



Po's Perseverant Journey in *Kung Fu Panda* Movie

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Abstract

This paper examines the theme of perseverance in the animated film Kung Fu Panda (2008), focusing on the journey of the protagonist, Po, as an embodiment of resilience and determination. The story follows Po, an overweight and unskilled panda, who dreams of becoming a kung fu master. Po is unexpectedly chosen as the Dragon Warrior, tasked with protecting the Valley of Peace. Through hard work, belief in himself, and overcoming self-doubt, Po demonstrates that perseverance, rather than natural talent, is the key to success. The purpose of this study is to analyze how Po's character arc reflects the importance of perseverance in overcoming adversity and achieving personal growth. The research adopts a narrative analysis approach, focusing on Po's interactions with other characters throughout the film. This paper explores how Po's perseverant journey aligns with Albert Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, where persistence, belief in one's abilities, and overcoming negative feedback led to eventual success. The analysis reveals that Po's perseverance is key not only to his success as the Dragon Warrior but also to his self-acceptance and personal fulfilment. The conclusion highlights how the film serves as an inspirational narrative, teaching audiences that persistence and belief in oneself are vital components of achieving greatness, regardless of one's initial circumstances.

Abstrak

Makalah ini mengkaji tema kegigihan dalam film animasi Kung Fu Panda (2008), dengan fokus pada perjalanan sang tokoh utama, Po, sebagai perwujudan ketahanan dan tekad. Cerita ini mengikuti Po, seekor panda yang kelebihan berat badan dan tidak terampil, yang bermimpi menjadi seorang ahli kung fu. Po secara tak terduga terpilih sebagai Prajurit Naga, yang bertugas melindungi Lembah Damai. Melalui kerja keras, keyakinan pada dirinya sendiri, dan mengatasi keraguan diri, Po menunjukkan bahwa kegigihan, bukan bakat alami, adalah kunci kesuksesan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana alur karakter Po mencerminkan pentingnya kegigihan dalam mengatasi kesulitan dan mencapai pertumbuhan pribadi. Penelitian ini mengadopsi pendekatan analisis naratif, dengan fokus pada interaksi Po dengan karakter lain di sepanjang film. Makalah ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana perjalanan kegigihan Po selaras dengan konsep efikasi diri Albert Bandura, di mana kegigihan, keyakinan pada kemampuan seseorang, dan mengatasi umpan balik negatif mengarah pada kesuksesan pada akhirnya. Analisis tersebut mengungkap bahwa kegigihan Po bukan hanya kunci keberhasilannya sebagai

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Prajurit Naga, tetapi juga penerimaan diri dan pemenuhan pribadinya. Kesimpulannya menyoroti bagaimana film tersebut berfungsi sebagai narasi yang inspiratif, yang mengajarkan penonton bahwa kegigihan dan keyakinan pada diri sendiri merupakan komponen penting untuk mencapai kehebatan, terlepas dari keadaan awal seseorang.

Introduction

Kung Fu Panda is a 2008 animated film produced by DreamWorks Animation and directed by Mark Osborne and John Stevenson. The story follows Po, a clumsy and overweight panda who works in his father's noodle shop but dreams of becoming a kung fu master. Despite his physical limitations and lack of training, Po is unexpectedly chosen as the Dragon Warrior, a hero destined to protect the Valley of Peace from the menacing Tai Lung (Chen, 2021; Ming & Winarta, 2023; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). Throughout his journey, Po faces not only external challenges but also internal struggles of self-doubt and insecurity. His journey to becoming the Dragon Warrior highlights the theme of perseverance and how it can lead to personal transformation.

This research aims to examine how perseverance is portrayed through Po's character development and the film's narrative structure. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions: How is Po's perseverance depicted throughout the film, and why is it central to his transformation from an unlikely hero into the Dragon Warrior? By analyzing Po's interactions with key characters, such as Master Shifu and the Furious Five, and his response to challenges, this paper aims to provide insights into the role of perseverance in overcoming adversity and achieving success.

The statement of the problem in this study centers on understanding the mechanisms by which Po's persistence leads to his growth. Po is struggling his perseverance rather than innate talent as his key to his success. It is Po's determination, despite failures and setbacks, that allows him to transcend his limitations (Chen, 2021; Ming & Winarta, 2023; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). This paper aims to highlight the critical role of perseverance in *Kung Fu Panda* and its broader implications for both the narrative and the audience. Previous studies on animated films have examined how characters' resilience can serve as motivational tools for viewers, aligning with psychological theories such as Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which underscores the role of belief in one's abilities in achieving success (Bandura, 1997, 2023; Caprara, 2025).

There are some previous articles that have been done regarding Po and KungFu Panda film. The first one is written by Felita Emmanuela in 2022 entitled *Analisis Kiat*

Sukses Po dalam Film "Kungfu Panda" (Emmanuela, 2022). Through qualitative method, this article underlines Po's lesson in life that can be used as everyday inspiration for many people. The second one is composed by Adrian Ming and I. B. G. N. Winarta in 2023 entitled *Conflict and Moral Values of Being That Found in "Kung Fu Panda 1" Movie* (Ming & Winarta, 2023). This writing examines Po's moral desire regarding his solid desire to be a Dragon Warrior. The third one is published by James E. Bruner in 2023 entitled *Kung Fu Panda - A Good Story Well Done* (Bruner, 2023). This article gives out analysis regarding storytelling aspect of that movie by underlining enticing plots, courageous heroes, and narrative beauty.

Those three previous studies have similarities in analyzing Po in Kungfu Panda movie compared to this article. The difference is located in the theory being used since this writing employs perseverance in Po's character. This aspect then shapes novelty of this article by pointing out its research gap compared to other previous studies. By stating so, this article can enrich understanding about that movie and how psychological aspect may cover indications in literary work, including film.

Method

Through a qualitative approach, this research explores the identity crisis experienced by the character Po in Dream Work's 2008 "Kung fu Panda". The focus examines themes of perseverance, persistence, and limitation depicted in films. This analysis refers to theories related to Self-efficacy, including Albert Bandura's Self-efficacy theory. Data analysis involves content analysis methods, which include collecting sources, in-depth examination of the film and related literature, comparing findings with other relevant research, and citing sources in the paper, with appropriate documentation in a reference list.

Results And Discussion

Po's Story and His Resilience

The analysis of Po's journey in *Kung Fu Panda* demonstrates how perseverance plays a pivotal role in his transformation from a clumsy, insecure panda into the heroic Dragon Warrior. The film emphasizes that persistence, rather than innate talent or physical strength, is the key to success (Chen, 2021; Ming & Winarta, 2023; Osbourne & Stevenson,

2008). This section explores specific moments in the film where Po's perseverance is tested and how it ultimately shapes his character development. The data from the film is following;

Data 1

Master Shifu: "There is now a level zero." (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

Master Shifu eventually recognizes that Po's perseverance is his true strength. This line signals the beginning of Po's journey from a novice to a kung fu master. Po's unique relationship with food becomes a tool for his training, as Shifu adapts his teaching methods to fit Po's motivations. By doing so, Shifu helps Po realize that his persistence, when channeled correctly, can lead to remarkable results (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Singhal, 2022; Yu, 2023). The training montage that follows shows Po improving steadily, despite constant challenges, underscoring that persistence, rather than natural talent, is key to mastery.

Data 2

Po: "There is no secret ingredient" (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

The film explores the idea that perseverance is more powerful than physical strength. In the final battle against Tai Lung, Po triumphs not because of superior strength, but because of his persistence and ability to adapt. Po uses humor and creativity, embracing his flaws rather than hiding them (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Singhal, 2022; Yu, 2023). This revelation symbolizes that the power of perseverance comes from within. Po's determination and belief in himself are what ultimately allow him to defeat Tai Lung and save the Valley of Peace.

Data 3

Master Shifu: "You are the Dragon Warrior because you will never give up." (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

This scene is crucial because it marks the turning point in Po's development. Despite constant failure, Po's persistence begins to pay off. His training improves not because he suddenly gains physical prowess, but because his perseverance allows him to

learn and adapt. This aligns with self-efficacy which suggests that belief in one's ability to succeed influences persistence and ultimately achievement (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Singhal, 2022; Yu, 2023).

Data 4

Po: "I am not a big fat panda. I am the big fat panda." (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

Po's perseverance is not just about achieving a physical goal, but about accepting himself. By embracing his flaws and turning them into strengths, Po is able to triumph. This line encapsulates Po's journey of perseverance, which leads him not only to external victory but also to internal acceptance and confidence.

Data 5

Po: "You have to believe in yourself. That's the secret". (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

This line shows that self-confidence and self-belief are essential to personal success. In other words, anything is possible with the right mindset. Po's success as the Dragon Warrior demonstrates that believing in oneself is the foundation of true perseverance.

Data 6

Po: "It's not the size of the wand that matters, It's the magic in the stick". (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

Po emphasizes that true strength or ability did not come from external appearances or physical attributes, but inner qualities like perseverance, determination, and belief. This line reinforces the idea that what truly matters is how one uses their inner potential, not how they are perceived externally.

Data 7

Po: "A real warrior never quit". (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

This line shows that Po's perseverance and persistence is the key to achieve his success. It is a reflection of his internal transformation from someone who doubted his abilities

to someone who embraces the warrior's spirit. Po consider himself as a warrior because of his deep admiration for kung fu and his journey of his self-discovery.

Data 8

Po: "You don't need to meditate for hours and hours to attain inner peace and enlightenment. You need only see, feel, and act from the heart. Let the heart guide you to your peaceful enlightenment "

(Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

When Po shift from external validation to self-acceptance, he goes beyond his initial limitations. His perseverance is no longer just about physical endurance, but emotional strength. Facing his fears, letting go of his insecurities, and learning to value himself as he is. This emotional resilience is crucial to his success, as it allows him to act confidently and find his own path to inner peace (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Singhal, 2022; Yu, 2023). Po's journey shows that true warriors are not just those who train their bodies, but those who also nurture their minds and hearts. He transcends his self-imposed limits by embracing his imperfections and letting his heart guide him toward enlightenment and fulfillment.

Data 9

Master Shifu: "If you only do what you can do, you'll never be better than what you are." (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

This line inspires Po to keep pushing beyond his limitations and challenge himself to grow. Master Shifu's words highlight a crucial lesson in self-efficacy; the need to embrace discomfort and take risk in order to achieve personal growth. By encouraging Po to attempt the impossible and go beyond his current abilities, Shifu fosters a mindset of perseverance.

Data 10

Po: "The true hero is flawed." (Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008)

Po's believe that imperfection and flaws are what makes a hero a hero. This realization also reflects a broader theme within the hero's journey archetype, where true heroes often possess vulnerabilities that humanize them and make them relatable. Po's acceptance of his flaws becomes a source of empowerment, demonstrating that resilience,

adaptability, and authenticity are more important than perfection.

Perseverance and Its Continuance

Perseverance is the ability to remain determined and committed to a goal despite challenges, setbacks, or obstacles (Bandura, 2023; Lopez-Garrido, 2023; Schaffner, 2020). It involves resilience, which allows individuals to bounce back from failure, and consistency, where small, continuous efforts lead to progress over time. Perseverance requires mental strength to stay focused and maintain a positive mindset, even when the journey feels difficult or progress seems slow. It is often the key to success, as it enables people to learn from mistakes, build discipline, and develop confidence (Bandura, 2023; Pasopati et al., 2024; Sarmi et al., 2024). Whether it is a student overcoming struggles in school, an athlete pushing through injuries, or anyone striving to achieve their goals, perseverance is the driving force that turns effort into accomplishment.

There are some characteristics of Perseverance. The first is resilience in the face of adversity. Perseverance is marked by the ability to continue striving toward a goal despite obstacles and setbacks. Individuals who demonstrate perseverance do not give up easily, even when they face challenges that could derail their progress. The second is consistent effort over time. Ability to stick with tasks, goals, and passions is vital. Persevering entails effort and practice. It also involves ability to learn from failure and try again when thrown off horses until got thrown off no more (Bandura, 2023; Dweck, 2017; Lopez-Garrido, 2023). The third is optimism and belief in success. A perseverant person remains hopeful, even when outcomes are uncertain.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to successfully perform specific tasks or achieve certain goals. Coined by psychologist Albert Bandura as part of his Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy plays a critical role in determining how people think, behave, and feel (Bandura, 2023; Pasopati et al., 2024; Sarmi et al., 2024). According to Bandura, individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenges, persevere through difficulties, and remain motivated because they believe in their capacity to succeed. *“People who have strong beliefs in their capabilities approach difficult task as challenges to be mastered rather than as a threat to be avoided.”* (Bandura, 1997; Dweck, 2017; Lopez-Garrido, 2023). This belief influences how much effort individuals put into a task and how long they are willing to sustain that effort in the face of setbacks. On the other

hand, individuals with low self-efficacy are more prone to give up quickly and may view obstacles as insurmountable.

Self-efficacy and perseverance are deeply interconnected, as one reinforces the other. When individuals believe in their abilities, they are more likely to persevere through challenges and setbacks. For example, someone with strong self-efficacy in academic skills will persist in studying, even when faced with difficult concepts, because they trust that their effort will lead to mastery (Bandura, 2023; Caprara, 2025; Koskela & Paloniemi, 2023). Perseverance, in turn, strengthens self-efficacy because overcoming obstacles and achieving success reinforces the belief that one is capable.

Bandura identifies four key sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Caprara, 2025; Koskela & Paloniemi, 2023). They are mastery experiences (success through effort), vicarious experiences (observing others succeed), verbal persuasion (encouragement from others), and emotional states (managing stress and emotions). It is because perseverance often comes from building mastery experiences, where small successes increase confidence and fuel further effort. Together, self-efficacy and perseverance create a powerful cycle of motivation and achievement. Believing in oneself provides the foundation for sustained effort, while perseverance builds the experiences that reinforce self-efficacy. As Bandura's theory highlights, success is not merely the result of innate talent but of one's belief in their ability to persist and overcome challenges (Bandura, 2023; Caprara, 2025; Koskela & Paloniemi, 2023). His insights emphasize that fostering self-efficacy—through encouragement, positive experiences, and emotional regulation—can inspire individuals to persevere and achieve long-term goals.

Po's Perseverance in His Journey

The results of the analysis show that Po's journey in *Kung Fu Panda* illustrates how perseverance and self-belief are key to achieving personal growth and success. Po's transformation from a clumsy and insecure panda to the heroic Dragon Warrior highlights the importance of persistence in overcoming self-doubt and external challenges. This journey aligns with Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, particularly the role of persistence, encouragement, and belief in one's abilities in driving progress (Bandura, 2023; Dehsorkh et al., 2023; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). By embracing his unique strengths and persevering through failures, Po demonstrates that true success is rooted in

resilience and determination.

In data 1, it can be understood that Master Shifu recognizes Po's perseverance as his potential strength and modifies his training approach to suit Po's unique abilities. From data 1, Po started everything from zero, really struggling from the beginning and he was a nobody. This moment signifies the starting point of Po's transformation, as his persistence begins to show gradual result (Bandura, 2023; Dehsorkh et al., 2023; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). By tailoring his methods to Po's motivations, Shifu enables Po to persist through challenges, demonstrating how external encouragement can enhance an individual's belief in their capabilities.

In data 2, Po emphasizes the importance of self-belief over external factors. Po's acceptance of his strengths and flaws enable him to adapt and overcome obstacle, proving that persistence and self-belief are more powerful than external talent or tools. This moment is a turning point, showing that true success came from inner strength and determination (Bandura, 2023; Gan, 2022; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). Po has no special secrets about Kung Fu moves or his strength because it all comes from within himself. His ability to adapt to every situation allows him to turn his weaknesses and fears into strengths.

In data 3, Master Shifu's acknowledgment of Po's perseverance serves as a form of verbal persuasion, a key source of self-efficacy and perseverance. By reinforcing Po's belief in his ability to succeed, Shifu motivates him to continue despite repeated failures. This moment aligns to Schaffner's idea that perseverance and resilience are related to everyone's ability to learn from failures" (Bandura, 1997; Emmanuela, 2022; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Schaffner, 2020). Encouragement from Shifu validates Po's efforts and helps him realize that perseverance, more than any other trait, is what makes him worthy of the title. This reflects the transformative power of persistence in achieving greatness.

In data 4, it is emphasized that Po's emotional growth and self-acceptance, crucial aspects of his perseverance. By embracing his identity and using his perceived flaws as strengths, Po transforms his vulnerabilities into sources of empowerment. Bandura's theory of emotional states influencing self-efficacy is evident here, as Po's newfound confidence propels him to take on greater challenges (Bandura, 1997; Emmanuela, 2022; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Schaffner, 2020). This moment illustrates that perseverance is not only about external achievements but also about internal transformation, showing how self-

acceptance and resilience go hand in hand in the journey to success. With Po's self-acceptance, he also eliminates the weakness that many people usually have, namely insecurity (Emmanuela, 2022; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008; Schaffner, 2020). With or without realizing it, insecurity can be very damaging to someone from the inside. Here, Po managed to eliminate that feeling and that is also a form of his greatness.

In data 5, Po's realization underscores the critical role of self-belief in perseverance. He exposes growth mindset because anything is possible with the right mindset (Dweck, 2017; Fayzullayeva, 2024; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). Po's words encapsulate his journey, emphasizing that confidence in one's abilities is the foundation for overcoming challenges. Still closely related to data 4, in data 5, it is explained more explicitly that someone with self-confidence will be stronger, while those who maintain insecurity will become weak. The mindset determines how someone can control their strength. This moment teaches that true strength comes from within, and perseverance is fueled by unwavering faith in oneself, even in the face of doubt and adversity.

In data 6, Po's understanding that true strength lies in inner qualities, such as determination and creativity, rather than external appearances. Judging from data 4, Po's body size is considered a disadvantage. Others would argue that his fat body would make it difficult for him to move, less agile, and he would not be worthy of being the Dragon Warrior. However, Po's perseverance allows him to harness his unique abilities, demonstrating that success is not about physical attributes but about how one uses their inner potential (Dweck, 2017; Fayzullayeva, 2024; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). Emphasis on mastery experiences aligns with this moment, as Po's persistence leads to a deeper understanding of his capabilities, reinforcing the idea that resilience and effort are the keys to achieving greatness.

In data 7, this statement captures Po's transformation into a true warrior. Through his unwavering commitment and persistence, he develops the confidence to face challenges head-on. Po's journey illustrates that a warrior's strength lies not in perfection but in their ability to persist and grow despite obstacles. This moment reinforces that perseverance is an ongoing process, rooted in the determination to keep going, even when faced with failure (Bandura, 2023; Fayzullayeva, 2024; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). Data 7 proves that Master Shifu's words in data 3 are true. Shifu's belief in Po that he is worthy of being the Dragon Warrior is further clarified here because Po himself finally realizes that the

attitude of a true warrior is to never give up.

In data 8, Po's words reflect his emotional growth and his shift from seeking external validation to finding peace within himself. By persevering through self-doubt and embracing his flaws, he discovers that true strength comes from emotional resilience and self-acceptance (Bandura, 1997; Fayzullayeva, 2024; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). This moment highlights that perseverance is not just about enduring physical challenges but also about cultivating inner harmony and balance.

In data 9, it is emphasized that what master Shifu says to Po is matter of verbal persuasion. It is in line with idea of encouragement from others that make Po stronger to face further obstacles. Master Shifu then also persuades Po to dig deeper to his bravery to expand his effort and understanding of his own self. In this aspect, it is also indicated that perseverance is supported by master Shifu to gain better self-confidence from Po's aspects. However, perseverance in what he has mastered is not enough. One must always be able to be better than before. There must be new achievements that are achieved because life will not always stop at the same level (Bandura, 1997; Oktavia et al., 2024; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). For better self-quality, one must start doing things that he has never done before, which means always being willing to learn new things. That is the real manifestation of the results of self-efficacy. In data 10, Po's realization that flaws and imperfections define a hero highlights his journey of self-discovery and acceptance. The art of knowing own self is also important. It allows audience to know their limits and that can be very meaningful. By acknowledging his vulnerabilities, Po demonstrates that authenticity and adaptability are more important than striving for perfection (Bandura, 1997; Oktavia et al., 2024; Osbourne & Stevenson, 2008). This line reinforces the idea that perseverance involves embracing who you are and using your unique strengths to overcome challenges, ultimately showing that resilience and courage define true heroism.

Conclusion

Po's journey in *Kung Fu Panda* illustrates the transformative power of perseverance, resilience, and self-belief. From a clumsy and insecure panda to the revered Dragon Warrior, Po's story highlights that persistence is more critical to success than natural talent or physical strength. Through his interactions with Master Shifu, the Furious Five, and his internal battles, Po learns to embrace his flaws, find his unique strengths, and overcome challenges with determination and creativity. This analysis demonstrates how Po's growth

aligns with psychological concepts such as Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which emphasizes the importance of belief in one's abilities and the role of encouragement in fostering perseverance. Po's journey also reflects broader themes of self-acceptance and emotional resilience, showing that true strength lies in embracing one's imperfections and striving for continuous growth. The film serves as a motivational narrative, teaching audiences that greatness is attainable not through perfection, but through consistent effort, self-confidence, and the courage to persevere in the face of adversity. Ultimately, Po's story inspires viewers to recognize their potential and persist in their pursuits, regardless of their starting point or initial circumstances.

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