

## **THE PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN *THE PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER* MOVIE SCRIPT**

Luh Putu Niken Pradnyandari<sup>1</sup>, Galuh Febri Putra<sup>2</sup>, Ni Ketut Widhiarcani Matradewi<sup>3</sup>

Universitas Udayana<sup>1,2,3</sup>

[nikenpradnyandari15@gmail.com](mailto:nikenpradnyandari15@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [galuhfebriputra199002102023211023@unud.ac.id](mailto:galuhfebriputra199002102023211023@unud.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,  
[ketut.widhiarcani@unud.ac.id](mailto:ketut.widhiarcani@unud.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini berjudul Perkembangan Psikososial Tokoh Utama dalam Naskah Film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Pembahasan akan disusun berdasarkan dua pertanyaan penelitian utama: pertama, bagaimana perkembangan psikososial yang dialami tokoh utama? Kedua, aspek apa saja yang memengaruhi tokoh utama dalam naskah film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan psikososial tokoh utama yang dialami dalam naskah film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* dan mengidentifikasi aspek tokoh utama dalam naskah film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Metode dokumentasi digunakan untuk memperoleh data penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan dengan cara membaca naskah dan mencatat atau menyorot pernyataan mana yang dianggap sebagai data perkembangan psikososial berdasarkan teori Erik Erikson. Untuk menganalisis data, penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan teknik deskriptif. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar data sesuai dengan perkembangan psikososial Erikson yang berada pada tahap keenam, yaitu keintiman versus isolasi. Hubungannya dengan tokoh lain memegang peranan penting dalam perkembangannya, memberikan dukungan dan membantunya melewati tahap-tahap tersebut. Lebih jauh, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi bahwa aspek dominan yang memengaruhi perkembangan Charlie adalah hubungan-hubungannya, khususnya interaksi dengan anggota keluarga, teman, dan koneksi pribadi, yang memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk perkembangan psikososialnya dan respons terhadap konflik yang dijelaskan oleh teori Erikson.

**Kata Kunci:** Perkembangan Psikososial, Karakter Utama, Naskah Film.

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study entitled The Psychosocial Development of the Main Character in The Perks of Being a Wallflower Movie Script. The discussion will be structured around two primary research questions: first, how the psychosocial development does the main character experience? Second, what aspects influence the main character in The Perks of Being a Wallflower movie script. This research aims to analyze the psychosocial development of the main character experienced in The Perks of Being a Wallflower movie script and identify the aspect of the main character in The Perks of Being a Wallflower movie script. The*

---

*documentation method is used to obtain the data for this study. The data is collected by reading the script along with taking notes or highlighting which statement is considered as data of psychosocial development based on Erik Erikson's theory. To analyze the data, this research applies the qualitative method and descriptive technique. The findings of this study indicate that the majority of the data correspond to Erikson's psychosocial development is the sixth stage, intimacy versus isolation. His relationships with other characters play a crucial role in his development, providing support and helping him navigate these stages. Furthermore, the research identifies that the dominant aspect influencing Charlie's development is his relationships-specifically, his interactions with family members, friends, and personal connections., which play a significant role in shaping his psychosocial development and responses to the conflicts described by Erikson's theory.*

**Keywords:** *Psychosocial Development, Main Character, Movie Script.*

---

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

Literature refers to written works that express ideas, emotions, stories through language. Literature serves as a powerful medium for exploring the complexities of human experience, often reflecting the emotional and psychological landscapes of its characters (Putri & Komala, 2025). Through storytelling, literature provides insights into the struggles individuals face as they navigate various stages of life, particularly during adolescence—a critical period marked by significant changes in identity and self-perception.

Adolescence is a critical period of development characterized by significant emotional, psychological, and social changes. During this time, individuals grapple with the task of forming their identities while navigating the complexities of relationships, societal expectations, and personal values. Literature often delves into the inner lives of characters, providing insights into their thoughts, feelings, and motivations. This exploration aligns closely with psychological theories that seek to understand human behavior. Many films draw inspiration from literary works, using rich storytelling techniques to transform written narratives into compelling visual experiences. A film's narrative would be incomplete without richly developed characters, where psychology plays a pivotal role.

*The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is a coming-of-age story that shows Charlie's emotional, physical, and sexual maturation throughout the year, this journey can illustrate the challenges and transformations individuals face as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. The film effectively portrays how these feelings of alienation can impact a young person's mental health, leading to anxiety and depression and shows how relationships with

friends and family influence a teenager's personal development and mental health. Analyzing Charlie's interactions can highlight the importance of social support in overcoming mental health challenges and developing a healthy sense of self.

The research employed psychosocial development by Erikson as the grand theory, focusing on the eight stages of development that individuals typically navigate throughout their lives. Specifically, this study examines how Charlie, the main character in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* experiences the critical stages of adolescence.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

Based on Creswell (2018:40), research methods are essentially the strategies or techniques for conducting research which cover everything from broad assumptions to detailed methods for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. The data source was selected from the American coming-of-age romantic drama film produced by Summit Entertainment, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* written and directed by Stephen Chbosky which was released in the United States 2012. The documentation method is used to obtain the data for this study. The data is collected by reading the script along with taking notes or highlighting which statement is considered as data of psychosocial development based on Erikson (1998) theory. The data that had been obtained were analyzed by using a qualitative-descriptive approach based on Erikson (1998) theory regarding the stages of psychosocial development. To present the analysis findings, the informal method and descriptive technique will be used.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, the results for both research questions —examining the psychosocial development of the main character and identifying the aspects influencing this development— will be presented in a combined manner rather than in separate sections. This approach is chosen to highlight the close relationship between the character's internal growth and the external and internal aspects that shape it.

### **Psychosocial Development and the Influencing Aspects**

Erikson (1998) proposed eight crises that extend from birth through old age. Each crisis consists of a dilemma or choice that carries both advantages and risks. As cited by Erikson (1998), psychosocial development divided into eight stages: Trust versus mistrust, autonomy



developing trust **"And Charlie smiles, happy to just be home."** Charlie's smile and contentment at being home reflect a sense of safety and belonging. This moment signifies that, despite any underlying tensions, he feels secure in his family environment.

In the scene above, the aspect influencing Charlie is the family dynamic, which fosters a sense of belonging and comfort. Charlie's lighthearted question about the Penguins serves as a lighthearted conversation to break this silence, using humor as a way to reconnect with his father and ease the mood. These small casual conversations provide Charlie with a sense of belonging and stability, allowing him to feel more secure in his home environment. As they begin to eat and engage in casual conversation, Charlie's smile reflects his relief and joy at being home, signifying that he feels safe and accepted within this familial environment.

### **Autonomy versus shame and doubt**

According to (McLeod, 2014), during the second stage of psychosocial development, autonomy versus shame and doubt, infants begin to assert their independence by exploring their environment and making choices; when caregivers support these efforts, children develop confidence and a sense of autonomy, but if caregivers are overly critical or controlling, children may internalize shame and doubt about their abilities.

### **[3-4] Charlie's Perspective**

***Charlie watches his sister, slow dancing with Derek. As happy as she looks, Charlie still isn't sure if he did the right thing by keeping quiet. The song ends to applause.***

*After a beat, Charlie turns away. That's when he sees Sam and Patrick at the punch bowl. We hear the first notes of "Come On, Eileen" by Dexy's Midnight Runners.*

—————Movie script page 19

The scene above shows Charlie watching his sister dancing happily with Derek introduces a layer of complexity to Charlie's internal conflict. Although he desires to support her happiness, he is plagued by doubt about whether he made the right choice by remaining silent about certain issues. This reflects Erik Erikson's stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt, where children begin to assert their independence and make choices that shape their identities.

In this scene, the aspect influencing Charlie is the family dynamic, As Charlie observes his sister dancing with Derek, he feels a mix of happiness for her and uncertainty about his

choice to remain silent on certain issues that may affect her. Charlie's desire to support his sister's joy is overshadowed by his doubts about whether he did the right thing by not speaking up. This illustrates the tension between wanting to assert his own opinions and fearing the potential shame or repercussions that could arise from voicing them.

### **Initiative versus guilt**

According to (Cherry, 2024) during this stage children begin to assert power and control over their environment through directing play and social interactions; successful navigation of this stage leads to a sense of purpose, while failure results in feelings of guilt and self-doubt.

#### **[3-3] Charlie's breakdown**

*We see Candace hanging out with her girlfriends at a friend's backyard pool. Her FRIEND (18, pretty) holds the cordless.*

CANDACE'S FRIEND

Candace... your brother's on the phone.

*Candace casually picks up the phone.*

CANDACE

Hello.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Hey, Candace.

CANDACE

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Sam and Patrick left, and um, I just can't stop thinking something.

CANDACE

What?

**CHARLIE**

**Candace, I killed Aunt Helen, didn't I? She died getting my birthday present, so I guess I killed her, right? I've tried to stop thinking that, but I can't. She keeps driving away and dying over and over.**

*Candace looks like she got hit with ice water. She knows her brother. She knows this voice.*

*Candace covers the phone.*

CANDACE

Call the police and send them to my house.

CHARLIE

And I can't stop her. I'm crazy again.

CANDACE

No, Charlie, listen to me. Mom and dad are going to be home with Chris any second.

CHARLIE I was just thinking... what if I wanted her to die,  
Candace?

CANDACE What? Charlie... Charlie!

*Dial tone.*

—————Movie script page 86-87

The scene above reflects a psychosocial development particularly the third stage initiative versus guilt. **"I killed Aunt Helen, didn't I?"** This statement reflects Charlie's intense feelings of guilt and responsibility. In the "Initiative vs. Guilt" stage, children begin to assert themselves and take initiative in their actions. However, when they perceive that their actions have negative consequences, they may experience guilt. Charlie's belief that he is responsible for Aunt Helen's death indicates that he is struggling with the moral implications of his thoughts and actions.

In this scene, the aspect influencing Charlie is the family aspect, particularly his relationship with his sister, Candace. As Charlie grapples with intense feelings of guilt and responsibility regarding Aunt Helen's death, he reaches out to Candace for support. His statement, "I killed Aunt Helen, didn't I?" reveals the depth of his emotional turmoil and the burden of guilt he feels, which is compounded by the trauma of losing someone he loved.

### **Industry versus inferiority**

The fourth stage of Erikson's developmental theory is the stage of industry versus inferiority, which occurs during adolescence. According to (Baylor University, 2022) during this stage, adolescents learn to develop their own skills and to contribute to their community.

### **[3-4] Lighthearted Moment**

SAM How do you feel, Charlie?

CHARLIE I just really want a milkshake.

*The entire room explodes with laughter. Charlie loves that people find him so funny.*

—————Movie script page 23-24

The dialogue between Sam and Charlie above shows Erik Erikson's stage of industry versus inferiority. In the dialogue Sam asks Charlie, **how do you feel, Charlie?** Charlie respond **I just really want a milkshake.** This simple and honest response is met with laughter from the

entire room, indicating that Charlie's attempt at humor has been well received by his peers. By making others laugh, it is demonstrated that Charlie's efforts to engage socially have been successful, and a sense of accomplishment is likely to be experienced by him. Positive reinforcement, such as laughter and appreciation from peers, helps them develop a sense of competence and confidence (industry).

In this scene, the aspect influencing Charlie is his social environment, particularly the dynamics of friendship and acceptance among his peers. The laughter serves as positive reinforcement, validating Charlie's efforts to connect with others and making him feel appreciated within this social environment. This moment aligns with Erik Erikson's stage of industry versus inferiority, where individuals seek to develop a sense of competence and gain recognition for their contributions. For Charlie, successfully making others laugh boosts his confidence and reinforces his belief that he can positively impact his social environment.

### **Identity versus role confusion**

As they transition from childhood to adulthood, teens may begin to feel confused or insecure about themselves and how they fit into society (Cherry, 2023). During this stage, adolescents develop formal operational thinking, which enhances their self-awareness and ability to reflect on their traits and behaviors.

### **[3-5] Lonely Message**

**CLOSE UP TYPING:**

**"Dear friend, I have not seen my friends for 2 weeks now. I am starting to get bad again."**

—————Movie script page 64

The phrase **"I have not seen my friends for 2 weeks now"** indicates a period of social isolation. During adolescence and early adulthood, social connections are vital for identity formation. The statement **"I am starting to get bad again"** suggests that the individual is experiencing a decline in mental health, which can be linked to feelings of isolation and disconnection from peers.

In this scene, Charlie is influenced by his social isolation, which significantly impacts his mental health and sense of identity. The phrase **"I have not seen my friends for 2 weeks now"** highlights a critical period of disconnection from his social circle, emphasizing how vital friendships are during adolescence for identity formation and emotional support. The statement



**"I am starting to get bad again"** indicates a decline in his mental health, suggesting that this lack of social interaction exacerbates his emotional struggles and contributes to feelings of despair. Erikson emphasized that successful navigation of the identity versus role confusion stage requires strong social bonds that foster exploration and self-discovery. Charlie's absence from these connections not only hinders his ability to understand himself but also amplifies his feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

### **Intimacy versus isolation**

Developing a sense of identity is an ongoing process, but once people feel confident in who they are, they often focus on creating intimate relationships. On the other hand, if someone struggles to form these connections, they may feel lonely or isolated.

### **[3-6] Moment of Belonging**

*Charlie watches Sam and Patrick run to the center of the floor and show this stiff crowd what dancing is. It starts slow. "So over it" hand moves. A little shoulder. And then, the best of swing. 30 seconds of genius.*

*Charlie takes a breath. **Then, he tries desperately not to look like he's dancing toward them as he dances toward them. He bobs his head like a dork. And once he gets close, Patrick and Sam turn and find him.***

SAM & PATRICK

Hey!

***Without a pause, they grab his hands, and move together in a circle. Their own island. After a moment, Sam moves around Charlie like a maypole as the whole gym explodes into dance.***

—————Movie script page 19

The scene above, when Charlie's tries to dance toward them while not appearing too eager reflects his internal struggle with feelings of isolation. Despite his desire to join in the fun, he is aware of how he might be perceived by others, which can inhibit his ability to connect fully. This self-doubt is common during the intimacy versus isolation stage, where individuals often grapple with their self-image and how it affects their relationships. When Sam and Patrick notice Charlie and invite him into their circle, it marks a pivotal moment for him. Their warm welcome transforms the atmosphere from one of isolation to one of inclusion. As they grab his hands and move together in a circle, Charlie experiences a sense of belonging that is vital for developing intimacy.

The aspect influencing Charlie here is social relationships, particularly his interactions with peers. Charlie's desire to join Sam and Patrick while trying not to appear overly eager reflects his internal struggle with feelings of isolation. When Sam and Patrick notice Charlie and invite him into their circle, it marks a turning point for him. Their warm welcome transforms the atmosphere from one of isolation to one of belonging. As they grab his hands and move together in a circle, Charlie experiences a sense of belonging that is vital for developing intimacy.

### **Generativity versus stagnation**

In this stage, Erik Erikson (1998) identified the primary challenge as generativity, which involves making meaningful contributions to society and supporting the next generation. Conversely, stagnation arises when individuals feel unproductive or disconnected from purposeful activities.

### **[3-7] Social belonging**

<b>CHARLIE</b>	<b>Maybe I could join the cast as an alternate or something?</b>
MARY ELIZABETH	We're filled up now, but they'll need people after we leave for college. I could put in a good word for you.
CHARLIE	That'd be great. Thanks.

—————Movie script page 53

The data provided can be analyzed through the lens of Erik Erikson's seventh stage of psychosocial development, Generativity vs. Stagnation. **"Maybe I could join the cast as an alternate or something?"** Charlie's suggestion to join the cast indicates a desire to be involved and contribute to a group or community. This desire to participate in activities that foster creativity and collaboration reflects the essence of generativity, where individuals seek to make a positive impact and leave a mark on their environment.

The aspect influencing Charlie here is the desire for participation and contribution. In this scene, Charlie expresses a desire to join the cast, indicating a budding interest in participating in creative endeavors and contributing to a group. When Charlie says, **"Maybe I could join the cast as an alternate or something?"** it signifies his eagerness to engage with others and contribute creatively. By wanting to be part of the cast, Charlie demonstrates a shift

from passivity to active involvement in his life—a crucial step in developing a generative mindset. Charlie's willingness to seek involvement in the cast indicates that he is beginning to think about his future and how he can contribute positively to his community.

### **Integrity versus despair**

There are two possible outcomes for this stage: integrity, which means feeling satisfied and accepting of one's life and impending death, or despair, which involves feeling unfulfilled and struggling to come to terms with life and aging.

### **[3-36] Haunted Memories**

#### ***INT. CHARLIE'S BEDROOM - DAY (PRESENT)***

***BACK TO PRESENT. Charlie holds his head. Trying to stuff the pictures back in his brain. But he can't. They keep coming and coming, faster and faster. Sam's hand, Little Charlie on top of the stairs, the police telling him Aunt Helen is dead.***

—————Movie script page 86

In this scene, Charlie is experiencing a profound emotional struggle that can be analyzed through the lens of Erik Erikson's eighth stage of psychosocial development, "Integrity vs. Despair." ***"But he can't. They keep coming and coming, faster and faster."*** The inability to control these memories can lead to feelings of despair, as Charlie may feel overwhelmed by the weight of his past. This experience can be likened to a life review, where unresolved issues and regrets come to the forefront, making it difficult for him to find peace or acceptance.

The aspect influencing Charlie here is the struggle with unresolved grief and trauma. Charlie's inability to control these memories, as expressed in ***"But he can't. They keep coming and coming, faster and faster,"*** illustrates the weight of unresolved issues from his past. For Charlie, the memories flooding his mind represent unresolved grief related to Aunt Helen's death and the emotional turmoil that has accompanied it. This reflection on loss and trauma can lead to despair if he feels that he has not adequately processed these experiences or found meaning in them.

### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the above analysis, several conclusions can be drawn. This study has explored the psychosocial development of Charlie in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, recognizing the significance of understanding adolescent experiences. Charlie's character presented a unique

opportunity to explore the psychological challenges and developmental stages that individuals navigate during their formative years. The movie script of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* was chosen because of its focus on mental health, emotional intelligence, and the impact of social relationships.

This study identified the critical psychosocial stages that Charlie experiences, particularly identity versus role confusion and intimacy versus isolation. His relationships with other characters play a crucial role in his development, providing support and helping him navigate these stages. Furthermore, external factors such as family dynamics and societal expectations significantly influence his emotional well-being.

The analysis demonstrates how Charlie's development tracks with Erikson's framework because each successfully resolved psychosocial crisis builds personality traits including trust, self-understanding, and loyalty to self. The study contributes to a broader understanding of adolescent development by emphasizing significant aspects that influence psychosocial elements in overcoming life's obstacles.

## REFERENCES

- Astuti, T. M. (2024). Erikson's Fourth Stage of Development: A Deep Dive into Harry Potter's Character Progression. 4(3), 486–500.
- Baylor University. (2025). Erik Erikson. [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.studocu.com/en-us/document/baylor-university/theories-of-family-development/erik-erikson/43206026> [accessed April 27, 2025].
- Creswell, J.W., 2013. Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. SAGE.
- Cherry, K. (2023). Identity vs. Role Confusion. [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.verywellmind.com/identity-versus-confusion-2795735> [Accessed 16 April 2025].
- Cherry, K. (2024). Erikson's stages of development [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.verywellmind.com/erik-eriksons-stages-of-psychosocial-development-2795740> (accessed April 16, 2025).
- Emir, B. C. (2016). Literature and Psychology in the Context of the Interaction of Social Sciences.
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

- Erikson, E. H. (1998). Erik H. Erikson. November.
- Fahiratunnisa. (2023). The Impact of Gender Stereotypes on the Main Character's Psychological Development in the Disney Movie *Mulan*. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(1), 1–14.
- Immazuddin, F. (2021). Psychosocial Development of Melody's and Iris's in Jacqueline Woodson's *Red at The Bone*. 6.
- Kenney, W. (1966). How To Anaylze Fiction. <http://www.archive.org/details/howtoanalyzefictOOkenn>
- Komala, I. and Putri, N. Q. H., 2025. Poetry, Prose, Drama: Various Expressions in Literature. *Advances In Social Humanities Research*, 3(2), pp.146-155.
- Leo. (2025). Industry vs. inferiority. [WWW Document] Psychogily. URL <https://psychogily.com/industry-vs-inferiority/> [accessed April 27, 2025].
- Myers, D. G. (2010). *Social psychology* (10th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- McLeod, S. H. (2014). The development of self-identity in early childhood: Erikson's theory revisited. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 55(3), 234–245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12103>
- Medical Studies and Health Journal (SEHAT), 1(1), 2024. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62207/w9p9wn90>
- Natasya, A. T. (2023). Analysis of Psychosocial Through the Social Injustice in Unfortunate Events Film (2004). *LITERA KULTURA : Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 10(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.26740/lk.v10i2.48433>
- Putri & Komala. (2025, February). POETRY, PROSE, DRAMA: VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS IN LITERATURE. *Advances in Social Humanities Research*, 2(2), 146-155.
- Rini, Y. D. S. (2022). Psychosocial Development of The Main Character in Charles Dicken's *David Copperfield*. 6.