

# EMOTION OF MAIN CHARACTER HUA MULAN IN THE MULAN MOVIE (2020): PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

Fachriza Mukhlis Choirudin; Titis Setyabudi, S.S., M.A.  
Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

## ABSTRAK

Emosi adalah respons yang dihadapi makhluk manusia sebagai reaksi terhadap kejadian atau keadaan. Jenis emosi yang ditemui individu ditentukan oleh keadaan yang memicu emosi tersebut. Misalnya, ketika seseorang menerima kabar baik, mereka senang. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji emosi tokoh utama Hua Mulan dalam film Mulan (2020). Metode penelitian ini adalah deskriptif-kualitatif. Dalam mengumpulkan data, ada dua sumber yaitu data primer dari film Mulan dan data sekunder dari artikel, buku, website, dll. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori emosi dari Paul Ekman dan teori penilaian kognitif dari Richard Lazarus. Penelitian ini menemukan dua hasil. Pertama, jenis emosi yang diungkapkan oleh Hua Mulan. Kedua, proses terjadinya emosi pada Hua Mulan.

*Kata kunci : Emosi, Hua Mulan, Film*

## ABSTRACT

Emotions are responses that human creatures encounter in reaction to occasions or circumstances. The sort of emotion an individual encounters is determined by the circumstance that triggers the emotion. For example, when a person receives good news, they are delighted. The goal of this study is to examine the emotions of the main character Hua Mulan in the movie Mulan (2020). The method for this research is descriptive-qualitative. In collecting the data, there are two sources, namely primary data from the Mulan movie and secondary data from articles, books, websites, etc. This research uses emotion theory from Paul Ekman and cognitive appraisal theory from Richard Lazarus. This research found two results. First, the kind of emotions expressed by Hua Mulan. Second, the process of the occurrence of emotions in Hua Mulan.

*Keywords : Emotion, Hua Mulan, Movie*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Emotions are responses that human creatures encounter in reaction to occasions or circumstances. The sort of emotion an individual encounters is determined by the circumstance that triggers the emotion. For example, when a person receives good news, they are delighted. An individual encounters fear when they are debilitated. The emotion is a mental condition which is

caused by the change of neurophysiological, several of mind associated, sense, behavior response, and the level of joy and displeasure (Schacter, 2011).

In living life, humans show various kinds of emotional expressions that can be displayed with facial expressions, speech, and behaviour. Emotions play an important role in fostering adaptive interactions with the world (Panksepp, 2005) An American psychologist and also the pioneer of emotions study Paul Ekman during the 1970s identified six basic of emotion which used by all human. The emotion defined as happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, surprise, and anger. As time goes by, he added some basic emotions such as, pride, shame, embarrassment, and excitement. Expressions of emotion can be found in literature, just as they are in real life. Mulan is a movie that tells about a young adventurous girl in China named Hua Mulan who tries to be free to find her identity and not be trapped in the culture and gender traditions of a woman in China's past.

Mulan's journey as a woman was extremely difficult. His life began when he had to submit to his father's decision to bring honor to his family, namely by getting married. On the other hand, the rebellion led by Bori Khan, assisted by a magician named Xianniang, along with his troops, had succeeded in attacking the northern outpost and expanding his attack. This made the imperial side so worried that they declared that each family should send one member to be trained as a soldier.

Mulan is forced to replace her weak and unfit father by becoming a soldier because there are no sons in her family. Mulan secretly steals her father's armor, sword, and horse to go to the soldier's training camp. During the training period, Mulan couldn't show her true identity, so she had to disguise herself as a man. When Mulan successfully rescued Chen Honghui, one of his best friends, during the war with the rebels, he could no longer conceal his true identity and was expelled from the troop and forced to return to his village.

On one trip to his village, she met Xianniang, who said that he had something in common with Mulan and that the reason for joining Bori Khan was simply because of the difference in treatment from the others. Besides that, he also said that the attack on the post was just a diversion because his real goal was to kill the emperor as revenge for the death of Bori Khan's father. Mulan finally returned to the battalion and explained everything to the troop commander, who agreed and gave her permission to lead the troops to the palace.

When she arrived at the location, Bori Khan had killed the soldiers and captured the emperor, who was preparing to be burned. Seeing Mulan try to save the emperor, Khan tried to kill him by

launching arrows. But due to sympathy from Xianniang, the arrow actually killed her, who at that time turned into a falcon. In the end, Mulan manages to kill Khan by kicking an arrow at him. After successfully saving the emperor, Mulan was offered the chance to join the emperor's personal bodyguard. But because of her inner problems, she was reluctant to accept and chose to return to her village.

The researcher chose this film because Mulan can reflect people's emotions in real life. Many emotional events in Hua Mulan and how to deal with them are depicted as if they were real-life events. Moreover, this movie also has a moral value and message about how to be a good person who doesn't give up, has a winning character, and is a person who can encounter difficult times within himself.

Furthermore, this movie was interesting and different from others. This film has an authentic background story about an ancient Chinese kingdom. Based on the explanation and reason given above, the researcher is interested in analyzing Mulan using a psychological approach and focusing on the types of emotions felt by Hua Mulan, the main character.

## **2. METHOD**

This research uses descriptive-qualitative method. The material object for this research is Mulan movie (2020) that will be analyze for her emotion as the formal object. This research use type of data in the from of text and image which taken from manuscript and screen capture. Then, the data source the researcher using based on primary and secondary data. The primary data comes from the movie itself Mulan (2020) and secondary data comes from reference, such as journals article, book, website, and others that are related. To collect the data the researcher, watch Mulan movie carefully for several times to understanding the content of the movie based on information and literature that related. After screening and capture the scene, the researcher taking notes for important information that will be organizing based on the classification analyze. Then on data analysis, the researcher refers to Miles and Hubberman (2014) that there are three concurrent flows of activity in qualitative data analysis, namely: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing.

## **3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

## **Finding 1. The kind of Emotion by Hua Mulan in Mulan Movie**

As a woman who is very sensitive to an event or condition, Hua Mulan shows a variety of emotions that express what she is experiencing. Based on Paul Ekman, the researcher found six kinds of emotions based on Mulan movie, as follows: **a. Anger**

An intense emotional situation involving an uncomfortable and uncooperative strong feeling in response to an inducement, hurt, or threat. In the movie it can see when Mulan fell because of the collision with the man in front of her. Then a man named Honghui tried to help him, feeling offended by the little man's presumption on her, which enraged Mulan, who threatened him while drawing his sword.

### **b. Disgust**

An emotional reaction characterized by dismissal or aversion to something potentially infectious or regarded as hostile, offensive, or repulsive. There are two scene shows an expression of disgust from Mulan. First, it happen because of something she saw. At the barracks, where all the soldiers gathered to rest and conduct their personal activities, there was an incident where a soldier named Yao threw an object at Po, who was wrapping a towel at the time. But the towel was not completely wrapped, causing it to fall to the floor when Po received a throw from Yao. Mulan, who accidentally saw it, immediately felt disgusted. Second, Mulan feels disgusted when she starts to sleep in the barracks with other soldiers. When she was about to fall asleep, the man beside him suddenly subconsciously wanted to hug Mulan, who at that time had just laid down. So that she responds as if disgusted because she has never touched a man and has done more.

### **c. Happiness**

Define as a term used in the context of mental or emotional states, including positive or charming emotions ranging from satisfaction to intense delight. First, the happy scene was seen when Mulan was still small. Mulan tried to put a chicken into the cage that had been prepared by her father. Even though it id not easy to do and full of struggles, Mulan looks very happy doing it. Second, the scene when she was being barrack and starting to sleep. The man beside became delirious and made a move to hug Mulan. Aware of the

movement being repeated, Mulan swiftly avoided the man and was happy that she had in doing so.

#### **d. Sadness**

An emotional torment caused or characterized by feelings of impediment, misfortune, hopelessness, despondency, weakness, disillusionment, and distress. There are four scenes in this emotion. First when she do an intimate conversation with her father. Her father explained to Mulan that as a woman she could not show her chi because chi was only for soldiers and she had to hide it to bring honor for her family. Second, when she realized that her father must be join the soldiers training camp in order to bring te honor for their family because they have no son. Third, when Mulan show her true identity to commanders and others soldiers after battle with rebel. As long as a soldiers she disguised as a man, so she must accept the consequence. Fourth, the scene when Mulan return to her village after fulfilling her obligation as a soldiers. She apologize to her father after what had she done including losing his armour.

#### **e. Surprise**

Defined as a brief mental and physiological state, a startle response experienced by creatures and humans because of an unexpected event. The researcher found four scenes. First, when Mulan got yelled at from her father regarding her participation in the war while everyone was eating together. Secondly, when one of his friends approached him while she was bathing in the lake who was alone at that time. Third, when Mulan and Commander Tung are talking together, and he finds out her secret and background. **f.**

#### **Fear**

Defined as the escalation of an unpleasant emotion in response to seeing or recognizing a threat or risk. Emotion of fear it can seen when Mulan carried out the 3 pillars of a soldier's oath before going to war. In this promise, Mulan was afraid to say the third pillar, namely the truth. Because basically from the beginning she was lying.

## **2. The Process of Emotion at Hua Mulan**

According to appraisal theories, the first step a human takes before experiencing an emotion is to think. It can be described as an event that is followed by a stimulus, then

thought, and finally a physiological response in the form of simultaneous experience and emotion. Cognitive appraisal can be a model to explain responses to stressful events (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984).

**a. Anger**

The scene when Mulan gets angry because she feels offended after hearing the little man's parable from one of the trainees. Mulan thinks this is an insult to her. Mulan delivered by slapping the man's hands away, drawing her sword, and speaking gruffly in response to these angry emotions.

**b. Disgust**

In the first scene, the emotion of disgust can occur because Mulan saw something unusual for her, namely the genitalia of a man. This made Mulan think it was very disgusting; moreover, Mulan has no brothers, and she isn't married either. As a form of this emotion of disgust, Mulan responds through her facial expressions by closing her eyes tightly and wrinkling her face. In the second scene, the process starts when she feels uncomfortable when a man sleeping beside her tries to hug her. Mulan, being a woman who isn't particularly fond of men, thinks this is unusual. As a form of psychological response to her disgusted emotions, Mulan acted in the form of body movements, that is, elbowing the man's body, which caused him to turn around and not hug her.

**c. Happiness**

The process of emotion in the first scene occurs when she is little and she is doing activities to catch a chicken that is going to be put in a cage. Of course, to a small child, this activity is a lot of fun, but they can't think of any other consequences. To respond to the emotion, Mulan distributes it with facial expressions in the form of smiles and happy laughter. Then, for the second scene, we see the process of emerging emotions as a result of her success in avoiding the man sleeping next to her, who is seen making gestures to hug her. Mulan expresses them through facial expressions, namely, a wide smile and relief after avoiding them.

#### **d. Sadness**

In the first scene, it can be seen that the emotion of sadness for Mulan was formed as a result of having an intimate conversation with her father. Her father advised that she could not maintain the chi that was in herself because it was too strong, and chi was only for soldiers. So she must hide it in order to bring honor to her family. This statement made Mulan feel disappointed, she thought that she could not grow as she wanted. Mulan expressed her sadness by sniffing. In the second scene, Mulan's sadness occurred because she realized that her father, who no longer had the ability, had to go to the soldier's training camp on behalf of his family. She wished that if he were born as a man, she would certainly replace his father. Mulan is responding to the tears that are flowing down her face while watching her father. In the third scene, the process occurs when she is her way home after showing her true identity to the commanders and other soldiers. She couldn't contain her sadness after what she did. She had mixed feelings in her mind. On the one hand, she was sad because she was expelled from the army and could no longer fight and embarrass the family, which Mulan had to bring honor to. On the other side, she felt regret for having done it. Mulan expressed it by crying, which dampened her mood. The process of emotion in the last scene occurs when she returns home. At that moment, she apologizes to her father for the mistakes she had made and also loses his armor. Mulan expressed her emotional sadness by crying over her fault.

#### **e. Surprise**

In the first scene, the emotion is evident when her father pushes her hard at the dining table while staring at her because she asked. This incident left Mulan shocked and silent. She didn't expect to be snapped at by her father, which she suddenly got when she was asking. Mulan expressed it through her facial expressions in the form of a tense and silent face. The second scene depicts her thought process when she was certain she was alone at the lake for a bath. But, in the middle, her best friend suddenly called out. This surprises her because she did not expect it. Mulan exclaimed, opening her mouth and widening her eyes. And in the last scene, the emotion caused her to realize that

Commander Tung knows about her secret. She had no idea the commander was interested in her and her family. Mulan responded by making a flat face, looking perplexed, and opening his mouth. The emotion of fear appears when Mulan takes a soldier's oath and she can't follow the third pillar, namely the truth. It's because at first she was lying and afraid that it would have big consequences.

## **Discussion**

According to Paul Ekman, there are six basic emotions in humans: anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. Then the psychological theory by Richard Lazarus, namely the cognitive appraisal theory, that explains the process of emotion must be thought about for the first step. The emotions shown in movie are related to Paul Ekman's theory include anger, disgust, happiness, sadness, surprise, and fear. On the set of the movie, the main character Mulan represents all of the basic emotions. The emotion of anger shown when she is insulted by a man who attempts to help her when they collide. The second is disgust, the depiction of disgust in the Mulan movie is shown when Mulan suddenly sees male genitals at the barracks and scene when she was hugged by the man beside her. The next is happiness, there are two scenes: first is when little Mulan chases the chickens to put them in the coop, second is when Mulan successfully avoids the man who is standing beside her and tries to hug Mulan while she is sleeping. The next emotion is sadness, there are four scenes represented. First, during an intimate conversation between Mulan and her father. Second, she realized her father would be taken to a soldier's training camp with deplorable conditions. Third, when Mulan is alone after showing her true identity to her battalion. Fourth, when Mulan comes back home after the war and meets her family, especially her father. The fifth emotion is surprise, there are three scenes. First, when her father yelled at Mulan by banging the dining table. Second, when she was cleaning her body at the lake. Third, when Mulan meets with Commander Tung in his tent. The final emotion, fear, the depiction of fear when Mulan made a soldier's promise with the three pillars before already war.

With cognitive appraisal theory by Richard Lazarus, the researcher can find out that an emotion occurs through several processes before being expressed. There must be a stimulus for the first, which will later be responded to as a thought, and then finally refer to a physiological response in the form of simultaneous experience and emotion. Emotions of



anger in Hua Mulan happen because she gets the uneasy feeling of being called a little man and response it by slapping her hands away, drawing her sword, and speaking gruffly. Mulan's emotion was disgust when she accidentally saw male genitalia in the first scene. She responds by closing her eyes tightly and wrinkling her face. The second scene occurs when a man attempts to hug her while she is sleeping. Mulan responds to it by elbowing the man's body, which causes him to turn around. The next emotion is sadness, which is expressed in the first scene during a deep conversation between she and her father. Mulan sniffles to express her feelings. The second scene is when she learns that her father will go to a soldier's training camp, she responds through tears that are flowing down his face. The last scene is when Mulan goes back to her home and meet with her father, she responds to her emotion by crying over her fault. The emotion of surprise in the first scene was caused by a snap from her father on the sidelines when she asked. She responds in the form of a tense and silent face. In the second scene was caused by the fact that she had not expected her friends find her in the lake while she was bathing, and she expressed by gasping, opening her mouth, and widening her eyes. Mulan delivers the emotion in the final scene by looking flat-faced, dumbfounded, and opening his mouth as she realizes Commander Tung knows about her secret, which she never expected. The final emotion is fear, which occurs in the scene because Mulan is afraid of the third pillar. Mulan delivered her emotion by breathing shakily and beating her heart.

#### **4. CLOSING**

The researchers can draw conclusions about the emotion of the main character Hua Mulan in Mulan (2020) based on the analysis. First, the researcher found six kinds of emotions that represent Hua Mulan as the main character throughout the Mulan movie. There is anger, disgust, happiness, sadness, surprise, and fear. Some emotions can occur more than once. This emotion can be known through behavior, dialogue, or visible expressions. Second, every emotion that occurs in Hua Mulan has a process before it is disclosed. Hua Mulan first needs to think about the stimulus she gets before expressing the emotion. After she gets a stimulus, she needs to think about what really happened to her and finally deliver her psychological response. In expressing her emotions, Mulan does so through body language, facial expressions, psychological responses, and the tone of her voice.

## REFERENCES

- Barret LF, Mesquita B, Ochsner KN, & Gross JJ. (2007). The experience of emotion. *Annual Review Psychology*, 58, 373–403.
- Craig A Smith. (1985). Patterns of Cognitive Appraisal in Emotion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(4), 813–838. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.48.4.813> .
- Craig A Smith. (1993). Appraisal Components, Core Relational Themes, and the Emotions. *Cognition and Emotion*, 7(3–4), 233–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02699939308409189> .
- David A.Preece. (2018). Measuring emotion regulation ability across negative and positive emotions: The Perth Emotion Regulation Competency Inventory (PERCI). *Personality and Individual Differences*, 135, 229–241. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.07.025> .
- Jaak Panksepp. (2005). Affective consciousness: Core emotional feelings in animals and humans. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 14(1), 30–80. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2004.10.004>.
- James J. Gross. (1998). The Emerging Field of Emotion Regulation: An Integrative Review. *Review of General Psychology*, 2(3), 271–299. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1037/10892680.2.3.271>.
- James J. Gross. (2015). Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2014.940781>.
- Lisa Watson, M. T. S. (2007). Causes and consequences of emotions on consumer behaviour. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41(5/6), 487–511. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560710737570>.
- PEACOCK., EDWARD J., PAULT. P. W. (1990). THE STRESS APPRAISAL MEASURE (SAM): A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO COGNITIVE APPRAISAL. *Stress Medicine*, 6, 227– 236.
- Pinker, S. (1997). *How the Mind Works*. W.W. Norton & Company.
- Richard S Lazarus; Susan Folkman. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping* (Print Book). Springer Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/OCLC 10754235>.
- Schacter, D. L. (2011). *Psychology Second Edition* (Secind edition). Worth Publishers.