

## THE ROLE OF MOTHERS IN GENDER EDUCATION THROUGH THE FILM "EJEN ALI: THE MOVIE"

Aa'ilata Fakhriyyah<sup>1</sup>, Dewi Puspitasari<sup>2</sup>

fakhriyyahaailata@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, dewi.puspitasari@uingusdur.ac.id<sup>2</sup>

\*Correspondence author

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### Abstract

Gender education has become a crucial issue in shaping children's perspectives on gender equality. This article explores the role of mothers in introducing and fostering an understanding of gender education through the film "Ejen Ali: The Movie." The research aims to describe the gender education values depicted by Ali's mother. Utilizing a qualitative research approach with descriptive methods, the analysis reveals that the values presented in the animation are highly relevant to gender education. The film narrates the struggles for gender equality undertaken by Ali's mother, making it a significant tool for teaching children about gender education. In today's context, gender is recognized not as a taboo but as a fundamental right that should be upheld in accordance with natural principles. Consequently, this film serves as an important educational resource for children, providing a foundational understanding of gender equality.

*Keywords:* Gender education, Gender equality, Children's perspectives, Mothers' role, Educational resource

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### Introduction

Gender education is a crucial component in shaping societal attitudes towards equal gender roles between men and women. Research by (Du et al, 2021) highlights the effectiveness of gender education in promoting gender equality by equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to challenge traditional gender stereotypes. This form of education not only occurs within formal educational institutions but also extends into the household environment, where it plays a vital role in nurturing gender awareness from an early age.

In the family setting, mothers are instrumental in gender education, serving as both role models and primary sources of gender values for their children. They contribute significantly to the development of a child's personality and moral values, laying a strong foundation for their growth. (Singh, 2016) emphasizes that mothers, as key educators, are responsible for instilling essential moral and life values, which are crucial for shaping the child's character and sense of self. Thus, gender education is a shared responsibility that spans both educational institutions and family dynamics. On the other hand, there is still a lot of stigma that views a woman or mother as only being good at cooking and taking care

of the house. The role of the mother is made the main figure in the family because she is not only good at taking care of the house, but also at educating her children so that she is called a madrasa or first school for her children. Madrasah is a place where children can study and a place where children can gain self-development. Therefore, the education and progress of a woman is very important in the education and progress of a generation (Syamsiah, 2015). In other words, the role of mothers or parents is an initial seed in the formation of individuals and personality structures that are very beneficial for their children.

Apart from that, gender education also involves the role of fathers in encouraging a balanced view of gender roles in the family. Referring to research by (Levtov et al., 2015) it can be interpreted that a father is important in gender education in how children are disciplined at home and positive involvement in children's physical and mental improvement. Although the role of the mother is often the main focus in gender education, the role of the father should not be ignored. Moreover, many people are of the view that the father figure only earns a living for his family at home, even though a father's lack of attention, both physical and emotional, can have a negative impact on the child's behavior, such as being rude to friends and having difficulty adjusting. Perales & Baxter (2018) stated that the father's involvement in parenting will be beneficial in increasing cognitive achievements in children. Education also plays an important role in understanding and receiving information about nutrition. Therefore, father's and mother's education is equally important in nurturing and affection. Adamsons and Pasley (2016) stated that mother's care influences how involved the father figure is in caring for children.

The mother's role in gender education is not only limited to being physically present, but also creates a deep impression in the form of love and values instilled in children. In life, there needs to be a feeling of love that mothers must give to their children. Rahman (2015) states that the main requirement for the continuity of life and integrity in the family is the need for peace of mind and a sense of love and affection. This nurturing presence and emotional support are fundamental in shaping children's understanding and perceptions of gender roles from an early age.

Gender education is crucial in forming children's character. One effective medium for providing gender education to children is film. Films often reflect social realities and influence society's views on gender issues. Furthermore, films can analyze important elements that can be understood as language in a representational system (Hall, 2013). Through visual storytelling, films can convey complex ideas about gender in a relatable and engaging manner, making them an excellent tool for teaching these concepts to young audiences.

An example of a film that provides gender education values to children is "Ejen Ali: The Movie." In this animated film, the role of the main character Ali's mother is pivotal in imparting gender education to her child. Mrs. Ali, who is intelligent, wears a hijab, and is full of affection, serves as a positive role model for children. She exemplifies the values of solidarity, cooperation, and striving for ideals, demonstrating important roles that transcend traditional gender stereotypes. By portraying such a character, the film offers valuable lessons on gender equality and the importance of diverse role models in children's lives.

## **Review of Literature**

Films and audiovisual media have become significant tools in spreading social messages and community values, particularly in the context of gender education. Mulachela et al. (2019) stated that mass media, especially films, have a substantial emotional influence on audiences and play a crucial role in shaping gender perceptions among children and adolescents. Gender roles in education have garnered public attention recently, with various studies proving that films have the potential to shape children's gender perceptions. When films explore the theme of gender equality, the mother's role is often depicted as an agent who models gender equality and provides a positive example and understanding of gender for children. In this context, mothers play a crucial role in teaching children gender concepts such as courage, independence, self-confidence, and limitless abilities.

Numerous articles discuss the issue of gender education imparted by mothers to their children at an early age. Hizriyani (2018) emphasized that the mother's role extends beyond schools or madrasas, highlighting their influence in building children's emotional intelligence and even their spiritual intelligence. Mothers are integral in fostering children's overall development, creating an environment where emotional and spiritual growth is nurtured alongside conventional education. Their responsibilities include developing children's emotional intelligence, teaching empathy, and fostering a sense of identity and self-worth.

Research by Muyasaroh (2018) further underscores the importance of mothers in instilling multicultural values in children. Acting as primary caregivers and educators, mothers engage in active dialogue with their children, serving as knowledge advisors. These values are not only taught but also demonstrated through role modeling, promoting virtues such as tolerance, justice, mutual help, social cohesion, and brotherhood. By embodying these principles, mothers help children internalize and practice these values, thus playing a vital role in shaping a child's character and understanding of gender equality and social harmony.

Previous research in this area has provided valuable insights into various aspects of gender education. The work of Kholmatova (2022) makes a significant contribution by exploring how motherhood can play an essential role in promoting gender education. Kholmatova suggests that mothers can help their children develop a more egalitarian understanding of gender by actively engaging in conversations about gender roles and demonstrating gender equality through their actions. This approach can prepare children for a more equitable and inclusive future, emphasizing the influential role mothers have in shaping their children's perceptions of gender.

A literature review of studies on this topic reveals common themes regarding the role of mothers in gender education. It is consistently highlighted that mothers are the first educators, or madrasahs, for their children. These studies, including those referenced by Kholmatova, discuss how a mother significantly influences her child's character and personality. Despite the formal education children receive at school, a mother's role remains irreplaceable as she continues to nurture emotional intelligence and instill core values. The mother's influence is crucial in understanding and adopting multicultural values, where she acts as an advisor, advocate for justice, and positive role model within

the family environment.

In addition to these roles, mothers are encouraged to provide their children with opportunities to interact with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. This exposure helps children develop a broader and more inclusive perspective, reinforcing the principles of gender equality and multiculturalism. Films, as suggested by Hall (2013), can also be an effective medium for gender education, offering visual and relatable examples of these values. For instance, "Ejen Ali: The Movie" portrays a mother character who exemplifies intelligence, compassion, and strength, serving as an excellent role model for children. By integrating these diverse influences, mothers can significantly impact their children's understanding of gender and multicultural values, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

## **Methodology**

Gender education is a crucial aspect of developing a more egalitarian understanding of gender roles, with mothers playing a significant role in their children's gender education. As primary caregivers, mothers have a profound influence on their children's development. The Malaysian animated film "Ejen Ali: The Movie," released in 2019, serves as an illustrative example of how media can reflect and shape gender education. The film follows Ali, a 12-year-old boy who becomes a secret agent, and includes several scenes that highlight the role of mothers in imparting gender values. By analyzing these scenes, researchers can gain insights into the ways mothers can foster a more inclusive understanding of gender in their children.

This research employs a qualitative methodology to explore the role of mothers in gender education as depicted in "Ejen Ali: The Movie." Qualitative research, which includes interpretive, constructive, and naturalistic approaches (Trumbull & Watson, 2010), aims to achieve a deep and holistic understanding of phenomena. This method is well-suited to educational, social, and humanities research, using data such as words, images, and videos to explore the subject matter. The descriptive qualitative approach involves describing data to draw comprehensive conclusions (Institute for Study and Student Empowerment IAIN Purwokerto, 2018). By reviewing published studies and connecting their findings to the film, the research examines how the film's portrayal of a mother's role significantly influences children's development and growth. This focus on the mother's role underscores its relevance to gender education, making it a compelling subject for analysis.

## **Result And Discussion**

### **a. Gender Education**

Gender education is a learning process that addresses roles, traits, and behaviors appropriate to gender, aiming to create a more inclusive, fair, and equal society for all genders. It introduces an understanding of how social constructions, culture, and norms influence individual roles, perceptions, and experiences in gender contexts. The film "Ejen Ali" serves as an example of audio-visual media that can effectively promote gender education. The film tells the story of a boy named Ali, who becomes a secret agent at the M.A.T.A (Meta Advance Tactical Agency). Ali's character is depicted as independent,

confident, strong, and dedicated to fighting crime and protecting those he loves. Importantly, Ali's willingness to help others, regardless of gender, highlights essential gender education values.

Ali's character in "Ejen Ali" provides a valuable role model for children, demonstrating that boys can embody qualities of independence, confidence, and strength even in the absence of a loved one, such as a mother. Moreover, Ali's empathy and readiness to assist others of different genders illustrate the importance of compassion and equality. This portrayal aligns with the goals of gender education, emphasizing that positive traits and behaviors transcend gender boundaries. By presenting a character like Ali, "Ejen Ali" contributes to the broader objective of fostering a more equitable and understanding society.

### **b. Gender education values in the cartoon "Ejen Ali: The Movie"**

The values of gender education are central to the discussion of the film "Ejen Ali." These values are primarily conveyed through the character of Aliya, Ali's mother and an agent at the same M.A.T.A. agency. Aliya, who is also the older sister of Ali's uncle Bakar, has cared for Ali since childhood. She exemplifies a strong spirit and unwavering support for her brother and others in pursuing their aspirations. Beyond her duties as a caregiver, Aliya embodies the role of a clever and responsible mother, demonstrating that gender education extends beyond traditional domestic responsibilities. Through her actions and demeanor, Aliya teaches essential gender education values to her children.

Aliya imparts several gender education values indirectly throughout "Ejen Ali." These values include independence, self-confidence, and strength. By embodying these traits, Aliya serves as a role model for both Ali and the audience, illustrating that these qualities are not bound by gender. Her character reinforces the idea that mothers can be powerful agents of gender education, instilling important values in their children through everyday interactions and examples. In doing so, "Ejen Ali" highlights the critical role mothers play in fostering a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender roles.

#### **a) Independence**

"Ejen Ali: The Movie" serves as an excellent example of how films can impart important gender education values to children. Through the character of Aliya, the film emphasizes the significance of mothers in teaching their children essential traits such as independence, self-confidence, and strength.

Aliya teaches Ali to be an independent figure capable of solving his own problems without relying on others. This independence is crucial as it encourages Ali to take risks and take responsibility for his actions if something goes wrong. According to Nuryatmawati and Fauziah (2020), independent children are not afraid to take risks because they have considered the potential outcomes before taking action. Through Aliya's guidance, Ali learns to navigate challenges confidently and responsibly, embodying the values of gender education that his mother instills in him. This portrayal underscores the pivotal role of mothers in shaping their children's understanding of gender roles and fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

#### **b) Be confident**



In addition to teaching independence, Aliya also instills confidence in Ali, making him a self-assured figure. Ali's character demonstrates that confidence involves believing in one's abilities and being unafraid to showcase them. He stands up for the truth even when standing alone, illustrating the importance of personal conviction and courage. Teaching self-confidence helps children trust their own judgment and become less reliant on external validation or assistance.

Crawford (2017) highlights that confident children have better control over their lives, as they are more likely to trust their own decisions and take initiative. Ali's portrayal in "Ejen Ali" exemplifies how confidence enables children to navigate challenges and assert their beliefs effectively. By fostering these traits, Aliya not only equips her son with the skills needed to face various situations but also reinforces the broader goal of gender education: empowering individuals to confidently and responsibly engage with the world around them.

### c) Strength

Aliya taught Ali the importance of strength, both physically and mentally, recognizing that the outside world can be challenging, especially for a 12-year-old boy. She emphasized resilience by encouraging him not to give up easily and to persist in achieving his goals. These lessons are crucial as they help Ali develop into a determined and robust individual.

The gender education values that Aliya instilled in Ali—independence, confidence, and strength—are essential for children to acquire from an early age. By embedding these traits in her son's upbringing, Aliya ensures that he grows into a well-rounded individual capable of navigating life's challenges with self-assurance and perseverance. This foundational education is key to fostering capable and resilient individuals who can thrive in a complex world.

### **c. The relationship between the mother's role in gender education and its influence on Ali**

The relationship between a mother and her child is fundamental to family dynamics and child development. Mothers are often the first and most influential figures in a child's life, shaping their growth and learning. As the initial educators or "madrasahs," mothers significantly impact their children's development by offering love, attention, and support. They serve as role models, providing guidance and encouragement that helps children build confidence and independence.

In the film "Ejen Ali," the importance of a mother's love and attention is clearly illustrated through Ali's early life. Despite receiving abundant care and affection from his mother, Ali faces profound loss when she dies while he is still a child. This loss leaves him feeling sad and bereft of the nurturing he once knew. Nevertheless, the values instilled by his mother—independence and resilience—enable him to continue growing strong and self-reliant, even in the face of adversity. The film poignantly depicts how foundational maternal influence continues to shape Ali's character and ability to cope with life's challenges.

A mother serves as the first and most important role model for her child, acting as their initial "madrasah" or school. It is crucial for mothers to exhibit positive behaviors that children can emulate. In the film "Ejen Ali," this role model effect is vividly illustrated. Ali observes a recording of his mother in action, showcasing her perseverance and calm demeanor in the face of challenging situations. Her unwavering determination and composure become key lessons for Ali, who internalizes these qualities and strives to embody them himself.

Inspired by his mother's example, Ali develops a profound sense of resilience and a strong commitment to doing good. The behaviors and values exemplified by his mother serve as a constant source of motivation for Ali, driving him to persist and maintain a positive outlook even in challenging situations. His aspiration to be a good role model for others reflects the deep impact of his mother's influence, illustrating how the values and behaviors demonstrated by a mother can significantly shape a child's character and future goals.

Providing supports is essential for mothers to help their children navigate the complexities of life. This support can manifest in various forms, including emotional, physical, and financial assistance. In "Ejen Ali," Aliya embodies this supportive role, especially during moments when Ali faces adversaries. Despite her untimely death, Aliya's influence persists through the I.R.I.S. dimensional memory she created. This memory acts as a continuous source of support for Ali, reigniting his strength and resilience whenever he faces difficulties.

Ali's recognition that his mother continues to support him even after her death profoundly affects him. The I.R.I.S. memory symbolizes Aliya's enduring presence and encouragement, reinforcing his ability to confront challenges with renewed determination. This ongoing support, despite her physical absence, underscores the lasting and profound impact a mother's care and guidance can have on a child's development and emotional well-being.

The influence of a mother's teachings extends to broader societal aspects, including gender education. A child who receives gender education from an early age develops a more equitable perspective on gender roles, recognizing that men and women have equal rights and opportunities. Such education fosters independence, confidence, and strength, equipping children to face life's challenges more effectively.

In "Ejen Ali: The Movie," Ali's transformation in attitude, thoughts, and actions after embracing the gender education values taught by his mother illustrates the powerful impact of such education. The film demonstrates how early exposure to gender education can alter children's behavior and perceptions of gender roles in society, highlighting the crucial role of maternal influence in shaping a more inclusive and equitable worldview.



Picture 1

In the film "Ejen Ali: The Movie," a poignant scene features three characters: Ali, Viktor, and Viktor's mother. They are shown enjoying Viktor's favorite biscuits, which his mother made. Viktor's affection for his mother is evident as he shares these treats with Ali,

highlighting their close bond. Watching this scene triggers a wave of sadness for Ali, who reflects on his own loss since his mother, who used to make his favorite biscuits, has passed away. This moment of reflection underscores Ali's longing for the love and nurturing he once received from his mother.

Ali's emotional response reveals feelings of envy and jealousy towards Viktor, who still experiences the affection of his mother. This aligns with Ben Ze'ev's (2022) assertions that envy and jealousy emerge when individuals compare themselves to others and feel they fall short. Envy arises from believing we are deprived of something we deserve, while jealousy stems from fearing the loss of something valuable. Although Ali is portrayed as independent and strong, the absence of his mother evokes deep emotional pain. This reflects the enduring impact of a mother's love and the natural tendency for children to remember and miss the care they once received.

Puspitasari (2022) further supports this by discussing how feelings of loss manifest when someone who was once present becomes absent. Ali's profound sense of loss illustrates how significant and impactful a mother's presence can be. The scene effectively captures the deep sadness and emotional void experienced by Ali, highlighting the psychological effects of losing a loved one. Despite Ali's independence, the emotional scars from his mother's absence reveal the lasting influence of parental love and the complex nature of coping with loss.



Picture 2

In the film "Ejen Ali: The Movie," a significant scene depicts a young Ali and his mother, Aliya, illustrating their close bond and the traditional maternal role. This flashback shows Ali as a baby playing hide and seek with his parents but becoming distressed when he can't find his mother. His immediate response of crying out, "where's mom?" underscores his reliance on her comfort. Aliya swiftly responds by hugging and carrying him, using various soothing techniques, such as playing with balls and his favorite toys. Despite his father's attempts to calm him, Ali's preference for his mother's presence highlights the irreplaceable nature of maternal love.

This scene underscores the traditional role of the mother as a nurturing and comforting figure, essential for calming children in distress. Safa (2017) emphasizes that mothers play a crucial role in shaping children's personalities, particularly in providing protection and education during times of discomfort or danger. The mother's ability to soothe and comfort Ali reflects the broader importance of maternal influence on emotional development and stability. This maternal role is crucial for helping children navigate their emotions and develop a secure attachment.



The depiction of Aliya's nurturing role aligns with the principles of gender education, which advocate for recognizing and valuing the distinct contributions of both parents. Gender education stresses that both fathers and mothers are vital in providing emotional support and fostering children's development. While the scene highlights the traditional maternal role, it also underscores the broader educational message that both parents are integral to a child's emotional well-being and development.

To sum up, the film illustrates how maternal love and care are foundational to a child's emotional health and development. By depicting Aliya's role in comforting her child, "Ejen Ali" reinforces the significance of gender education in understanding and appreciating the diverse roles parents play in nurturing and supporting their children. This representation helps emphasize the need for a balanced approach to parenting, where both parents contribute to the emotional and developmental growth of their children.



Picture 3

In Picture 3, Ali discovers an old iPad while rummaging through a box of forgotten items. To his surprise, the device still works and is filled with photos and videos from his early childhood. Among these memories are images of a younger Ali with his mother and father, all appearing joyful and content. As Ali views these photos, he gently rubs his mother's face on the screen, overcome with sadness and nostalgia. The scene captures his deep yearning to relive moments with his mother and his longing for her comforting presence, which leads him to hug the iPad and eventually fall asleep.

This scene poignantly illustrates Ali's profound sense of loss following his mother's death. The nostalgia he feels is a testament to the significant role his mother played in his life, and his desire to reconnect with her reflects the deep emotional void left by her absence. The emotional impact of losing a mother is closely linked to gender education, which highlights the essential role mothers play in nurturing and caring for their children. According to Hartanti (2017), mothers are pivotal as role models, providers of love, caregivers, and emotional educators. Their absence can create a considerable emotional gap, emphasizing the critical importance of their presence in a child's development.

Ali's reaction underscores the profound influence a mother has in a child's life and the lasting effect of her absence. The scene reflects broader themes in gender education, where the mother is often seen as the cornerstone of emotional support and guidance. This portrayal reinforces the notion that mothers are central figures in shaping their children's emotional well-being, and their loss can significantly impact a child's sense of security and happiness.

Picture 4



In the fourth picture from "Ejen Ali: The Movie," Ali unexpectedly encounters a manifestation of his mother within the I.R.I.S dimension during override mode. This encounter is surprising for Ali, as he did not anticipate meeting his mother, whose data was previously stored within I.R.I.S. Overwhelmed with emotion, Ali rushes to embrace his mother, seeking to alleviate the longing he has felt since her passing. In this moment, Ali discovers that his mother, who had been a techno agent at the M.A.T.A (Meta Advance Tactical Agency), was the creator of the I.R.I.S. tool designed specifically for him. She explains that override mode, which Ali must control, was implemented to protect him from crime but requires her data to be deleted if he succeeds. This revelation adds to Ali's emotional turmoil as he faces the impending loss of his mother once again.

This scene vividly captures the deep yearning and complex emotions associated with reuniting with a loved one only to face their imminent loss. It reflects the broader themes of gender education by underscoring the crucial role of the mother in a child's life and the profound impact her presence or absence has on their development. The emotional struggle Ali experiences highlights the importance of a mother's role in shaping a child's resilience and ability to cope with loss. According to Anggaraini (2022), a child who develops strength and independence can better adapt to their environment and overcome life's challenges. Ali's encounter with his mother reinforces the significance of maternal influence in fostering these attributes.

This scene also illustrates how gender education encompasses not only the teaching of values but also the emotional support that mothers provide, which profoundly affects a child's capacity to navigate difficult situations. The brief but impactful reunion serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring connection between mother and child and the vital role of maternal guidance in developing strength and independence.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the description above, it is evident that mothers play a crucial role in the family, serving as the child's first madrasa or school and significantly influencing their development. Beyond managing household responsibilities or working outside the home, mothers fulfill the essential roles of role models and teachers. They provide their children with love and protection, leaving a lasting impression that endures even after they are gone. The character of Ali's mother in "Ejen Ali: The Movie" exemplifies this impact, illustrating how a mother's influence imparts important values such as independence, self-confidence, and strength, which are crucial for children as they navigate life's challenges.

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