

Construction of Moral Messages in One Piece Animation on Netflix Streaming Television Media (A Case Study of Students at SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung)

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the construction of moral messages in the Netflix adaptation of the One Piece animation and how these messages are received and interpreted by students at SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung, like perspectives on life, friendship, justice, and courage. In the Netflix version, there is a possibility of meaning shifts in the moral messages due to cultural adaptation, global marketing strategies, and narrative interests of the production. This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving selected student informants. Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Keywords

One Piece, Moral Message Construction, Netflix, Popular Culture, High School Students

Introduction

The development of communication technology and digital media has significantly changed how people, especially teenagers, consume information and entertainment. One of the most popular forms of entertainment among young audiences is anime. Originating from Japan, anime has become a global cultural product. With the emergence of streaming platforms such as Netflix, anime has become increasingly accessible to audiences worldwide, including in Indonesia. *One*

Piece is one of the most well-known anime titles, maintaining its popularity across generations.

Anime has emerged as one of the most prominent forms of Japanese pop culture globally, especially among teenagers. With the increasing availability of anime through streaming platforms like Netflix, series such as *One Piece* have become very popular (Zhang 2022). *One Piece* offers more than just entertainment through action and adventure; it is also rich in moral values such as loyalty, courage, justice, and resistance against oppression. The Wano Country arc particularly highlights these values prominently. For teenagers, these values can influence their social perspectives and attitudes, especially since they are at a crucial stage in identity formation and moral development.

Media is not merely a transmitter of information but also acts as a builder of social reality. (Berger and Luckmann 2016) explain that social reality is constructed through ongoing interaction and communication. Mass media, including anime, plays an essential role in this process by delivering symbolic representations that shape how audiences think and act. In this sense, anime functions as a medium for delivering moral messages that are often subtly embedded in its narratives and character portrayals.

According to the encoding-decoding model proposed by (Hall et al. 1972), messages produced by the media are not always received as intended because the decoding process is influenced by the individual's cultural and social background. Therefore, how adolescents interpret moral messages in anime depends on their personal experiences and the values they hold.

Based on this background, the present study aims to analyze how moral messages in the *One Piece* anime—specifically in the Wano Kuni arc streamed via Netflix—are constructed and interpreted by students of SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann's theory of social construction and Hall's encoding-decoding model, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how media content shapes adolescents' moral perceptions through popular entertainment.

Literature Review

1. The Social Construction of Reality

According to (Berger and Luckmann 2016), social reality is constructed through social interaction, not an objective truth. The construction process consists of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In media contexts, moral values in anime—such as those found in *One Piece*—are formed symbolically and then internalized by audiences as legitimate norms. These values, including bravery and solidarity, become part of adolescents' moral frameworks through continuous media exposure (Zhang 2022).

2. Encoding-Decoding Model

(Hall et al. 1972) argues that communication through media is not a one-way process. Producers encode messages using narrative and visual signs, but audiences decode or reinterpret them based on their own cultural and social context. Viewers may adopt a dominant, negotiated, or oppositional reading. In anime, students as active viewers may interpret the same moral message in *One Piece* differently depending on their personal experiences and worldview (Cornford 2022; Santos and Satler n.d.).

3. Anime as a Moral Medium

As highlighted by (InfoBlitz 2024), *One Piece* is not just an adventure story, but a cultural text that embeds moral messages related to justice, humanity, and anti-oppression. The Wano Kuni arc in particular is recognized for its deep portrayal of political tyranny and rebellion,

making it a rich object for examining how youth interpret moral values conveyed through anime.

Methods

Type and Approach of Research

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach, focusing on understanding how moral messages are constructed in the anime *One Piece* as streamed on Netflix and how students interpret those messages within their social and digital environments.

Research Location and Time

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung between February and March 2023. The school was chosen due to students' active engagement with anime, especially *One Piece* via Netflix. Data collection—through observation, interviews, and documentation—was conducted ethically and with institutional permission.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews explored how students interpret moral messages in *One Piece*. Observation focused on their anime-related behavior. Documentation supported the findings, including anime scenes and school-related documents.

Data Validity

To ensure data credibility, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing data from students, teachers, and documents. Method triangulation combined interviews, observation, and documentation. A member check was also conducted by asking participants to verify the researcher's interpretations.

Data Analysis Techniques

This study applied Miles and Huberman's data analysis model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved filtering essential information from interviews and observations. The data were then presented thematically in a structured narrative. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting consistent meaning patterns aligned with the research objectives.

Results and Discussion

This study reveals that the Netflix version of *One Piece*, specifically in the Wano Kuni arc, contains strong moral messages that are actively constructed and interpreted by students at SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung. Core moral values such as loyalty, courage, justice, perseverance, and social solidarity emerge consistently through the depiction of key characters such as Monkey D. Luffy, Roronoa Zoro, Kozuki Oden, and Yamato. These characters are not perceived merely as fictional figures, but as symbolic representations of values and moral identity models for adolescents.

Observations and interviews indicate that students were not passive viewers. Instead, they engaged emotionally and reflectively with the narrative. For instance, the character Oden is interpreted as a symbol of leadership and sacrifice, while Yamato is seen as a representation of the

courage to resist injustice—even within the family. Many students stated that they learned the meaning of loyalty from Zoro and the meaning of struggle from Luffy, especially during the tense confrontation with Kaido.

These findings are consistent with Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, which explains that moral reality in media is built through three stages: externalization (the encoding of values in narrative), objectivation (representation through characters and conflict), and internalization (audiences accepting and integrating the values as part of their social reality). The values conveyed are not simply understood as story elements, but are integrated into students' personal worldviews and behaviors.

Furthermore, according to Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory, most students interpret the content in a dominant-hegemonic position, accepting the moral values as intended by the content creators. However, a portion of the students reflect a negotiated position, accepting some values while adjusting others based on their personal background and cultural context. For example, some admired Yamato's bravery, but did not fully agree with her rebellion against her father, seeing it as culturally complex.

The streaming platform itself, Netflix, plays a crucial role in this process. It allows for flexible access, repeat viewing, and personal, ad-free engagement. This flexibility enhances the reflective process and supports deeper individual interpretation of moral messages. Some students reported engaging in discussions outside the classroom, creating social media content such as episode reviews, fan art, and educational memes. These social activities help extend the moral impact of the content and reinforce value internalization through peer interaction.

The study also notes the influence of adolescent psychological development in shaping students' interpretations. Adolescence is a critical phase in identity formation, and teenagers seek role models, inspirational stories, and value-based narratives. Characters such as Luffy, Yamato, and Oden are seen as relatable because they demonstrate that being morally good is not without suffering, but rather the ability to stay strong despite adversity.

Thus, the Wano Kuni arc in One Piece is not merely a fictional adventure but functions as a powerful moral medium. Its messages contribute to shaping students' ways of thinking, value identities, and social attitudes in facing real-life challenges. This study strengthens the view that digital entertainment media can function as a non-formal educational tool with significant impact on the moral development of adolescents.

Discussion

The discussion of this study shows that the Netflix adaptation of One Piece, particularly the Wano Kuni arc, serves not only as entertainment but as a medium for delivering moral values that are socially constructed and reinterpreted by students at SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung. Values such as loyalty, courage, justice, solidarity, and perseverance are present in multiple narrative layers—textually, visually, and symbolically. The meaning-making process is not one-directional but an active interaction between the media text and adolescent viewers who are in the process of moral identity formation.

According to Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, moral messages are shaped through externalization (by content creators), objectivation (into narrative structures and characters like Luffy, Oden, and Yamato), and internalization (as students reflect and incorporate these values into their daily lives). Students admire characters not just for their strength, but for the values they embody—Oden's sacrifice, Yamato's defiance of injustice, and Luffy's unwavering

commitment to justice. These moral insights are internalized and influence how students think, act, and perceive social realities.

From the lens of Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory, viewers interpret media content based on their context. Most students adopt a dominant-hegemonic reading, accepting the moral lessons as encoded by the creators. Some display negotiated readings, agreeing with core values but modifying their interpretation—for instance, admiring Yamato's bravery while questioning her rebellion against her father. A few demonstrate oppositional readings, rejecting certain portrayals, such as violence, which they perceive as conflicting with their moral beliefs. This illustrates that media interpretation is subjective and shaped by each viewer's background and personal values.

The streaming platform also plays a crucial role. Netflix offers freedom of access, ad-free continuity, and the ability to rewatch specific episodes. These features facilitate deeper emotional and cognitive engagement. Students are not merely viewers; they participate in social media discussions, create content like fan art and reviews, and extend moral reflection into digital communities. Thus, the moral construction process continues beyond the screen and into peer interaction and identity formation.

Moreover, the psychological development of adolescents must be considered. In this critical phase of identity exploration, teenagers need relatable role models and narratives that reflect the moral complexities of real life. Characters in *One Piece* are not flawless heroes—they are vulnerable, wounded, and resistant to injustice. This humanized portrayal makes them more relatable and inspirational than conventional moral instruction.

In conclusion, *One Piece* functions not only as a global pop culture product but also as a discursive space that empowers youth to engage in moral construction actively and reflectively. These findings support the integration of media literacy and value-based education using popular content, guiding students not only to understand media messages but to critically deconstruct and relate them to their social experiences.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of research conducted on students at SMA Negeri 9 Bandar Lampung, it can be concluded that the Netflix version of *One Piece*, particularly in the Wano Kuni arc, plays an active role in conveying and shaping moral messages that are received and interpreted by adolescent audiences. Through the depiction of characters such as Roronoa Zoro, who symbolizes loyalty and integrity, and Monkey D. Luffy, who represents courage and justice, moral values like solidarity, perseverance, commitment to ideals, and advocacy for the weak are delivered as part of a narrative that is actively consumed and reflected upon by students. The show serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium of moral reflection that supports social and character development during adolescence.

Using Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, the study confirms that media participates in shaping social reality through ongoing internalization of messages. Students do not merely watch content—they internalize and assign meaning to the values presented, forming their understanding of social life. Furthermore, according to Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory, students are not passive recipients; while many adopt a dominant-hegemonic reading, others engage in negotiated readings, adapting the messages to their personal experiences and cultural contexts. This supports the idea that media is a discursive space, where messages are open to diverse and contextual interpretations.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. First, for educational institutions, particularly teachers and schools, it is encouraged to utilize popular media such as Japanese animation as a supporting tool in value-based and character education. Leveraging student interest in media can make learning more relatable and engaging. Second, for parents, it is essential to guide children in accessing digital content—not merely to restrict—but to foster discussion about the moral messages within. Third, policy makers and curriculum developers should consider integrating media content as supplementary references for affective learning that supports students' moral and social development. Lastly, for future researchers, this study suggests expanding the topic to different types of media or using quantitative methods to obtain broader insights into how media influences adolescents' moral value construction.

In conclusion, shows like *One Piece* should not only be examined as products of popular culture but also as relevant non-formal learning tools in the digital era. When accessed wisely and accompanied by sufficient media literacy, such content can function as a reflective medium for instilling essential values and contributing to the personal and moral development of Indonesian youth.

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