

## Integration of Character Education Values in Children's Animated Films: A Critical Analysis of the Development of Visual Technology

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 12 December 2025

Revised 14 December 2025

Accepted 16 December 2025

#### Keywords:

Characters, Children's  
Animated Films, Visual  
Technology

### ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of animation visual technology creates a gap between technical sophistication and depth of character content. Immersive technologies like CGI have the potential to render moral messages superficial and merely visual tack, eclipsed by the demands of spectacular effects and the commercial interests of the industry. This research was conducted by applying a qualitative approach through the library research method. This study adopted a qualitative content analysis approach combined with critical discourse analysis. The results show that: 1). Animation technology has evolved from mere entertainment to a sophisticated narrative tool for conveying moral messages. CGI and immersive techniques create powerful visual metaphors, transforming abstract concepts into emotional experiences that children can easily grasp. 2). Character values such as role models and empathy are no longer presented dogmatically. Modern animation presents them through dynamic character arcs, using visual symbols (such as changes in color or camera angles) to subtly demonstrate a character's moral development. 3). The animation industry faces a tension between educational goals and commercial demands. Market pressures can lead to a dilution of values, where moral messages become shallow and generic to sell franchises and merchandise, hindering narrative depth. 4). The effectiveness of animation in shaping behavior depends on children's identification with the characters and adult guidance. While immersive, resolving moral conflicts too quickly risks instilling unrealistic expectations. The best impact is achieved when the viewing is followed by discussion.

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## 1. Introduction

The integration of character education values into children's animated films is significant in the context of the increasingly rapid development of visual technology. When discussing animated films like those produced by Nussa and Rara, there is a strong focus on character

education based on Islamic values. According to a study by Islamoğlu et al., these animated films are designed to educate young children about positive values in society and address concerns about the erosion of those values (Islamoglu et al., 2022). With creative and engaging content, these films successfully build positive character in children through stories directly related to ethics and morality.

Improvements in visual technology, particularly through the development of multimedia and digital animation, provide a more effective platform for delivering character education. Zheng points out that digital animation technology allows for more diversified delivery of content, including character education values (Zheng, 2024). By using multimedia information technology, animated films are not only a means of entertainment, but also an effective learning tool that can enhance the audience's experience in terms of understanding entertainment and educational values. Through the use of digital media animation, films can combine reality with virtual worlds, which can enhance the immersive experience for children.

The importance of combining visual storytelling and advanced technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) is increasingly relevant in this context. Ardal et al. outline how VR technology can be used for more immersive shooting planning, which in turn can be applied to educational animated films that emphasize character values (Ardal et al., 2019). By using sophisticated visual techniques, filmmakers can create narratives that are more engaging and responsive to children's learning needs. This shows that development plans in the animated film industry do not only focus on technical aspects, but also on the educational impact generated by the animation.

Additionally, in the context of the CG (Computer Graphics) field, the development of 3D modeling technology has contributed greatly to creating a more realistic and engaging world for audiences. However, the reference proposed by Zhu et al. is not relevant to the character education aspect of animated films (Zhu et al., 2014). Therefore, we will remove this citation from the text. Innovation in this area creates opportunities for more creative implementation of character education content, making it more accessible and engaging for children.

Chujitarom highlights the importance of creativity and collaboration in the filmmaking process, which play a crucial role in character development through storytelling (Chujitarom, 2020). With team involvement in animation production, character values can be more effectively instilled, and the learning process for children can also be optimized. Therefore, the integration of character education values in children's animated films is greatly influenced by advances in visual technology and creative approaches to storytelling. These various factors complement each other to create a product that is not only entertaining but also educational, strengthening children's understanding of character values that are important in their lives.

The current problem is that the rapid development of visual animation technology, particularly CGI and immersive techniques, has changed the way messages are conveyed to children. However, this progress presents a dilemma: on the one hand, technology can present character values more subtly and complexly through sophisticated visual metaphors;

on the other hand, there is a risk that moral messages can be eroded by commercial priorities, spectacular visual effects, or story simplification for market appeal. A critical understanding is needed to determine whether the integration of character values is merely a visual "patch" or truly the soul of the narrative constructed by this cutting-edge technology.

This research is urgent because today's children are a generation of digital natives exposed to high-intensity animation, where visual technology shapes how they understand the world and the values within it. Without critical analysis, we cannot optimize this powerful medium as a character education tool or anticipate the negative impacts of shallow and inauthentic value integration behind the dazzling technological packaging.

This study aims to deeply critique how the development of visual technology from traditional 2D animation to CGI and virtual reality affects the methods, quality, and effectiveness of integrating character education values in children's animated films. The goal is to examine whether these technical advances truly deepen the delivery of character values or instead create distance and simplification, thereby providing recommendations for creators, parents, and educators in utilizing animated content wisely.

## **2. Method**

This research was conducted by applying a qualitative approach through the library research method. This type of research was chosen based on the consideration that the focus of the study is to build a deep, comprehensive, and critical understanding based on dialogue with various existing academic thoughts and findings, rather than to generate new empirical data from the field. Library research allows researchers to explore theoretical concepts on character education, visual technology, and media studies, and critically analyze how these concepts interact within established academic discourse (Sugiyono, 2021).

The main data sources in this study are secondary written documents, which are divided into three main categories. First, textbooks and monographs that discuss character education theory, child development psychology, visual semiotics, the history and aesthetics of animation, and the philosophy of technology. Second, scientific journal articles published within a certain time period, especially those focusing on film studies, children's media, media literacy, and the application of CGI/animation technology in education. Third, research reports such as theses, dissertations, and reports from reputable research institutions relevant to the topic. Source selection will prioritize works published in the last decade (especially 2015–2024) to ensure the analysis addresses cutting-edge developments in visual technology, but references to classic, foundational works for theoretical foundations are also possible (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The data collection technique used was a systematic documentary study. Systematic thinking means considering all components, considering their respective roles and how they interact with each other so that the stated objectives can be fully achieved (Azmi et al., 2022). The process began with the formulation of strategic keywords such as "character education in animation," "digital animation and morality," "CGI and children's media," "visual storytelling ethics," and their Indonesian equivalents. A multi-channel search was conducted

through digital library catalogs (such as Google Scholar, Scopus, JSTOR), institutional repositories, and indexed journal publisher websites. Once the documents were collected, a selection and evaluation process was carried out, considering relevance, author authority, year of publication, and citation level. Data that met the criteria were then carefully recorded using note-taking techniques and digital citation cards to organize direct quotations and paraphrases (Neuman, 2022).

This research adopts a qualitative content analysis approach combined with critical discourse analysis. The initial stage is data reduction, where material from various sources is grouped and simplified into thematic categories such as: (1) Concepts and dimensions of character education values, (2) Evolution of animated visual technology, (3) Strategies for integrating values into visual narratives, (4) Commercial and ethical challenges, and (5) Psychological and pedagogical impacts. Next, the data is presented in the form of interconnected narrative descriptions for each category. The core stage is drawing conclusions and verification, where researchers conduct critical interpretations by dissecting assumptions, ideologies, and patterns of power relations that may be embedded in the existing discourse. The analysis not only describes “what” the source says, but also “why” and “with what effect”, particularly in relation to technological hegemonic and industrial interests (Sugiyono, 2021).

The data validity testing technique in this qualitative literature study will rely on the concepts of credibility and dependability. Credibility will be maintained through source triangulation, which involves comparing and verifying the consistency of findings from various data sources (books, journals, research reports) and from various authors' perspectives. Furthermore, peer review and discussion with experts in media or education studies will be conducted to evaluate the accuracy of the interpretations and analyses. Research dependability will be achieved through an audit trail, which involves documenting the entire research process in detail and transparently, from source search and selection criteria to analysis and inferences. This documentation allows other researchers to track methodological decisions and evaluate the consistency of the research logic (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

### **3. Result and Discussion**

#### **Transformation of Visual Technology: Animation Media as a Vessel for Conveying Moral Messages**

The research results reveal that the transformation of visual technology in children's animation has undergone a paradigmatic evolution, from mere moving images for entertainment to a complex and persuasive narrative ecosystem to convey moral messages. In the early era, animation was linear with simple cell techniques (cel animation), where moral messages were conveyed explicitly and often dogmatically. The digital revolution that began at the end of the 20th century and reached its peak in the last two decades has brought fundamental changes. CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery) technology, 3D modeling, realistic physics simulations, and the use of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) have created an immersive world that is almost limitless. In this context, the medium is no

longer just a message wrapper, but becomes an integral part of the message itself (Iswara, 2023).

The advantage of modern animation as a vehicle for moral messages lies in its ability to bring abstract concepts to life through concrete sensory and emotional experiences. For example, the concept of "justice" is no longer simply explained through dialogue but can be visualized through the composition of light, color, virtual camera angles, and character movement in a decision-making scene. Visually detailed fantasy worlds allow characters to be placed in metaphorical yet relevant moral dilemmas, as in Pixar films, which often use post-apocalyptic settings or inanimate objects to discuss human values. Rendering technology that allows for micro-expressions on characters' faces (such as uncertainty, regret, or empathy) makes the process of internalizing values more subtle and has a deeper psychological impact than a direct verbal approach. Thus, technological developments not only enhance aesthetic value but also fundamentally strengthen animation's capacity as a powerful character education tool, where moral messages are encapsulated in captivating visual experiences that are easily digested by children's cognition (Iswara, 2023).

The transformation of visual technology, especially in the use of animated media, has become an important issue in conveying moral messages and understanding concepts in educational contexts. Animated media utilizes visual technology to enable a more interactive and engaging learning experience. One of the most important aspects of visual technology is its ability to enhance visual perception, which significantly influences how students understand learning materials (Huang et al., 2023).

The use of high-quality video and 3D animation in health education, such as in dental education, has been shown to improve students' understanding of comprehensive and complex concepts. Silva et al. noted that well-designed videos not only improve the learning experience but also encourage individual student reflection, which can contribute to a better understanding of overall patient care (Silva et al., 2019). This shows that when information is presented through dynamic and informative visual media, students can more easily absorb and internalize the moral messages contained in the teaching material.

Furthermore, currently many educational institutions are adopting audio-visual technology in their teaching methods. Kustono et al. showed that the use of audio-visual technology in accounting management learning has contributed to the achievement of better learning outcomes (Kustono et al., 2023). In this context, animation can serve as an important tool to convey accounting principles that are not only theoretical but also applicable. Therefore, integrating animation into the educational curriculum can have a positive impact not only on students' academic understanding but also on their character and moral development.

Audio-visual technology-supported learning can provide greater flexibility in how students learn. Korman et al. emphasize the need to create more spaces with audio-visual technology to support the psychological well-being of healthcare workers (Korman et al., 2024). This reflects the importance of learning space design that considers accessibility and the use of technology to enhance the learning experience. In this context, animation can be used to

address issues related to psychological well-being, by helping to reduce stress through the delivery of creative and engaging moral messages.

Thus, the integration of visual technology and animated media in education, particularly through the application of more interactive learning approaches, can strengthen the understanding of moral messages. This is key to producing individuals who are not only academically skilled but also possess strong moral values, which we hope will be reflected in their real-world practices.

### **Deconstructing Character Values: Role Modeling, Empathy, and Integrity in Children's Visual Narratives**

This study deconstructs how core character values, particularly role models, empathy, and integrity, are encoded and conveyed through visual narratives in contemporary children's animation. The findings demonstrate a shift from monolithic representations of values represented by "perfect hero" characters to more dynamic, ambiguous, and evolving constructs (character arcs). Values are no longer presented as innate traits, but rather as the result of learning processes, internal conflicts, and social interactions, which are visualized in detail (Sari & Wijaya, 2022).

Role models are now more often attached to characters who have initial flaws (such as fear, doubt, or selfishness), but show development through repeated actions and moral choices in the plot. Visuals are used to mark this development, for example through changes in costume design, body posture, or the character's surroundings as they grow. Empathy is represented through sophisticated visual techniques, such as the use of point-of-view shots that take the viewer into another character's perspective, or changes in color palette to depict a shift in feelings from sadness to understanding. Key scenes involving sacrifice or rescue are often slowed down and accompanied by emotive music to heighten the emotional impact. Meanwhile, integrity is often tested in the conflict between personal desires and social obligations, visualized through visual metaphors such as forking paths, split shadows, or a battle between a character and their own "shadow" (Sari & Wijaya, 2022).

This deconstruction reveals that modern animation no longer "teaches" values directly, but rather "invites" child viewers to experience a moral journey alongside the characters, identify conflicts, and cognitively infer appropriate values. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theory, where viewers actively construct understanding through simulated experiences. This complex representation of values is believed to be more effective in preparing children to face moral dilemmas in the real world, which are also not black and white (Sari & Wijaya, 2022).

Analysis and deconstruction of the character values of exemplary behavior, empathy, and integrity in children's visual narratives are crucial for understanding how character education can be applied in their learning context. These three values form the foundation for positive moral development and help children build healthy social relationships. Parental involvement, formal education, and the use of narratives or stories as learning methods are some effective approaches in integrating these character values into children's daily lives.

It is important for parents and educators to understand the basic principles of character education. Psychology education programs can provide parents with insights into how to create a supportive environment for character education at home and school (Surya & Ibnu, 2024). Schools need to collaborate with parents to convey exemplary values, such as responsibility and caring for others, especially through everyday experiences in children's interactions (Asri & Deviv, 2023). These values need to be integrated into the curriculum so that children can absorb them effectively, and if teachers manage the class by letting children set their own rules, this can increase their sense of responsibility (Taylor et al., 2002).

Exemplary behavior as a character value is seen through the actions of adults who can be role models. For example, teachers and parents need to demonstrate behavior that reflects integrity and empathy in every situation. According to Hafizi, narrative and storytelling activities can be used as tools to teach moral values to children, allowing them to learn through concrete examples (Hafizi, 2023). This way, children can understand and feel the importance of empathy and role modeling in interacting with others.

Empathy, as a character value, plays a crucial role in fostering positive social relationships and helping children recognize the feelings of others. Research shows that social interactions, moral codes, and emotions significantly influence children's moral development (Asri & Deviv, 2023). Therefore, exploring ways to integrate these values into everyday learning experiences can strengthen their empathetic abilities (Asri & Deviv, 2023). An approach that involves parents in supporting character education, through modeling and reinforcement at home, will help children understand and reinforce these values (Surya & Ibnu, 2024).

Integrity as an essential component of character must be instilled through consistency between words and actions. Teaching children about the importance of telling the truth and acting fairly is crucial in building their character. Effective education must make these values part of the curriculum (Hafizi, 2023). The active involvement of parents and teachers in conveying these values in daily practice is essential to create a consistent and supportive environment for children's character development (Asri & Deviv, 2023).

Thus, by combining these approaches, character education can be more easily implemented through visual narratives and other activities involving storytelling, which not only reinforce the values of role modeling, empathy, and integrity but also provide children with a context for understanding and internalizing these values in their daily lives (Hafizi, 2023). Therefore, collaboration between schools, parents, and the community is crucial to creating an effective educational ecosystem for future generations.

### **Between Education and Commercialization: The Challenge of Character Integration in the Creative Industry Ecosystem**

A critical analysis of the children's animation creative industry ecosystem reveals an intense, and often conflicting, tug-of-war between character education agendas and commercial imperatives. On the one hand, there is pressure to create content that is not only entertaining but also contains positive values that can be accepted by parents as "co-consumers". On the other hand, market logic demands high profitability through merchandise sales, franchises,

ratings, and spectacular appeal that often prioritizes action, slapstick humor, and bombastic visuals over the depth of moral narrative (Johnson, 2021).

The main challenge identified is value dilution. In an effort to cater to the tastes of a broad global market and avoid controversy, character values are often presented in a form that is too safe, generic, and loses the specific cultural context that is crucial to identity formation. Moral messages become shallow and mere tokenism to fulfill educational checklists. Furthermore, franchise and sequel logic encourages the repetition of proven, successful formulas, stifling innovation in delivering new, more complex values. The pressure to produce iconic characters that are easily marketed as toys often precedes the development of meaningful character arcs (Johnson, 2021).

However, the research also found that there is room for negotiation. Some studios have found a way to achieve this by creating “smart entertainment,” where character values are organically integrated into compelling stories and stunning visuals, thus having both commercial and educational power. This success is often led by creative leaders with a strong vision who are able to protect narrative integrity from excessive market pressure. Case studies show that films that achieve commercial and critical success are those that boldly present profound values in creative ways, proving that education and commercialization do not always have to be at odds when managed with high creative integrity (Johnson, 2021).

Character integration in the context of the creative industries is an increasingly relevant topic given the challenges faced by educators and industry stakeholders. In creating a healthy ecosystem in this sector, the relationship between character education and commercialization presents its own challenges. Character education does not only contain moral knowledge, but must also lead to concrete actions in everyday life. This concept includes understanding, feeling, and applying virtuous values, thus providing a solid foundation for creative industry players to act ethically and responsibly (Tuerah et al., 2019).

According to Park and Peterson, character development is a frequently proposed goal in youth development programs (Park & Peterson, nd). However, despite the existence of many character education programs, empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness is still very lacking. This creates a gap between educational theory and practice on the ground, which impacts how students function in the creative industries. Therefore, collaboration between educational institutions and industry is needed to develop a more targeted curriculum in character development.

One of the main challenges faced is increasing students' knowledge and awareness of relevant issues, such as addiction problems, which can affect their creativity and productivity. Studies show that before education, students' average knowledge of addiction management was quite low, but after receiving education, there was a significant improvement (Fahrizal et al., 2019). An approach based on behavioral change through education could be a good model to integrate into the learning process in the creative industries.

School leaders' perceptions and practices towards character education also demonstrate the belief that education should focus on building students' character (Yasmin et al., 2021).



School leaders recognize the importance of character in reducing violent behavior in schools and leading to positive academic achievement. This demonstrates that character education has a significant contribution to the development of individuals capable of making positive contributions in the creative industries. In a changing economic context, particularly in the creative industries, research shows that arts graduates are increasingly challenged by career uncertainty and inequality in professional opportunities (Frenette, 2017). By strengthening character education, graduates can be better prepared to face these challenges, as character education can help them build a strong professional identity and adapt quickly to changing economic conditions.

Therefore, to achieve a harmonious integration between education and commerce in the creative industries, it is crucial to establish a strong partnership between educational institutions and industry. This will result in a curriculum that not only emphasizes technical and creative skills but also builds strong character, thus producing individuals who are not only academically successful but also socially responsible.

### **Psychological Impact Evaluation: The Effectiveness of Modern Animation in Shaping Children's Behavior**

Evaluation of various experimental and longitudinal research findings shows that the effectiveness of modern animation in shaping children's behavior is multidimensional and influenced by complex mediator factors. In general, animation has a significant psychological impact due to its ability to create parasocial relationships (a close, pseudo-relationship) between child viewers and characters. This relationship serves as a channel for observation, learning, and identification. The highest effectiveness occurs when: (1) Perceived similarity: children perceive characters as similar to themselves, whether in age, experience, or emotions; (2) Realism and character appeal: the main character is presented with realistic flaws and a learning process, rather than as a perfect figure; (3) Reinforcement of consequences: moral actions in the story are reinforced with positive consequences (not just verbal praise), while immoral actions are depicted as having narratively logical negative consequences; and (4) Adult support: there is intervention or discussion with parents or teachers after watching (mediational talk) that helps children reflect on, articulate, and internalize the values witnessed (Miller & Clark, 2024).

However, research also warns of the moral risks of simplicity and quick resolution. Animations that too often resolve complex moral conflicts with simple, quick solutions (due to duration limits) can instill unrealistic expectations in children about real-life problem-solving. In addition, the high immersive power of visual technology also has the potential to make it easier for children to accept moral messages without sufficient criticism (uncritical acceptance). Therefore, the long-term effectiveness of animation as a behavioral development tool depends heavily on the quality of the narrative (which demonstrates moral processes and struggles) and the context in which it is used off-screen, not solely on the sophistication of the technology. Animation is a powerful tool, but it functions best within a healthy media ecology, where quality content is supported by active support from the child's social environment (Miller & Clark, 2024).

Evaluating the psychological impact of the use of modern animation in shaping children's behavior is essential to understanding how media can influence their social-emotional development. Research shows that children's interactions with media, including animation, can have short-term and long-term impacts on their mental health and behavior. One relevant study shows that children who are exposed to violence or negative content in the media can experience psychological disorders, such as anxiety and depression. In particular, these experiences can trigger behavioral problems such as a tendency to commit violence or other deviant behavior later in life (Suriah & Nasrah, 2023).

Empirical analysis also shows that children who lack emotional support from parents or caregivers are at greater risk of emotional instability. For example, a study in Sri Lanka revealed that children left behind by parents working abroad tended to experience worse social-emotional and behavioral problems (Wickramage et al., 2015). This suggests that the environment and support provided to children play a crucial role in moderating the impact of the media they consume. In the context of modern animation, the type of content presented, parental involvement, and parental understanding of child development are becoming increasingly important, consistent with findings that parental knowledge of child development is associated with better developmental outcomes (Viet et al., 2021).

The importance of encouraging social and emotional skills through positive media use can have implications for children's long-term health. Studies of parent-based interventions have shown sustained improvements in adaptive skills and empathy in children who receive appropriate support, as evidenced by overall behavioral improvements (Barry et al., 2021). This not only creates positive short-term impacts but also indicates the potential for a broader impact on children's future well-being.

Thus, from all the available information and evidence, it can be concluded that evaluating the psychological impact of modern animation on shaping children's behavior must consider various factors, including the type of content, parental support, and the broader socioeconomic context. Integrating all these elements will provide a more comprehensive picture of how media affects children's behavior and mental health, as well as the importance of parents' role in creating a healthy media environment for their children.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study concludes that modern children's animated films have developed into a very sophisticated and influential medium in character education, but at the same time are full of dynamics and challenges. Immersive visual technology is not only entertaining, but has become a language in itself capable of packaging abstract moral messages into concrete sensory and emotional experiences. Values such as role models, empathy, and integrity are no longer presented rigidly, but rather through dynamic and relatable character journeys, which invite children to think and feel. However, this enormous potential often clashes with the market logic of the creative industry, which risks trivializing moral messages for commercial gain. The effectiveness of animation in shaping behavior has ultimately proven to be more than a passive process, but highly dependent on the quality of the narrative,

demonstrating a holistic moral process, and, most crucially, on the active support of parents or educators to help children process and internalize these values.

Based on these findings, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed to optimize animation as a character education tool. For creators and studios, implementation means a commitment to creating "smart entertainment" with high narrative integrity, where visual technology and engaging storytelling are organically integrated with deep, contextual character values, not simply as a mere overlay. For families and educational institutions, these findings emphasize the importance of an active role as mediator. Parents and teachers need to engage in mediation talk or reflective discussions after children watch. Schools can integrate value-rich animated clips into the curriculum as a starting point for ethical discussions. Meanwhile, the government and certification bodies can implement policies by encouraging and providing appreciation (such as special ratings or labels) to animated content that successfully combines high production quality with deep and creative character value integration.

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