

STRUGGLE FOR LOVE IN MICHAEL HOFFMAN'S MOVIE *THE BEST OF ME* (2014): AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstrak

Penelitian fokus pada perjuangan cinta yang tergambar dalam film *The Best of Me*. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisis indikator perjuangan cinta dalam film, mendeskripsikan perjuangan cinta yang direfleksikan oleh karakter utama dalam film, dan menjelaskan alasan perjuangan cinta diangkat dalam film. Jenis penelitian ini adalah studi literatur. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan hermeneutika. Data penelitian ini diambil dari dua sumber data, yaitu primer dan sekunder. Data primer diambil dari potongan adegan dan dialog yang relevan dengan objek penelitian. Sedangkan data sekunder diambil dari artikel, website, dan jurnal yang mendukung analisis ini. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) terdapat tiga indikator yang mempengaruhi perjuangan cinta tokoh utama, yaitu perbedaan ekonomi, ketidaksetujuan keluarga, dan kejadian tragis; (2) perjuangan cinta dalam film ini tercermin dari komitmen, pengorbanan, kesetiaan, dan kesempatan kedua; (3) alasan perjuangan cinta dibahas dalam film ini karena tantangan dan konflik yang dialami oleh tokoh utama membuat perjuangan cinta yang dialami menjadi lebih nyata.

Kata kunci: *cinta, perjuangan, film The Best of Me*

Abstract

This research focuses on the struggle for love depicted in *The Best of Me* movie. The aims of this research are to analyze the indicators of the struggle of love in the movie, describe the struggle of love reflected by the main character in the movie, and explain the reason for the struggle of love raised in the movie. This type of research is a literary study. This research uses qualitative methods with a hermeneutic approach. The data of this research taken from two data sources, namely primary and secondary. The primary data is collected from scene captures and dialogue which are relevant to the object of the study. The secondary data taken from articles, websites, and journals that support this analysis. The results of this research are: (1) there are three indicators that influence the main character's struggle for love, namely economic differences, family disapproval, and tragic accidents; (2) the struggle for love in this movie is reflected by commitment, sacrifice, faithfulness, and second chance; (3) the reason of struggle for love is addressed in this movie because the challenges and conflict experienced by the characters make the love struggle more real.

Keywords: *love, struggle, The Best of Me movie*

1. INTRODUCTION

A struggle can be seen in real-life society. The term “struggle” describes an act of devotion or a challenging effort. There are many different kinds of struggles in society, such as a struggle for life, freedom, justice, achievement, and also love (Utomo & Nugroho, 2022). People will strive to realize their desires even though the struggle is difficult. Various ways are done to make the desire come true. This means that in living this life there must be an effort to be able to progress and develop (Irawan & Wahyono, 2023).

The struggle to find love changes people’s personalities and lifestyles (Virgiawan, 2012). People have various ways of showing love in life. Love is a deep and intense emotional sensation that can be felt by an individual towards another person, typically of the opposite gender. This emotional experience involves feelings of affection, attention, care, and a strong emotional connection. According to Fisher (in Wade et al., 2009) love is an extremely potent feeling. Love often brings about sensations of joy, satisfaction, and a desire to provide protection, but it can also give rise to complex emotions such as jealousy and heartache (Mumpuni & Wajiran, 2024). Love implies a healthy and affectionate relationship between two people, including trust in each other (Nabila & Gunawan, 2023). Love makes people confident and encourages them to live life well, so that humans have a clear path to live, grow and develop well. Because of their love, people may lie, cheat, steal, and even kill for their love, and it is better to die than to lose their love.

The Best of Me is a 2014 romantic drama movie based on Nicholas Sparks’ 2011 novel directed by Michael Hoffman. The script of the movie was written by Will Fetters and J. Mills Goodloe. Michael Hoffman frequently explores the topics of love and relationships in his movie, both romantic and platonic. The movie gives him a basis to investigate different aspects of love, such as the struggle for love and the tension between idealized and actual love. Michael Hoffman also came up with the concept for the romance drama *The Best of Me* after experiencing a real-life heartbreak (Hoffman, 2014). The movie examines how decisions affect relationships and how true love never gets any less intense with time. The emotional strain weaved throughout their love story is

exacerbated by the character's need to work through miscommunications, regret, and the unavoidable effects of their choices. *The Best of Me* essentially shows a heartwarming, multi-decade love story, demonstrating how love can still have a significant impact on a person's life even in the face of hardship.

The movie portrays the journey of two former high school sweethearts, Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier who are reunited after a long breakup because of the death of a close friend. Dawson Cole, the main character in the movie, comes from a troubled and disharmonious family background, while Amanda, who comes from a more affluent family, has a passionate teenage love story. However, their love faced with opposition from Amanda's father who disapproves of their love affair and eventually causes a breakup to occur. When social and family circumstance compel them to part during their adolescent years, the struggle in their love story starts. They struggle greatly to move on with their lives separately after their initial split. Dawson and Amanda's battle with love's complexity highlights the topic of love struggle even more. Twenty years later, Dawson and Amanda return to their hometown to attend Tuck's funeral. They are confronted with memories of their past. The movie shows a flashback to their teenage, where their love blossomed. In the present, they grapple with the consequences of the choice they have made. Despite the passage of time and their different life paths, Dawson and Amanda find themselves drawn to each other once again. They must confront unresolved feelings and regrets that have lingered for years. As they spend time together, the sparks of old love reignite and they face the challenge of rekindling a love that never really died.

In this research, the researchers intended to present the relevant previous study related to *The Best of Me* movie. Andup (2016), this study employs Carl Gustav Jung's Archetype theory to examine the characterizations of Dawson Cole and Amanda Collier. The outcome demonstrates that after acknowledging their persona, anima/animus, and shadow, Amanda and Dawson are able to realize their self or completeness. Candra, Yanti, & Rina, (2016), the purpose of this study is to characterize the ways in which the feelings of love and grief are expressed through words, both liberal and nonliteral, and how the environment influences these expressions. The outcomes of this study are described and explained using qualitative methodology. A few of the theories are form Yanti, Y. (2013), Parrot (2001), Fiehler (2002), Kovecses (1990), and Crabtree (1991). The author uses descriptive paragraphs to illustrate the data analysis. There are nineteen

ways to portray emotion, as follows: (1) words that express love; (2) words that do not express love; (3) literal words that express sadness; and (4) non-literal terms that express grief. Sulastri & Laila (2019), her study's objectives are to identify the reasons why men and women employ expression language in the movie and explain the traits of each gender's language as it relates to Coate's Conversational Strategies and Bender theory. The study's findings indicate that there were 23 data related to the characteristics of men's language and 27 data referring to the characteristics of women's language. The second difference is that women employ directives for suggestions or requests, but men tend to use commanding directives.

Many studies have explored romantic themes in movies. However, each movie has its own story in exploring the nuances of love. Therefore, in this research, the researcher is interested in examining the struggles experienced by the characters in the search of love in *The Best of Me* movie. This research refers to the obstacles faced by the characters and an analysis of the conflict they experience while navigating the complexities of love. In contrast to previous studies that focus on the linguistic elements and the emotion of character. This study focuses on Dawson's love struggle. Dawson has a desire for his love to last forever. This desire is a reflection of the conflict between the past he encountered in the passage of time and the reality he faces. Dawson is forced to face his own desires and make decisions that will ultimately affect his future as a result of this love struggle.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the indicators of the struggle of love in the movie, describe the struggle of love reflected by the main character in the movie, and explain the reason for the struggle of love raised in the movie. The researcher focuses on how the struggle for love is reflected in the movie through the lens of the character's individual psychology, desires, and personal growth. The researcher uses the perspective of individual psychology to understand the love relationship in the research. By applying an individual psychological perspective, the readers can gain deeper insights into the characters' struggles and journeys in the context of love. This research provides a deeper understanding of the theme of the struggle of love in literary works. Researchers hopes that the results of this research can add insight and reference for other researchers in conducting a literature review of movies using different theories.

2. METHOD

This research is literary studies. The object of the research consists of two objects, namely material object and formal object. The material object of the research is *The Best of Me* movie directed by Michael Hoffman in 2014. The movie was produced by Justin Burns, Denise Di Novi, Alison Greenspan, Ryan Kavanaugh and Nicholas Sparks. The formal object is the struggle for love in *The Best of Me* movie. The type of the data of this study is text and image. The primary data sources are from scene captures and dialogue which are relevant to the object of the study. The secondary data sources are taken from books, articles, websites, journals and other literature that support this analysis. The document analysis was used to acquire the data for this research. This study is uses hermeneutic approach as a technique in analyzing the data. Hermeneutics is known as a methodology of interpreting texts and content in literary work. In this study, the analysis that is used to examine the data is qualitative analysis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 The indicators of struggle for love in the movie

In the movie *The Best of Me*, researchers found several indicators that influence Dawson and Amanda's love struggle. The following are indicators of the love struggle contained in the movie.

a. Differences in economic background

Different backgrounds in a relationship are still a complicated issue today. Everyone wants a partner who is equal, one of which is in economic conditions. Economic differences often make relationships end in the middle of the road. In *The Best of Me* movie, economic differences become one of the factors in Dawson and Amanda's love struggle.



Picture 1 the state of Dawson's house.
(17:26)



Picture 2 the state of Amanda's house.

(1:14:49)

This picture above shows the different conditions of Dawson and Amanda's house. Dawson and Amanda come from different economic backgrounds. Dawson, the main character in this movie comes from a simple, troubled and disharmonious family background whereas Amanda, she comes from a more prosperous family and full of love from her father. This puts Dawson and Amanda's love to the test. Dawson feels that the sincerity of their love will be difficult for their families to accept. In addition, the expectations and judgements of the people in their small town became an obstacle to their love. The struggle of their love begins as they navigate the challenges of coming from different worlds and facing disapproval from their community.

b. Family disagreement

In a romantic relationship, family approval is important, especially parents. Because without the blessing of parents, this romantic relationship will cause problems in the future. In this movie, family disapproval is shown by Amanda's father. He does not approve of his daughter's relationship with Dawson because of Dawson's family background.



Picture 3 Amanda's father asks Dawson to stay away from his daughter.

*Harvey : "Four years of school, say \$15.000 a year tuition.
 Another five to live comfortably."
 Dawson : "You want to give me \$80.000?"
 Harvey : "If you'll let me."
 Dawson : "Just stay away from Amanda, right?"
 Harvey : "You'll come out debt-free with a real chance to make
 something of yourself. This isn't personal, Son. I just want what's
 best for my daughter and I can't have her anywhere near your family.
 It's gonna end anyway."
 Dawson : "I don't want your money."
 (59:41 – 1:01:25)*

In the scene, Dawson is seen talking to Amanda's father. They are talking in a classic car garage owned by Amanda's father. They are talking about classic cars. Apparently, Amanda's father offered Dawson some money to stay away from his daughter. Amanda's father does not allow his daughter to be with Dawson and be around Dawson's family. He felt that Dawson would not be able to provide a decent life when with Amanda, as he had raised his daughter with a lot of love and affection. Dawson who heard the words was seen putting on an emotional expression. He refused Amanda's father's offer. He did not expect that Amanda's father would say that. Then, Dawson left the garage.

c. Tragic accidents

The next indicator of the struggle of love in this movie is a tragic accident. Dawson and Amanda experience various unforeseen accidents that affect their love relationship. The loyalty of their love is further tested when Dawson receives threats from Dawson's father's community. Some of the tragic accident that affect their relationship are:

1) Dawson imprisoned

Dawson must take responsibility for accidentally killing his friend Bobby. The incident stemmed from an argument he had with his father. He was sentenced to criminal punishment and imprisoned. Amanda was sad to learn about this, but she continued to provide support to Dawson while in prison.



Picture 4 Amanda visits Dawson in prison.

Dawson : "There can't be next time."

Amanda : "What do you mean?"

Dawson : "I got 8 years, I mean, it's what four before I'm even eligible for parole?"

Amanda : "I will wait."

Dawson : "No, I can't let you do that."

Amanda : "You don't get to make that choice."

Dawson : "If this is the last time, you're gonna see me. What would you say?"

Amanda : "Please don't do this."

Dawson : "I'd say thank you."

Amanda : "I'm not walking away."

Dawson : "I'd say I love you. I will always."

(1:17:25 – 1:18:40)

In this scene, Amanda is visiting Dawson in prison. They are talking in a prison phone room. Amanda continues to provide support and wants to wait for Dawson. However, Dawson cannot let Amanda wait for him until he gets out of prison. This is a difficult decision for them, because they love each other very much. Amanda could not hold back her tears. She burst into tears. Then, Dawson left Amanda and went back into the cell.

2) Tuck death

Tuck is Dawson's close friend who considers his own father. Tuck also knew Amanda, as Dawson often told him about her. They are close to each other. Tuck became a very influential person in Dawson and Amanda's love relationship. Tuck often gives them advice. This made Tuck's presence invaluable in maintaining their love relationship. However, an unfortunate event happened. Tuck had an accident and died. After this accident, Dawson and Amanda's relationship did not continue and stopped in the middle of the road. However, they still harbor love for each other.

3.1.2 The struggle for love reflected in the movie

In this section, researchers identify how the struggle of love is reflected by the main characters in *The Best of Me* movie. This struggle of love is depicted through four components, namely commitment, sacrifice, faithfulness, and second chance.

a. Commitment

Stenberg (1986) explains that commitment consists of two, namely commitment to love someone in the short term and commitment to maintain love in the long term. The cognitive component of the decision for a possible long-term commitment to a relationship falls under this commitment.

In the movie *The Best of Me*, this commitment in a love relationship is shown by Dawson and Amanda. Dawson realizes that there are many obstacles that must be faced in living this love story. Therefore, there must be faith in each other to stay together in a relationship.



Picture 5 Dawson's commitment to Amanda.

Amanda : "My parents think you're dangerous."

Dawson : "They are right. Sooner or later, I'm gonna have to pay for what happened today and I can't have you standing next to me when I do, okay? I can't have you getting hurt."

Amanda : "I'm not getting hurt."

Dawson : "You hang around with me long enough and you will."

Amanda : "I don't care! I mean, Dawson, do you want this? Do you want me?"

Dawson : "I do."

(35:02 – 35:20)

In this scene shows that Dawson and Amanda are talking seriously to each other. Amanda's parents think that Dawson is in danger. Because of this situation, Dawson committed to Amanda that he would replace everything that's happening now with

happiness. Dawson is afraid that this situation will hurt Amanda. He does not want Amanda to be in danger with him. Nonetheless, they commit to each other to live together and take care of each other. This commitment cannot be separated from the power of love and their desire to live together. The commitment that Dawson and Amanda reflect for their love is very evident here.

b. Sacrifice

“Love requires sacrifice” is a phrase we are all very familiar with. Love requires sacrifice because the relationship is between two people. Therefore, this sacrifice is important for each other so that the relationship lasts. A relationship can be said to be successful when both partners are willing to sacrifice for each other (Yonga, 2023). This means that both are committed to maintaining a loving relationship. While these sacrifices are important in relationships, a balance of giving effort to one’s partner and maintaining a sense of self-fulfilment is also very important.

In *The Best of Me* movie, this sacrifice of love is reflected by Dawson and Amanda in their relationship. Dawson and Amanda sacrifice for each other so that their love is always given happiness. Various challenges that hinder their love are overcome so that their goal of living together is realized. The following are part of the sacrifices Dawson and Amanda made for their love.



Picture 6 Dawson protects Amanda from his father’s community.

Dawson : “You gotta leave! You gotta leave out of here.”

Amanda : “What?”

Dawson : “No, please. You just get out of here now.”

Amanda : “Who is that?”

Dawson : “Get out of here, please! Leave!”

Amanda : “Dawson! You’re hurting me!”

Dawson : “Leave! Don’t ask any questions. Get out now!”

(31:38 – 31:52)

In this scene, Dawson and Amanda are chatting in his workshop. They are joking and laughing together. However, suddenly a car pulls up to the workshop. Apparently, the car is Dawson's father's car and his men. Dawson, who knew about it, immediately told Amanda to leave the place. He didn't want Amanda to be known by those people. This proves Dawson's concern for Amanda by protecting her from something that might be dangerous for Amanda. Protecting a loved one is a form of sacrifice in relationships. This is applied by Dawson to Amanda.



Picture 7 Dawson risks all his love for Amanda.

Amanda : "I'm sorry, my dad is an asshole."

Dawson : "he is right though. You got a big life ahead of you. You're gonna do great things. I don't want to get in the way of that."

Amanda : "Dawson, what would you risk for me?"

Dawson : "Everything."

Amanda : "Let me love you like that, please."

(1:02:15 – 1:02:47)

In this scene, Dawson is thinking about Amanda's father's word to stay away from Amanda. He thought about what would happen if he left the person he loved. Then, Amanda came over to Dawson. Amanda apologizes for what her father said to Dawson. However, those words did not make their love falter. Amanda reassured Dawson to keep fighting for their love. The form of sacrificial love can be seen from Dawson's statement in this scene that he will risk everything for their love. Meanwhile, Amanda also stated that she would love Dawson the way Dawson loved her with all his efforts.

c. Faithfulness

Faithfulness is an important foundation in a relationship. In a relationship, faithfulness is holding on to the belief in oneself to persevere through thick and thin. Being faithful is not just about not loving someone else, but about providing support, attention, and

proving in important moments. Being faithful means believing what you've done together.



Picture 8 Dawson convinces Amanda of his feelings of love.

Dawson : "I know you, Amanda. I know your heart, you are the girl who came every day for a month an every weeks for a year ... these past few days have been so good a chance to see you and talk to you to heal a little to love you again ... no matter what happens Amanda, I want you to know how grateful I am because at the end of it all I get to say I know what it's like to have loved someone truly love someone because I've loved you."

(1:27:32 – 1:29:00)

The scene above shows that Dawson still loves Amanda after 20 years of separation. Dawson's love for Amanda has not changed since they first met. He is very grateful to be able to meet Amanda and spend time together. He felt the sincerity of love was colored again. This shows how loyal Dawson is to Amanda. He did not drop his love for others when he was separated from Amanda. After meeting again, he expressed his sincere love to Amanda.

d. Second chance

Every event that happens in this life must have gone through a failure. Basically, the failures we experience have a positive impact on getting up behind it. This makes it an opportunity to make things right with a second chance. In a love relationship, a second chance occurs when two individuals forgive each other for past events. The existence of this second chance is so that love relationship is re-established with a better romance than before.

The Best of Me movie reflects on the second chance at love between Dawson and Amanda. They had to separate for 20 years, then reunited with different lives. Dawson is still in his solitude, but Amanda is married and has a family. They try to open up and accept each other's presence again.



Picture 9 Dawson tried to use the second chance.

Dawson : "I'm trying to get my head around it since it all happened. Why the hell am I still here? And maybe it's cause of this you know? Maybe it's a chance to see you again and a chance to tell you how sorry I am. And tell you how much I still love you."

Amanda : "You want me to fall back in love with you? How do I do that if I haven't ever stopped?"

(1:07:59 – 1:08:26)

In the scene above, Dawson and Amanda meet again after a long separation. They meet near a lake in a park. Walking around while talking about each other's lives after 20 years of not seeing each other. Then they sat by the lake, Dawson began to talk about his feelings during his separation from Amanda. He accepted the fate that had happened. However, he felt regret about the past events. He still loved Amanda and wanted to have a second chance with her. Amanda told Dawson that she never stopped loving him either.



Picture 10 Amanda reads a letter written by Dawson.

Dawson : "Dear Amanda ... When I survived my fall, I began to wonder if there wasn't some purpose to my life. Maybe I was on a destined path even if I couldn't see it yet. When I saw you again, I believe we had been given a second chance that the universe had decided to give us that. You have commitments, I understand and you want to keep them. I can only love you more for that hope to see you again someday, but if I don't just know that these last days have been the best of my life. I love who I am when I'm with you, Amanda. You are my dearest friend, my deepest love."

(1:49:25 – 1:50:30)

This section shows Amanda reading a letter from Dawson. Dawson wrote a letter to Amanda when he was no longer around. At that time, Dawson still believed that there would be a second chance for him and Amanda to reconnect. However, it was too late. Amanda had to accept the fact that the second chance was short-lived.

3.1.3 The reason of struggle for love addressed in the movie

The theme of the struggle for love depicted in this movie is quite complex. The movie tries to present love life realistically. Love relationships don't always go smoothly. The challenges and conflict experienced by the characters make the love struggle they go through provide a more real picture. This also affects the growth and learning of the characters. Through these challenges and conflicts, the main character experiences self-development and learns about commitment, sacrifice, and loyalty in a love relationship.

From the explanation above, *The Best of Me* movie conveys the message that love is a complicated and challenging journey. Love doesn't always go according to our wishes, but with struggles that we go through can build a lasting and strong relationship.

3.2 Discussion

The researcher used Alfred Adler's individual psychology theory in conducting this research. Individual psychology consists of six important components, namely inferiority feeling, fictional finalism, striving for superiority, social interest, style of life, and creative power. The struggle for love in this movie can be identified through the theory.

Inferiority feeling, Dawson comes from a troubled background, having grown up in a family marked by disfunction and abuse. Dawson is depicted as somewhat of an outsider in the community, further isolating him from a sense of belonging. This social alienation can contribute to feelings of inferiority. *Fictional finalism*, his love for Amanda becomes a driving force. This enduring love serves as his final fiction or ultimate goal. Dawson's fictional finalism reflects a long-term orientation, where his actions are directed toward a future state characterized by a fulfilling and lasting relationship with Amanda. *Striving for superiority*, Dawson's romantic pursuit of Amanda can be interpreted as a form of striving for superiority. His love for her becomes a motivating factor for positive change in his life, driving him to be a better person and to build a future with her. *Social interest*, Dawson's relationships with Amanda could reflect social interest. The choices he makes in the context of their relationship might highlight his concern for the happiness and welfare of those around him. *Style of life*, Dawson's character embodies elements of

a tragic hero, facing adversity with courage but ultimately being shaped by the tragic circumstances of his life. Dawson's pursuit of love and his enduring connection with Amanda highlight his belief in the transformative power of relationships. *Creative power*, Dawson's interactions and relationships with Amanda, may showcase his creative approach to love and emotional connections. His ability to navigate complex emotions, communicate effectively, and build meaningful relationships demonstrates the creative power inherent in human connections.

Based on the research results that have been presented, this research adds information to previous research from Candra, Yanti, & Rina (2016) which focused on how feelings of love and sadness are expressed through words. Therefore, this research aims to complement the new findings in the movie *The Best of Me*. This research is intended so that readers can increase their information through literature studies and individual psychology theory used in researching this movie.

4. CLOSING

Based on the problem statement and the results of the research obtained, the researcher concludes that the struggle for love contained in *The Best of Me* movie has three important things. First, in this movie, there are three indicators that influence the main character's struggle for love. These indicators consist of economic differences, family disapproval, and tragic accidents. The economic differences between the two individuals are the main factor in their struggle for love. This difference causes family disapproval to occur. Then, tragic accidents such as the main character having to serve a criminal sentence and losing a person who is very instrumental in building the love relationship. Second, the struggle for love in this movie is reflected in four ways, namely commitment, sacrifice, faithfulness, and second chance. Commitment is made by both partners when they realize the various obstacles in their love relationship. Sacrifice is shown to each other so that love still provides comfort and ends in happiness. The faithfulness of the main character when he chose not to fall in love with anyone after separating from her first love. The second chance given to establish a love relationship again after a long separation makes the main character take advantage of it. Third, the reason the love struggle is addressed in this movie is because the challenges and conflicts experienced by the characters make the love struggle, they go through more real. This also affects character growth and learning. Through these challenges and conflicts, the main character

experiences inner development and learns how commitment, sacrifice, and faithfulness in a love relationship.

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