

THE PORTRAYAL OF JAKE SULLY'S PERSONALITY TRAITS AND HIS SOCIAL INTERACTION IN THE AVATAR MOVIE

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ABSTRACT

Every person is created with a unique character that distinguishes one from another in terms of personality traits that defines the way he interacts with the society. Jake Sully, as the main character in the Avatar movie, portrays this relationship between personality traits and social interactions. This research used the Avatar (2009) movie by James Cameron as the object of the research and applied the personality traits theory from Costa and McCrae and the social interaction theory from Tischler. The research methodology used was descriptive qualitative. Two types of data were primary and secondary data. Primary data were taken from the movie Avatar. Meanwhile, secondary data were taken from e-books, e-journals, and articles about personality traits and social interaction. Watching the movie, reading the movies script, identifying data, classifying data, and reducing data were done in collecting the data. The result finds that the personality traits in Jake Sully are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. Moreover, the social interactions experienced by Jake Sully are non-verbal behavioral, exchange, cooperation, and conflict. Finally, it can be concluded that personality traits influences the social interaction of a person.

Keywords: Personality Traits, Social Interaction, Avatar (2009)

INTRODUCTION

According to Back (2021), personality is a person's tendency to act or experience things in a particular way that differs from others. Individual differences can be explained by personality traits (Wayment & Taylor in Rentzsch, 2023). Costa and McCrae's five-factor theory is one of many theories that analyze human behavior and utilizes the basic principles of trait theory to characterize individuals according to consistent patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior. Briefly, this theory provides five dimensions of personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Ramadhani et al, 2023).

Asendorpf and Wilpers (2020) emphasized that personality traits effect the quality of the social networks. Their research demonstrated the critical role that personality plays in determining how people connect with one another. For example, extroverts will find it easier to interact with others because they tend to be proactive. On the other hand, introverts tend to be shy, passive, and even avoid social stimuli. Thus, personality differences show up during social interactions. Social interactions, such as meetings, cooperation, gatherings, or short conversations, can be considered as the building blocks that structure our social life (Back, 2021). This research will use Tischler's theory. Based on this theory, social interaction can be divided into some types namely non-verbal behavior, exchange, cooperation, conflict, and competition. Social interaction may sound like a simple topic because almost everyone does it. However, the process is quite complex. If it does not do well, the individual's life will face problems in a society.

Discussing people's personality traits and social interactions is not only found in real life but is also displayed in various literary media, such as novels, poems, dramas, and movies. In literary works, —literature always depicts the social and cultural events that occur in society (Sabudu, 2020). Korte and Zipp (2020) examined how literature can raise awareness of social issues. By providing some literary works, literature can motivate readers to engage in social change. One of the literary works in the form of a movie that provides a social issue is *Avatar* by James Cameron.

Released in 2009, this movie contains issues that are still relevant today, especially about social interaction. It shows that understanding individual differences in terms of the personality in social interaction processes is key to understanding the nature of some of the most popular personality traits (e.g., extraversion, dominance, shyness, agreeableness, narcissism), as well as the key to survive and build a good social life.

Several previous studies have discussed the *Avatar* movie, one of them was Ridwan Dhiyaurrahman in 2022 with his research on "Analysis of Social Criticism In *Avatar* Movie". A study also discussed the same topic as this research in the journal *A Sociological Analysis of Social Interaction as Portrayed by Dido of Belle Film* written by Tutik Agustina et al in 2022. This study focused on finding the type of social interaction experienced by Dido and her personality traits. The results of this study showed that Dido experienced four types of social interaction, such as nonverbal behavioral interaction, exchange interaction, cooperative interaction, and conflict interaction. Meanwhile, Dido's personality traits are extraversion, openness to experiences, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Dido's character participates in achieving the goal and obtaining the best form of interaction. From the results of some previous studies, understanding how someone's personality traits defines the way he interacts with others is necessary in a social life, therefore this research tries to uncover the kinds of personality traits portayed in Jake Sully in *Avatar* movie that defines the kinds of social interaction he has to interact with others. The results of this study can also be used as a reference for other researchers who want to analyze more on the kinds of personality traits and the relation to social interaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used descriptive qualitative research. Qualitative research emphasizes an in-depth understanding of the research question through an approach oriented towards humanism or idealism. It was used to understand individuals' behavior, attitudes, interactions, beliefs, and experiences. This approach could provide new perspectives in research that could not be obtained simply by measuring numerical variables and data (Gerring, 2017). Qualitative research emphasizes the importance of qualitative research in understanding the social and cultural contexts of literature (Dawson & Mortimer, 2020). Thus, descriptive qualitative research was used in this study because it is appropriate to analyze the relationship between personality traits and social interaction using the movie script of *Avatar* (2009) as the object of the study.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research discusses about Jake's personality traits and the types of social interactions carried out by Jake based on his personality. The results are presented in the form of dialogues, monologues, and narration from the *Avatar* movie.

A. Personality traits experienced by Jake Sully in *Avatar* movie (2009)

Openness to experience

McCrae and Sutin (2021) explained that openness to experience refers to actively seeking and appreciating experiences for themselves. They like to discover something new and unusual. Open individual exhibit curiosity, creativity, inventiveness, and unconventionality. This personality traits of openness to experience is portrayed by Jake Sully in the quote below :

Later, Neytiri leads Jake up the spiral to the second level. **He now wears only a ratty loincloth.**

Jake munches on a white shrimp-like thing.

JAKE : “These rock. What are they?”

NEYTIRI : “Teylu. You call beetle larvae.” (53:08 – 54:52)

The quote above tells about Neytiri who takes Jake to learn how the Na'vi lived after being authorized by Tsaahik and the chief. Then starts with changing his clothes into a ratty loincloth like other Na'vi and trying new foods like Teylu. Humans on Earth are not used to eating insect larvae, which would have been difficult for Jake to adjust to if he wasn't broad-minded. Adjusting to the environment eventually becomes easier because Jake is open to new, even unusual, experiences and ideas. This allows Jake to learn how the Na'vi lives more quickly.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness encompasses self-discipline, organization productivity, ambition, and persistence in achieving goals. Conscientious individuals prefer structured and predictable social environments, which can lead to more stable and reliable social relationships (Roberts and Lejuez, 2022). The quote below clearly describes this conscientiousness in Jake Sully :

Tracking with Jake's feet as he runs over rocks, leaping onto a thick root, running on across the rough bark.

JAKE (V.O.): “My feet are getting tougher. I can run farther every day.”

Neytiri leads him along a massive root, and soon, they are running 30 meters above the ground. (1:09:09 - 1:09:46)

Self-discipline is characterized by Jake diligently studying the Na'vi way of life, getting to know the forest and how to walk, and being disciplined in following Neytiri's training every day. Jake is very hardworking and tenacious in training his body so that he could adjust to the Na'vi way of life. He also improved his understanding of Pandora's forests and environment. His self-discipline is a proof of Jake Sully's personality traits of conscientiousness.

Extraversion

Extraversion is characterized by a desire for social engagement and vigorous activities. People with high scores might have more friends because they are sociable, excitable, talkative, dominant, and have positive energy. Otherwise, people with low scores prefer to be alone, quiet, rigid, tedious, and submissive. They tend to avoid social assemblies or crowded places (McCrae and Costa in Ramadhani, 2023). The example of this kind of personality can be seen when Jake remains cheerful and gets along well with others. Jake likes to have fun and drink in bars full of people. Jake can put himself out there and doesn't shy away from crowds. Enjoying the company of others is an extroverted trait that suits this scene :

We find Jake near the pool table, **BALANCING** his chair, front wheels off the ground while holding a tequila shot on his forehead. **Onlookers, including some other disabled vets, clap and whoop. Jake grabs the glass, slams down the**

shot as they cheer. (01:52 – 02:01)

Agreeableness

An article written by Graziano and Habashi (2021) stated that the personality trait of agreeableness influences the social interaction styles. It argued that individuals high in agreeableness are commonly sympathetic, soft-hearted, helpful, forgiving, and tolerant, leading to more harmonious and cooperative social interactions. The dialogue below describes the personality traits of agreeableness in Jake Sully :

NEYTIRI: "I See you."

JAKE: "(a hoarse whisper) I See you."

Neytiri's eyes brim with tears.

NEYTIRI: "I was afraid Jake -- for my people. I'm not anymore." (2:11:13 – 2:11:36)

The quote above explains that Jake has personality of agreeableness because he is a soft hearted person and tolerates Neytiri's, who was previously filled with fear, anger, and distrust. Jake understood things to be difficult for her and was willing to bear them together. What he does that refers to the agreeableness of being forgiving. Jake does not give up, and he strives to gain the trust of Neytiri and the entire Omaticaya clan.

B. The relation between the kinds of personality traits and the types of social interaction performed by Jake Sully in Avatar movie (2009)

Non-verbal behavior

Extraverts might act in more expressive ways, which creates impressions of being seen as more interesting, which makes others accept them more often as friends (Back, 2021). This can be seen through non-behavioral interactions. The expression of information, feelings, and intentions without using spoken language is referred to as non-verbal behavior. It includes a broad spectrum of actions including posture, tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body language. Since nonverbal cues are more effective than words at expressing meaning and emotion, nonverbal behavior is important in social interactions (McNeill, 2021). Jake is a person with an extravert personality trait. People with this type will more easily make friends with people because they have a more expressive way of getting along. It is proven in the quote below :

NORM: "Hey, you're Jake, right? Tom's brother? You look just like him. (off Jake's wary look) Sorry, I'm Norm Spellman, I went through avatar training with him."

Norm offers his hand, and Jake shakes it. (11:50-12:02)

From the quotes taken from the movie above, it can be said that there is a nonverbal behavior interaction because of the handshake between Jake and Norm. In this context, a handshake is a form of two people greeting each other and starting an introduction. Jake welcomed Norm's introduction by accepting his handshake.

Moreover, not only extravert but agreeableness also takes part in this kind of social interaction. The example can be seen below :

QUARITCH: “On paper. You walk like one of her science pukers, you quack like one, but you report to me. Can you do that for me?”

Jake nods. (26:34 - 27:00)

In the quote above, the agreeable characteristic is the tendency to cooperate and view someone positively. From the quote, Jake agrees to Quaritch’s request that he responds by giving a sign in the form of a head nod. Due to his position as captain and militer background, Jake thinks Quaritch has no bad intention, so he agrees to that.

Exchange

When people are in a position to do something for each other in order to receive a return, benefit, or reward, then they are engaged in an exchange interaction. Openness to experience refers to actively seeking and appreciating experiences for themselves. They like to discover something new and unusual. Open individual exhibits curiosity (McCrae and Sutin, 2021). The quote below proves the exchange interaction :

JAKE: “I came to learn.”

...

EYTUKAN: “(subtitled) No! This is the first warrior we have seen. We need to learn more about him.” (51:49 – 52:43)

The quote shows that Jake's openness personality also plays an important role in his decision-making. It is, perfectly understandable that Jake wants to come there to learn about their culture. This is initially opposed because Jake is an outsider, but due to his status as a warrior of the sky people, Eytukan makes other considerations. Eytukan finally allowed Jake to come and learn their culture, and then they from the Clan would also learn from Jake. This is a form of exchange interaction because both have a desired benefit.

Agreeableness is defined in terms of not finding fault with others, being helpful and unselfish, being kind and considerate, and so forth (Nezlek et al. 2021). Jake, who wants to come back and be accepted by the Clan, then searches for the opportunity to become Toruk Makto. Afterward, he goes to the Clan and asks Tsu'tey for permission to return and stand with them. In response, Tsu'tey agreed, so Jake thanks to him in return. The reward in exchange interaction, does not always have to be material it can also be based on emotions instead such as gratitude. The kind of social interaction of agreeableness is found in the quote below:

JAKE (subtitled): “Tsu'tey of the Rongloa, son of Ateyo. I stand before you, ready to serve the People. (then just for Tsu'tey) You are Olo'eyctan, and you are the best warrior. I can't do this without you.”

Tsu'tey struggles with his emotions. Finally –

TSU'TEY: “I will fly with you.”

JAKE: “Ireiyo.” (2:11:47 - 2:12:35)

Cooperation

This kind of social interaction is called cooperative interaction, which occurs when people act together to achieve shared goals or promote common interests (Tischler, 2010). More extroverted people had more interactions and spent more time with others than less extroverted people (Nezlek et al., 2021).

Jake, Neytiri, and other flying hunters swoop low above a herd of sturmbeest -- a rapids of thundering muscle. Jake rolls in like a fighter jet, his banshee screaming. He draws and fires his bow. The arrow strikes true in the plexus between the armored shoulders, and -- the beast crashes to the ground. (1:26:12 - 1:27:40)

Jake, Neytiri, and other hunters collectively cooperate in hunting with the same goal of obtaining prey to fulfill food needs. This can happen because good communication and relationships have been established. Teamwork will work with everyone's joint efforts. Of course, this is also possible because Jake can blend in and adjust quickly so that they can cooperate during the hunt.

In addition, cooperation also influenced by agreeable personality within the quote below:

JAKE: "Hang on, they're gonna fix you up."

...

NEYTIRI and the other acolytes dance hypnotically. All the Omaticaya sway and chant to the rhythm of the drums. (2:12:30-2:13:50)

Agreeableness might be characterized by a stronger reactivity with positive affect in response to helping behavior and a higher discomfort in response to meta-perceived suffering (Back, 2021). Jake cannot be able to see Grace to lose her life. Then, to save Grace's life after being shot, Jake asked Eywa for help. With a single goal, everyone cooperates performing the ritual at the Mother Tree, Grace finally escapes the critical condition although still unconscious due to being too weak.

Conflict

People in conflict interaction struggle with one another for some commonly prized object or values. Conflict arises when the number of available resources is limited, or people have incompatible values (Tischler, 2010). Conscientiousness encompasses self-discipline, organizational productivity, ambition, and persistence in achieving goals (McCrae and Costa in Ramadhani, 2023). The example of this type social interaction is shown on the dialogue below :

TSU'TEY: "You mated with this woman?!"

...

TSU'TEY: "I challenge you."

GRACE: "Jake, don't --"

JAKE: "I accept." (1:41:53-1:42:45)

After getting to know Jake better, Neytiri falls in love with Jake and gets married in front of Eywa. Therefore, conflict breaks out when Tsu'tey challenges Jake, who he thinks has snatched Neytiri. Jake then accepts it because he wants to fight for and defend Neytiri. Jake, who have conscientiousness personality, tends to do his best in whatever he pursues including in fighting for the people he loves.

Another example of conflict also can be found within this quote:

QUARITCH: "How does it feel to betray your own race?"

...

JAKE reaches around the suit, grabs Quaritch's shoulder, and, yanks him forward HARD, SMASHING his face into the edge of the cockpit but -- Quaritch flings him off with a sweep of his arm, and Jake slams to the ground. (2:42:53 - 2:44:27)

Quaritch and Jake have different ideas and got into harsh fight. Jake cannot stay still when the Pandora's environment being destroyed and cause many casualties. He wants to protect everything worth to live, like the animal, sacred trees and the people. Moreover, Neytiri, a person he loves in danger too. But Quaritch just thought Jake betrayed his people from Earth by fight with them and forgot his duty to collect the mineral. Therefore, conflict is inevitable.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion above, it can be concluded that the five dimensions of personality traits are found in Jake character. These personality traits can be seen through Jake's social interactions, such as non-verbal behavior, cooperation, exchange, and conflict. Moreover, the finding and discussion also proves that personality traits play a significant role in determining what kind of social interactions a person will engage in. By recognizing different personality traits will help someone in adapting his communication styles. By understanding someone's personality traits also influences the social interactions that can lead to the improvement of the communication skills. On a broader scale, understanding the relation between personality traits and social interactions can help in fostering social cohesion reduce prejudice.

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