

# **The Effect of Permissive parenting Style on the Main Character's Emotion and Behavior Reflected in Greta Gerwig's Lady Bird (2017)**

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## **Abstract**

*The aims of this research are to analyze and find the effect of permissive parenting style on the main character's emotion and behavior reflected in Greta Gerwig's Lady Bird (2017). In this research, researcher analyzes the psychological condition of the main character. Then the researcher explains the effect of permissive parenting style on the main character reflected in Greta Gerwig's Lady Bird (2017). The object and primary data of this thesis is the movie entitled Lady Bird (2017). The researcher uses Parenting Style by Diana Baumrind and Psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud as the grounded theory. This research is descriptive qualitative research. As the result, the researcher found that the effect of permissive parenting style on the main character is lack self-discipline, unable to control emotion, hard to change bad habit, being impulsive, and the vulnerable to delinquency, substance and alcohol abuse. By that finding, it is proven that the effect of permissive parenting style can affect the emotions and behavior of the main character in this film.*

**Keywords:** *Psychological Condition, Permissive Parenting Style, Psychoanalysis*

## **Introduction**

Movies are part of everyday life and the industry is growing tremendously every single day. It is one of the products from today's culture that has an impact on modern society. In many ways, the movies also inspired people around the world, for example through romantic movies, additionally; it is a reminder why love is worth fighting for and why it is important. They can affect cry and laughter at the same time. Usually, the stories are based on true reality so the movie reflects on human life. Not only representing entertainment, but also movie represents the social condition, human nature, and imaginary life. Family is the first social group

where children show behavior and express their thoughts, desires or emotions in a social interaction. Therefore, the children's interaction in the family will determine the pattern of children's behavior in relation to other people. In this case, there are two possibilities that will be shown by adolescents related to their emotion maturity, namely a teenager who can control their emotions well and a teenager who is unable to control their emotions which will hinder their social relationships with other people (Hurlock, 1980).

Talking about the family's effect on emotion and behavior of adolescence, researcher chose Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird* (2017) as the object of analysis. *Lady Bird* was coming of age movie. Not only telling about a personal growth but also the movie is about the relationship between child and her parents, it is a simple story that talks about the coming of age. In the film, *Lady Bird* has a negative emotion that causes her behavior tends to be unkind. This is shown by her attitude that always follows to her own will. She feels that her decision and actions are always right. She lacks on responsibility so that she often goes against the rules set by her mother. Her emotions are unstable and she always argues with her mother even about trivial matters. From this problem, the researcher will discuss about how the effect of parenting style on children's emotional and behavior as reflected in *Lady Bird* (2017).

## **Literary Review**

### **Psychology of Literature**

Psychology deals with human behavior and mental processes while literature deals with depict human behavior through fiction. So, the correlation between psychology and literature is a literary work. According to Jung (1990:217) psychology inquiries into human process, it also leads to literature.

According to Papalia (1985:4) psychology and literature cannot stand apart, they have a correlation each other because psychology can be applied to analyze in the literary work. Both psychology and literature deal with human beings and their desires, fears, conflicts, and perceptions of the world. The author of literary works gives the example of life through the words which are influenced by

perceptions, values, ideologies, and so on. While literature influenced a human life as the result of the literary devotee's effect in reading or watching a literary works. As stated by Wellek and Warren (1963:81) By 'psychology of literature', we may mean the psychological study of the writer, as type and as individual, or the study of the creative process, or the study of the psychological types and laws present within works of literature, or, finally, the effects of literature upon its readers (audience psychology)".

### **Psychoanalysis**

Psychoanalysis is a study about personality and human nature. According to Freud (Calvin 1954) human have three mental system that are id (pleasure), ego (act, behavior) and super-ego (moral, ethical, values, parental). It can be assumed that the nature and behavior of people is carried out on the basis of motives without being aware or on the basis of thoughts, feelings, tend to do without conscious and partly being conscious.

#### **a. Id**

The id is the main component of human nature that has existed since humans were born. In addition, the id is defined as the operation of the subconscious. The id acts when someone does something impulsively. The id can't think, he only fantasizes or acts (Engler, 1997:34). According to Kirszner and Mandell (2010) the id impulses derived from the genetic background and concerned with the preservation and propagation's life. It operates unconsciously and it contains is pure of instinct, need and desire. The purpose of the id is just satisfying the desire (Feist, 2009:28).

#### **b. Ego**

The ego is also called the reality principle which tries to satisfy the id's desires in a realistic way. The ego ensures that the impulses of the id can be expressed in a way which is acceptable in reality. The establishment of the reality principle does not mean that the pleasure principle is abandoned. Fun is only blocked for a while for the sake of reality (Hock, 1998:27).

According to Freud (Feist, 2009:29) ego as the top area of personality is in charge to control the demand from id while considering the moral value from superego. Ego is decision maker of all things because ego is able to work in conscious, unconscious, even not conscious.

### c. **Superego**

The superego also provides guidelines for making judgments about what is right or wrong, appropriate or not so that someone can do something according to the morals found in society. Freud (Calvin, 1954:81) stated that the desire for approval and the fear of punishment lead the child to define himself by old moral advice. From there, the identification of parents leads to the formation of the superego.

There are two components of superego, first is conscience and the second is idea self. Conscience means punishing the ego if give an improper demands or it is about teaching the things not to do while idea self has the meaning like ideal personality. It means a thing which directs about what to the best things to do.

From the explanation above, especially in a very general way, the id may be thought of as the biological component of personality, the ego as the psychological component, and the superego as the social component.

### **Parenting Style**

In the permissive parenting style, parents tend to follow all the wishes of the child or in other terms, pamper the child. It is like Arnett (2007:643) said about the type of permissive parenting style, that “*permissive parents demonstrate a great deal of warmth and acceptance toward children but low levels of parent-child involvement and discipline*” Arnett (2007:643).

While in the book, *Social and Emotional Development in Infancy and Early Childhood Education* (2009:283) stated that the characteristics of permissive parenting include:

1. Let the children act freely and choose activities that they like.
2. Rarely demands children to do housework.

3. Rarely manage children's schedules and give the freedom to decide for themselves when to sleep, eat and spend time watching television.
4. Accept and support all behavior and attitudes of children.
5. Parents believe that limiting children is a violation of the child's autonomy.
6. Not treating children with rules in behavior.
7. Parents act as a resource when children need it.
8. Parents tend to be friends of children.
9. Freeing children to express positive and negative feelings also behavior.
10. Usually passive in discipline.
11. Rarely enforce any kind of punishment.

### **The Effect of Permissive Parenting Style**

The effect of the permissive parenting style is the children develop a feeling that parents are more concerned with other aspects of life than them. Therefore, many children lack self-control and cannot cope with independence well. They have low self-esteem, are immature, and may be isolated from their families. When they are teenagers they show mischief. Children rarely learn to respect others and have difficulty controlling their behavior. They can be aggressive, and domineering. The effect of permissive parenting is that it has an influence on the characteristics of children, such as lack self-discipline, unable to control emotion, hard to change bad habit, being impulsive, and the vulnerable to delinquency, substance and alcohol abuse (Dalimonte-Merckling & Williams, 2016).

### **Children's Emotional Development**

Emotions are closely related to humans because they have existed, every human being must have them. The environment in which adolescents are located, namely the family, school, and community environment plays an important role in shaping adolescent emotions, for that the positive conditions from the environment are needed and the examples from parents also other adults, so that adolescents get the moral and social values that is needed in their emotional development.

Adolescents who have good emotional development, obviously has a good emotional intelligence too. Emotional intelligence includes understanding and

expressing the feeling, controlling anger, empathy, has interpersonal problem solving skills, independence, adaptive, and has solidarity and many others (Shapiro, 1998:5). Emotional intelligence is basically influenced by environmental factors. It mean that every people who is able to adapt well with others, they must have good ability of emotional intelligence. Also, if every people who is not able to adapt well others, obviously the ability of emotional intelligence must be low. This is because the ability is not permanent and always changes. As a Goleman (1997) stated that emotional intelligence refers to the ability of recognizing the own feelings and others, the ability of motivating oneself and themselves, and the ability of managing emotions with both in self and in the relationship with others.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is kind of descriptive qualitative research. In this research, researcher will conduct the process of analysis and the final result by applying a theory of psychoanalysis which represents the study of literature. The researcher does the psychoanalysis and analyzes the effect of parenting style reflected in *Lady Bird* (2017) by describing them with the grounded theory as reviewed in the literary review. The objects of the research is in the form of words, phrases, clause, narration, picture or sentence relevant to answer the research question taken from the subtitle of the movie entitled *Lady Bird* (2017). The film is in the form of original DVD. It is directed by Greta Gerwig and released in 2017 in United States by Scott Rudin Production. The duration of the film is 94 minutes. The data of this research is divided into two sources. The primary data is from words, phrases, clause, narration, or sentences in the movie and the English subtitle of *Lady Bird* (2017) that the researcher is collected. The screenplay is written by Greta Gerwig. In collecting data, the researcher sis step such as watching the movie, identifying and classifying the data, and selecting the classified data. While in produce of analysis, the researcher did exposing, explaining, analyzing, and interpreting the selected data.

## Discussion and Findings

In this section, the researcher is going to discuss the result of the study to answer the problems. It is going to discuss psychological condition of the main character and the effect of permissive parenting style reflected in Greta Gerwig's *Lady Bird* (2017).

### The Main Character's Personality

This research discusses about the psychological condition of the main character in *Lady Bird* movie. Before that, the researcher analyzed the main character's personality. *Lady Bird* as the main character is clearly described as stubborn teenager. From her appearance, Christine with her colorful hair, already represents teenagers who like to rebel and live freely, different from others. Despite of that, she is always looking for cases by questioning the policies and rules set in the family, so that she often hurts the feelings of her parents, especially her mother.

*Lady Bird* : *I don't even want to go to school in the state anyway.  
I hate California. I want to go to the East Coast.*

*Marion* : *Your dad and I will barely be able to afford in state tuition.*

*Lady bird* : *There are loans, scholarship.*

*Marion* : *Your very smart brother, he even can't even find a job.*

*Lady Bird* : *He and Shelly work. They have jobs.*

*Marion* : *They bag at the grocery store. That is not a career.  
And they went to Berkeley.*

*Your father's company is laying off people right and left.*

*Did you even know that?*

*No, of course you don't.*

*Because you don't think about anybody but yourself.*

*And Immaculate Heart is already a luxury.*

*(Lady Bird, 00:02:35)*

*Lady bird* : *I want to go where the culture is, like New York, or at least Connecticut  
or New Hampshire where writers live in the woods.*

*Marion* : *You couldn't get into school, anyway.*

*(Lady Bird, 00:02:55)*

As mentioned in a piece of conversation above Christine has anxiety and wants to be freedom. She is bored with her life in Sacramento and wants to move to a more cultured city, like New York. *Lady Bird* still insists on continuing her studies in New York, even though her mother has told her that New York is quite a dangerous place, and coupled with her family's unstable economic situation. But she insists in her wish and reasoned that she could seek a scholarship.

### **Psychological Condition of the Main Character**

Lady Bird has many reasons to get what she wants, so that she was looking for a way to not spend a lot of money on school by looking for scholarships, loans or others. She ignored what her mother said because she has a big desire and goal that must be reached. All of the efforts that she did are her ego. The ego plays an important role in her id.

The way of Lady Bird conveys her will, Marion as a mother didn't allow it. She felt worry about her daughter's safety and tuition. Marion tends to think realistic that the condition of finance was not enough to fulfill Lady Bird's needs for studying abroad. As stated on the dialogue above "... *Your father's company is laying off people right and left. Did you even know that? No, of course you don't. Because you don't think about anybody but yourself.*" All those behaviors are totally by the superego of Marion. Here, the superego didn't come from internal factor but it come from external factor that is her mother. The superego of Lady Bird here is inferior to her id and ego. Therefore the superego comes from the other side.

As the researcher has emphasized in whole of the discussion which is based on Freud theory, an act is not only influenced by the id, but it is the combined influenced from the external factors such as super ego and ego as the decision maker.

### **The Effect of Permissive Parenting Style on Children's Emotion and Behavior**

The family, especially a mother has a significant role in developing children's personality. The parenting style applied by parents strongly influences children's behavior. Each parenting style has a different affect likewise, the effect of parenting style on the main character Christine as Lady Bird. From there, the researcher found that the permissive parenting style is applied by the mother in her parenting style.

According to Diana Baumrind (1967), parenting is about parental control. It means how parents control, guide, and accompany their children to carry out their developmental tasks towards the maturation process.



However, when parents give too much freedom and there is no control and attention from them, it will trigger aggressive behavior in children. Parents who always dominate can also make children unable to develop the desired creativity. This, will be aimed at the end where the children will perform aggressive behavior outside the family environment.

It is just as her mother Lady Bird had done. She treats her children, especially Lady Bird, by giving them a lot of freedom and lack of control.

*Marion : How is it going?*

*Okay.*

*Lady Bird : Mom, we ...*

*We cannot really talk right now.*

*Marion : Well, happy Thanksgiving.*

*We missed you, Lady Bird.*

*(Lady Bird, 00:31:01- 00:31:11)*

This scene happens when Lady Bird and her friends are going to watching a band in other place. There, Lady Bird and her friends enjoyed the event by having fun until they lost track of time. Due to being too busy and enjoying the event, Lady Bird came home late at night. By arriving at home, Lady Bird did not immediately go to her parents, especially her mother, to apologize for coming late of went home, but what she did was have a small party, enjoying with her friends in her house, precisely in the kitchen. Because of Lady Bird and her friend were so happy they didn't realize what they were doing was the same as disturbing their parents at home. As a result of her behavior like that, her mother woke up from her sleep. Looking for this incident, Marion did not scold or give advice to her children, but she only asked how they were after attending the event. There, Lady Bird behaved rudely with her mother by cutting her off on her. From there, it is clear that Lady Bird saw it herself while her mother did not care about what her child was doing. The meaning of not caring here is giving a freedom to their children without giving the limitations that should be done by Lady Bird.

From there, it can be conclude that permissive parenting makes children not learn about the rules, even from their immediate environment such as family. As a result, they are not accustomed to knowing responsibility and discipline. The children raised by permissive parents tend to lack self-discipline, unable to control

emotion, low achievements, hard to change bad habit, being impulsive, and the vulnerable to delinquency, substance and alcohol abuse.

### **Lack of Discipline**

One of the scenes in this movie describes how difficult it is for Lady Bird to be managed by her mother.

*Marion : You can't leave your room like this.*

*Lady Bird : I didn't*

*Marion : None of these things were put away right*

*They aren't nice.*

*Christine.*

*Now.*

*Lady Bird : I put my clothes away.*

*My Name is Lady Bird.*

*Marion : Don't lie to me.*

*This uniform...*

*This is gonna look like trash on Monday.*

*This isn't right. We can't treat our clothes like this.*

*I don't know what your wealthy friends do...*

*Lady Bird : Why do you care what I do to my clothes?*

*(Lady Bird, 00:21:08- 00:21:22)*

*Lady Bird : Didn't you ever go to sleep without putting*

*all your clothes away perfectly?*

*Like even once?*

*And don't you wish your mom hadn't gotten angry?*

*Marion : My mother was an abusive alcoholic.*

*(Lady Bird, 00:21:59 -00:22:10)*

Lady Bird had just returned from an event that is held at her school, where she came home so late. She forgot about the untidy her bedroom. From there, Lady Bird become indifferent and irresponsible for what was the condition of her bedroom there. She didn't care about the things that made her room a mess. Yet, when her mother reprimanded her, Lady Bird bravely refuted and distorted her mother's words where she said that "*can you not to talk like that*", it means that before the mother saw the situation she tended to ignore but why this time she cared about the condition of her room. From there it is clear that the lack of firmness in the rules from the mother gave rise to self-discipline in Lady Bird and it will make Lady Bird cannot control herself, difficult to manage, and unable to take responsibility for behavior that she has done.

## Unable to Control Emotion

The next point of permissive parenting's effect is unable to control emotion. Lady Bird, as the main character is irritable in every way. It can be seen when Lady Bird chooses a dress with her mother which the dress will be worn at thanksgiving. As she told in the dialogue below:

Marion : Are you tired?  
Lady Bird : No.  
Marion : Cause if you're tired, we can sit down.  
Lady Bird : I'm not tired.  
Marion : Oh, okay. I just couldn't tell because you were dragging your feet.  
Well, I just couldn't tell.  
Lady Bird : Why didn't you just say, pick your feet?  
Marion : I didn't know if you were tired.  
Lady Bird : You were being passive-aggressive.  
Marion : No, I wasn't.  
Lady Bird : You are so infuriating.  
Marion : Please stop yelling.  
(Lady Bird, 00:26:06- 00:26:29)

Lady Bird and her mother chose some dress in the Thrift Town. There, her mother allow Lady Bird to choose the dress what she like, also her mother helped Lady bird to choose a good dress to wear at the Thanksgiving. The choosing clothes went smoothly and there was no debate. Until a few minutes later an argument broke out, it was because Marion said to Lady Bird like this *"I just think, it's such a shame that you're spending your last thanksgiving with family you've never met instead of us,"* Marion said that she was regretful if Lady Bird did not celebrate thanksgiving with her own family but with other people that she didn't know. Hearing what her mother said, Lady Bird had a sullen face and bad mood, but the looking for the dress still continued. Since the dress that she was looking for didn't match with Lady Bird's taste, she becoming silent and putting on a gloomy face. Looking at that, the mother asked Lady Bird to have a rest if she was tired and Lady Bird answered by ignorant face. Because of that, her mother say the same thing again, if you are tired, you don't need to force yourself. However, Lady Bird replied with a statement that is filled with anger. Not only angry and annoyed but Lady Bird also shouted at her mother until her mother warns Lady Bird to speak well, not in a high tone.

Lady Bird didn't realize that what she did and said so far is actually hurt the other person's feelings. She who is still a teenager tends to be selfish. All she did is just to get everything what she wants and her plans run well, both in terms of family, friendship, to relationship.

### **Low Achievement**

Another scene shows the effect of permissive parenting style on the main character low achievement. It is illustrated in the dialogue below:

*The Teacher* : All right. So I'm gonna be passing back your graded quizzes. I urge you to find the problems where you went wrong and work them out.  
*Good job, Jules.*  
*I can tell from your work you even understood the ones you missed.*

*Lady Bird* : Suck a dick  
*Julie* : I like Jules  
*Lady Bird* : I just don't get why I'm not good at math.  
*My dad is really good in math.*  
*Even Miguel has a math degree.*

*Julie* : Maybe it's your mom's fault.  
(*Lady Bird*, 00:17:50-00:18:17)

Lady Bird's friend received praise from the teacher because the score was good, while when she distributed the paper from Lady Bird's quiz, the teacher was silent and immediately put it on the table. Looking at the quiz results shared by the teacher, Lady Bird immediately saw the results that she got. Lady Bird was annoyed and cursed herself. She also wondered why she was not good at academics, especially mathematics, even though her father and brother were proficient in it. And spontaneously Julie said "*Maybe it's your mom's fault*", means that Julie blames Lady Bird's mother for not being good at raising Lady Bird so that she is not good at math.

### **Hard to Change Bad Habits**

As a teenager who is looking for her identity, Lady Bird tends to act as she pleases. Starting from bad habits are very difficult to break. It's because she enjoys it. She tried to find something that matched her desires. Lady Bird did all of this because of the upbringing that she received which was caused by a lack of direction and prohibition from her family, especially her mother. It can be seen

that the habits carried out by Lady Bird mostly lead to bad habits such as lying, and cheating.

*Lady Bird* : *Hey I think B.*  
*The Teacher* : *I thought it was more like B-minus, maybe even C-plus territory?*  
*Lady Bird* : *No, because I did really well on the last quiz*  
*The Teacher* : *Oh. I seem to remember you doing only slightly better*  
*Lady Bird* : *That brought my average up to a B*  
*The Teacher* : *Okay. B it is*  
*It's your honor*  
(*Lady Bird*, 00:27:26 – 00:27:44)

Initially, this happened when a math teacher announced to the students that his grade book was missing. From that incident, the math teacher asked the students to tell him the truth about the scores that they had received before. Hearing that, Lady Bird felt happy and already had the intention to lie to her teacher. All students are asked to face the teacher to report the score that has been obtained. Immediately Lady Bird told her teacher that her grade was B. The teacher thought it was a lie and made it up due to Lady Bird's wishes. However, Lady Bird denied her teacher's words. She said that her grade point average was B because, on the last quiz had increased. Hearing what Lady Bird said, the math teacher confirmed that he remembered the score. Lady Bird got was B minus or even C minus, this was because Lady Bird was not proficient in the subject. However, Lady Bird still denied it and strengthens her reason for getting good score. Next, after listening to all the reasons that Lady Bird said, the math teacher said "*Okay. B it is. It's your honor*". It means that the math teacher has given up so that he allows what Lady Bird says, because those who know, whether to be honest or lying only come from self-awareness, not from other people.

### **Being Impulsive**

Lady Bird is one of those teenagers who are impulsive. She is a person who takes an action without thinking. The dialogue below describes how impulsive Lady Bird is.

*Marion* : *You should just go to City College, with your work ethic. City College and then to jail then back to City College. Maybe you'd learn how to pull yourself up*

*and not expect everyone to do everything for you  
(They slow for a stop light and Lady Bird  
dramatically opens the door and rolls out of the car)  
(Lady Bird, 00:03:11- 00:03:20)*

In the car, they listened to the radio which was discussing a book called “The Grapes of Wrath”. With a calm and emotional atmosphere, the trip seemed smooth and relaxed, then a few minutes later Lady Bird provoked a conversation by conveying her desire to continue her education outside the Sacramento. Hearing this, as a mother Marion did not agree for many reasons, one of which was financial problems. There, Marion mentions that it is better for Lady Bird to go to school near Sacramento, hope that Lady Bird can go to school and work. From there, the economic condition can be resolved and helped through Lady Bird. But Lady refused. This is where they are arguing each other. Tired of arguing with her mother, Lady Bird decides to jump from the car where her mother is driving, until breaking her arm.

From this, it is clear that what Lady Bird did was spontaneous without thinking about the consequences of what she had done. She didn’t care about what had happened after that, and the most important thing that she could avoid her mother’s babblings.

### **The Vulnerable To Delinquency, Substance And Alcohol Abuse**

According to a study from Parenting Science, children of permissive parents are more likely to be associated with bad behavior. These include substance abuse, and alcohol-related problems. All of this is because they tend to have poor self-control. Like other teenagers, Lady Bird does a lot of things that are inappropriate for the juvenile delinquents. The dialogue below can answer the statement above:

*Lady Bird : Why does that cigarette look so weird?  
Like, not like a cigarette?  
Shelly : Cause it’s a clove  
Lick your lips. That’s why they’re sweet  
(Lady Bird, 00:31:28-00:31:45)*

It happens at night when Lady Bird with her sister-in-law Shelly on her front porch. There, Lady Bird saw Shelly smoking a cigarette. From there Lady Bird wanted to it. Looking at Lady Bird asking about the cigarette, Shelly casually gave her the cigarette. And what's worse, Shelly teaches Lady Bird how to deal if

a beginner in cigarettes feels the bitter taste. Such actions are the impact of permissive parenting which lacks demands from parents.

## **Conclusion**

According to result of the study, the researcher concludes there are two focuses discussions. First is finding the psychological condition of the main character that represented in *Lady Bird* (2017). Second is finding the effect of permissive parenting style on the main character.

Lady Bird has a personality as stubborn teenager. With a personality like that, the psychological condition is not good. It is known that the id, ego and superego are not balanced; therefore bad qualities arise in her. Based on Sigmund Freud's psychology theory, the id, ego, and super ego, Lady Bird dominates the id. The id is something that is in people born from the birth, and in this film Lady Bird tried to fulfill the id in her way. However, it was undeniable that there were several egos and superegos against her. The way she tried to get her new school in another country was showed that she has strong desire even she had to leave her family and fight with her mother.

The second problem about the effect of permissive parenting style is depicted in five effects. There is lack self-discipline, unable to control emotion, hard to change bad habit, being impulsive, and the vulnerable to delinquency, substance and alcohol abuse. The mother's permissive parenting style and the personality of the main character in this film are closely related to each other. Not only behavior but emotions in the main character also have an inseparable relationship. Lady bird, as the main character in this film, experiences the effects of the parenting style chosen by her mother, namely permissive parenting. This parenting style is known for the absence of strict boundaries and rules for their own children. Therefore, the influence that she receives after applying this parenting pattern is behavior and emotions that tend to be bad and cannot be controlled.

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