

## An Intrinsic Motivation Analysis of the Main Character in the Joy Movie

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### ABSTRACT

Joy is a motivational movie that can inspire the audience to work hard and achieve their dreams. This research aims to analyze the intrinsic motivation of the main character in the movie, employing a descriptive-qualitative design. According to the Basic Psychology Needs Theory used in this research, intrinsic motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs: autonomy (the need to control one's own experiences and actions), competence (the need to feel effective and masterful), and relatedness (the need to feel belonging and socially connected). This research is conducted by identifying all three basic psychological needs reflected in the utterances of the main character. Using the movie and its script as primary data sources, the study employs a document analysis technique to collect the data, with an observation table as a tool for data collection and a content analysis method to interpret the data. The findings show that the main character's intrinsic motivation is certainly driven by basic psychological needs. It is revealed that the main character's intrinsic motivation is mostly driven by the need for competence, followed by autonomy and relatedness. This research not only contributes to the understanding of basic psychological needs but also their impact on intrinsic motivation, driving individuals to accomplish their goal.

**Keywords:** *Intrinsic Motivation, Basic Psychological Needs, Main Character*

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## INTRODUCTION

People nowadays are confronted with various problems when it comes to achieving their dreams. Many of them even stop chasing their dreams because they are afraid and do not want to fail again. However, people need to know that facing these problems is not just an unavoidable aspect of life but can also be a valuable life lesson. A life lesson is like knowledge or personal experience gained from difficulties or challenging situations that can shape their perspective and influence their choices and actions, helping them face problems better in the future. In order to gain a life lesson, people can do many things, and one of the easiest ways to do that is by watching good movies.

A movie is not only a source of entertainment but also a powerful art form. According to Petrie and Boggs (2012), a movie is an artwork on par with painting, sculpture,

music, literature, and drama. As a powerful art form, a movie is also popular, and the majority of people watch movies to be entertained and educated. There are a lot of good movies that can be watched out there and one of them is called Joy.

Joy is a 2015 American biographical comedy-drama movie starring Jennifer Lawrence, written and directed by David O. Russell. The movie is based or inspired by a true story of a real-life person named Joy Mangano, an inventor, and entrepreneur who faced numerous obstacles but managed to become a successful woman. Throughout the movie, the main character shows that even in the face of adversity, with strong determination, anyone can overcome obstacles and achieve dreams. In other words, the movie teaches motivation to audiences through its main character.

Motivation is essential for every individual. According to Harmer (2007), motivation is an internal drive that pushes someone to do things in order to achieve a goal. It is something that gets individuals going, keeps them working, and assists them in completing tasks (Schunk et al., 2014). In general, motivation is divided into two types: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is defined as doing something in order to obtain something else (Santrock, 2011). Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is the internal drive to do something that you want or enjoy, viewing the activity as an end in itself (Santrock, 2011). While both types of motivation are important in driving one's behavior and action, intrinsic motivation is often considered more significant. This is because intrinsic motivation comes from within where individuals are motivated by the enjoyment of an activity or by a desire to make themselves feel better (Harmer, 2007).

There are various internal factors that can influence intrinsic motivation. According to Basic Psychology Needs Theory, intrinsic motivation is driven by the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, also known as basic psychological needs (Deci and Ryan 2000).

Autonomy is the need to control of one's experiences and actions (Ryan and Deci 2017). It is described as a feeling to make one's own choices and have control over one's own action, making individuals motivated to engage in activities they choose. Competence is the need to feel effective and masterful (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It is portrayed as a feeling to be capable of doing certain tasks or activities, making individuals want to excel in their pursuits. Relatedness is the need to feel belonging and socially connected (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It is seen as a desire to experience connections or meaningful relationships with others, making individuals engage in activities that can foster or enhance their connections or relationships. When individuals have the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated. According to Niemiec and Ryan cited in Wang et al. (2019), intrinsic motivation is enhanced when the three basic psychological needs are achieved.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher decided to analyze the intrinsic motivation of the main character in the Joy by using Basic Psychology Needs Theory as the framework to find out if the main character's intrinsic motivation was driven by the need for autonomy, competence, relatedness through her utterances. The decision to focus on the main character was done because a movie's main character has more opportunities to

deliver messages and images to the audience compared to other types of characters (Harinanda & Junaidi, 2021).

## METHOD

The researcher used descriptive qualitative for the research design to analyze the main character's intrinsic motivation qualitatively. According to Creswell cited in Nasir et al., (2019), qualitative research is a type of research in which the researcher relies heavily on information from objects or participants to explain and analyze words, and the research is conducted subjectively, meaning that the conduct of this qualitative research involves the researcher's perspective and understanding in the analysis and interpretation of the data.

The sources of data in this research are both the movie and the script. Before doing the analysis, the researcher watched the movie several times and read the movie script afterwards. And then, the researcher used document analysis technique to collect the data. Bowen (2009), defines document analysis as a methodical process for studying or evaluating physical and electronic documents (computer-based and Internet-transmitted). In this case, the researcher collected the data by choosing the utterances that matched the indicators of basic psychological needs and added them in the tool of data collection, an observation table. Here are the indicators of basic psychological needs used to help the researcher identify autonomy, competence, and relatedness reflected in the utterances of the main character:

NO	Basic Psychological Needs	Indicators
1	Autonomy	Making one's own choices
		Showing a desire for control
2	Competence	Expressing a desire to use or improve one's abilities
		Showing the determination to excel in one's pursuits
		Taking on challenges in one's pursuits
		Expressing the satisfaction in one's accomplishments
3	Relatedness	Showing a desire for positive relationships or social connections.
		Feeling a sense of connection, attachment, or significant to others.
		Expressing the satisfaction derived from one's relationships or connections with others.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher found out that the main character's intrinsic motivation was certainly influenced by basic psychological needs and it was reflected in the utterances of the main character. The results are explained in the following:

## Findings

Intrinsic motivation is the internal drive to do something that you want or enjoy, viewing the activity as an end in itself (Sanrock, 2011). According to Basic Psychology Needs Theory used in this research, intrinsic motivation is driven by three basic psychological needs:

### 1. Autonomy

The first fundamental psychological requirement that plays a crucial role in intrinsic motivation is the need for autonomy. According to (Ryan & Deci, 2017), autonomy is the need to control one's experiences and actions. It represents a feeling or desire that pushes individuals to make their own decisions and have control over their own actions. Autonomy is also associated with the experience of volition (a freedom to make one's own choices or decisions) and willingness (Vansteenkiste, Ryan, & Soenens, 2020). According to Ryan and Deci (2017), when acting with autonomy, one engages in activities wholeheartedly, whereas when acting against it, one experiences confusion and conflict.

In conducting this research, the researcher found out that the main character's intrinsic motivation was driven by the need for autonomy. Using the indicators of autonomy, the researcher was able to identify autonomy six times through her utterances. The results are explained in the following:

#### Scene at 00:03:53 – 00:04:43

- Young Joy : And I open the gate to the big green meadow. And I went into the forest. And there, I conquered many dangers. A wolf and other scary things. And then I started to build my very own house, where I would live and make wonderful creations for all the world to see and have. And maybe for the prince and princess who lived across the forest in the castle (Autonomy: Making her own choice). See? And they were in love. And maybe they'd invite me over because of the things that I made.
- Young Peggy : You need a handsome prince. That's what you need. A prince.
- Young Joy : No, I don't need a prince. This is a special power. I don't need a prince (Autonomy: Making her own choice).

#### Scene at 01:12:55 – 01:13:36

- Neil : I'm in a meeting with our lawyers. What do you think you're doing?
- Joy : "Go home, Joy, and watch the numbers roll in on television! Make 50.000 mops! Borrowing and owing every dollar, including your home."
- Neil : It could have been handled better. I'll let Todd have another shot.
- Joy : I don't want Todd or anyone else to try it! It should be me (Autonomy: Making her own choice)!

#### Scene at 01:15:05 – 01:16:10

Neil : What? You undid the whole thing.  
Joy : This is me.  
Neil : This is you? You've got the exact same outfit you had when you came in here.  
Joy : I wear a blouse and I wear pants. That's who I am. I want to go on as me (Autonomy: Making her own choice).

**Scene at 01:27:16 – 01:29:18**

Peggy : I paid them the 20 that you owed them. I had to. I got them to fill the order of the 100,000 with a price increase of only two dollars per unit.  
Joy : We can't increase at all, Peggy! Don't you understand? We sold at a certain price. Any hikes, especially the ones he's asking for... I mean that I will lose so much money that I'll be in even more debt than I was before.  
Peggy : You're gonna make it back.  
Joy : I'm gonna make it back? How?  
Peggy : I've got ideas, you know. There are things that I'd like to do. I spoke to him about a project that Dad and I have been designing. Right, Dad?  
Rudy : Yes, we did.  
Joy : Do you have any idea how much your idea will cost? How or where you'll sell it if you can't even manufacture it after it's taken everything we've got to sell this one product that now, thanks to you is going to cost more money?  
Peggy : Maybe my product is better than your product. I can do what you did on TV. It's not that hard. Isn't that the whole purpose of that channel is that everybody could do it?  
Rudy : What your sister does is not easy but what we were planning to do is not that difficult.  
Joy : Listen to me! Never speak on my behalf about my business again (Autonomy: Showing her desire for control over her business)! Now I have to go to California.

**Scene at 01:55:39 – 01:56:02**

Young Joy : This right here. This is a special power. This is a special power. And then I started to build my very own house where I would live and make wonderful creations for all the world to see and love (Autonomy: Making her own choice).

**2. Competence**

The second fundamental psychological requirement that plays an important role in intrinsic motivation is the need for competence, or the need to feel effective and masterful (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This concept is based on the idea that individuals want to feel capable of doing certain activities. According to Cerasoli, Nicklin, and

Nassrelrgawi (2016), competence is a desire to demonstrate or improve one's abilities. The need for competence makes individuals feel like they need to perform effectively in their lives or important situations (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In conducting this research, the researcher found out that the main character's intrinsic motivation was driven by the need for competence. Using the indicators of competence, the researcher was able to identify competence seven times through her utterances. The results are explained in the following:

**Scene at 00:39:45 – 00:42:37**

Joy : 300 feet of continuous cotton loops. That's what I drew. This is why I would like to ask you for your investment, Trudy.

Trudy : Morris worked 50 years to earn his fortune, Joy. Before he passed on to the next world, he made me promise on his deathbed that I would never be neglectful with one dollar of the money that he so carefully earned. Therefore, you have to answer Morris's four questions of financial worthiness. Are you ready?

Joy : I think so. Yes.

Trudy : Question number one, where did you go to high school?

Joy : Plainfield Public High.

Trudy : Question number two, who were you in high school?

Joy : I was valedictorian.

Trudy : The smartest student in the school.

Rudy : That's good, right?

Trudy : Perhaps. Joy might be a brilliant, unrealized creator of commerce. But on the other hand, it's equally possible that she is a fatally flawed underachiever doomed to a lifetime of failure, disappointment, unfulfilled expectations. You must admit, Joy that your life, to date makes a stronger case for disappointment.

Peggy : I don't care about any of this! It's not only risky, but it's fiscally irresponsible and doesn't make any sense, whatsoever. Joy's never run a business in her life. I've been running my father's garage for the last 10 years.

Joy : Our father!

Peggy : I have ventures that I'm planning to launch here at this existing business.

Joy : You never mentioned any of this until I came to Trudy to ask for an investment!

Jackie : What's Morris's third question?

Trudy : Are you prepared within six months of commencing this venture to show adequate returns?

Joy : I accept your terms (Competence: Taking on a challenge).

Tony : Don't do it, Joy!

Jackie : What's the fourth question?

- Trudy : You are in a room and there is a gun on the table and the only other person in the room is an adversary in commerce. Only one of you can prevail. Yet, you have protected your business and Morris's money. Do you pick up the gun, Joy?
- Joy : That's a very strange question.
- Trudy : There is nothing strange about this question at all. This is money! Do you pick up the gun?
- Joy : I pick up the gun (Competence: Showing her determination to excel in her business)!

**Scene at 00:57:47 – 01:00:10**

- Neil : We don't mean to be disrespectful, Joy. It's the end of a long day for us. I feel like I want to tell you a little bit about who I am. Because I have a feeling you don't know exactly where you are right now. Am I right? Ten months ago, a man named Barry Diller called me from Los Angeles. He started a television network. Fox television channel. And prior to that, he ran 20th Century Fox, among other studios. And he acquired a little cable channel right here in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. And he hired me to run it as a bigger idea. Now, I'm from Detroit, Michigan. I ran America's largest, most affordable, successful, value-driven retailer chain called Kmart. Prior to that, I was a buyer for Kmart. And prior to that, I managed seven separate Kmart stores. I decide what products we let into our stores here into people's homes, 24 hours a day, for our valued customers. I choose very carefully and very conservatively. I spend most of my day deflecting incoming shots from people like yourself. You see that chart (*walks towards Joy and shows her a chart*)? This green line either rises or stays the same each month. There's no problem with my product choice. Do you know what QVC stands for, Joy?
- Joy : No, I don't.
- Neil : Quality, Value, Convenience. I sell product affordably, but I don't sell cheap product. And your mop is plastic and it looks strange.
- Joy : I don't know anything about charts or business, frankly. But I do clean my own home. And I made this mop because it is better than anything else out there. Please give me a chance (Competence: Showing her determination to excel in selling her mops)!

**Scene at 01:00:12 – 01:01:12**

- Joy : I like that it's plastic because it's so light in my hands, it's like nothing. It's also ten times more absorbent than any other mop on the market. Why? Because of 300 feet of continuous cotton loop that I looped myself. That is an enormous amount of absorbent cotton on a very small mop head. Now I'm done with the bathroom, and I haven't wrung the mop once. Let me ask you a question. Would you take this mop where you were just cleaning the

bathroom and around the toilet, and all of those germs and take it into the kitchen where your family eats, where you feed your children? I take this mop head, I put it in the washing machine, it comes out clean like new. You can't do that with any other mop. So...

Neil : Stop! Can you make 50,000 of these mops by next week?

Joy : Yeah, I think so (Competence: Taking on a challenge).

**Scene at 01:11:16 – 01:12:27**

Neil : I'm sorry the product didn't sell.

Joy : That man didn't know what he was doing, Neil.

Neil : Well, it wasn't the man, Joy. It was the product.

Joy : I made 50.000 units because you told me to. I mortgaged my house, I'm in \$200,000 of debt. More!

Neil : Well, it's your business. It's your debt. And we indemnify up to a third, if you read your contract. To be honest, that's even gonna be hard to get.

Joy : Neil, you gotta give us another chance (Competence: Showing her determination to excel in her business)!

**Scene at 01:18:56 – 01:20:49**

Joy : Household item 375. I guarantee you. You are not going to find another mop like this that exists. If there was, I would have bought it and I wouldn't have cut my hands up. You can get across the whole kitchen with one wring. Just imagine that. Watch this!

*Joy starts to demonstrate how to use the mop.*

Joy : *(pours a syrup on the floor)* Chocolate syrup.

Neil : *(asks the cameraman)* Go to the syrup! Go to the syrup!

Joy : *(spills baby food on the floor)* Baby food. A very big spill at my house. Very common spill for me. Now, the biggest difference, I don't have to touch this disgusting mop head. There's not another mop on the market that has as much absorbent cotton as this mop right here. And I guarantee you, there will be no regrets, no returns. I have been mopping for most of my life, every single day. I cannot tell you how much this mop has changed my life.

Neil : Phones are ringing! Phones are ringing! Phones are ringing!

Joy : The phones are ringing. The phones are ringing. This is gonna be the greatest mop to have around Christmas time when you have family over. I am a mother of two. There is just spill after spill. Family comes to town. You can mop your entire kitchen with one wring!

*Joy seems surprised with the number of sales on the board.*

Joy : Oh, my God! 29.000! This is very special (Competence: Expressing the satisfaction in her accomplishments)! I haven't even told you about my personal favorite feature which is the removable mop head that I can put into the washing machine and it will come out clean as new.



*The number of sales on the board is getting large.*

Joy : Oh my God! These numbers keep climbing! Thank you (Competence: Expressing the satisfaction in her accomplishments).

### 3. Relatedness

The last fundamental psychological requirement that plays a crucial role in intrinsic motivation is the need for relatedness, or the need to feel belonging and socially connected (Ryan and Deci 2000). Relatedness is described as a desire to experience connections or meaningful relationships with others. According to Ryan & Deci (2017), the need for relatedness can be experienced both when individuals feel valued by others or when individuals care about others. An individual is most likely to feel relatedness when he or she receives support from others, yet supporting others as an act of wanting to be significant among them is equally important to relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to Ryan & Deci (2017), the need for relatedness is satisfied when others show concern toward an individual, as well as when the individual has opportunities to feel and show compassion toward others, as both directions of caring enhance their connections or relationships.

In conducting this research, the researcher found out that the main character's intrinsic motivation was driven by the need for relatedness. Using the indicators of relatedness, the researcher was able to identify relatedness five times through her utterances. The results are explained in the following:

#### Scene at 00:33:50 – 00:34:51

Joy : Tony, you need to move out of the basement! You need to get your own house!  
Tony : What? Why? Because I go out at night and sing at Angela's club? Is that it?  
Joy : No. Because we've been divorced for two years. We need to move on! You need to move out! Rudy, you need to move out, too!  
Rudy : What? There's more room in the basement for me now.  
Joy : And another thing, Rudy. Tomorrow, I would like to have a meeting with you and Trudy at your office to discuss her investing in the manufacturing of my new idea (Relatedness: Showing her desire for a relationship with Trudy).

#### Scene at 01:17:43 – 01:18:56

*Joy receives a call from Jackie who pretends to be a customer to help Joy.*

Neil : Joy, we have a call!  
Joy : A call? How did that happen? Well, we have a call.  
Jackie as Joanne : Hi. Joanne from New York.  
Neil : Joanne from New York.  
Joy : We have a call coming in from Joanne from New York.  
Jackie as Joanne : Yeah, I'm calling in because I would love a mop that I don't have to touch when I wring it. You know, my hands get raw and when I mop broken glass and I wring the mop, I cut my hands. Do you ever cut your hands when you're wringing?

*Joy recognizes Jackie's voice and she becomes more confident.*

- Joy : Joanne, that is so funny that you said that. That is actually exactly how I was inspired to invent this mop (Relatedness: Feeling a sense of connection to Jackie). There was glass shattered everywhere. I was with my two kids, with my father, and I... Every time I would wring the mop, I would get glass shards in my hands. And the old mop just wasn't very absorbent. So, I went to my daughter's room, and I borrowed her crayons and I designed this mop.
- Neil : *(asks the cameraman to shoot the mop and Joy's hands)* Make sure you get down there. Yeah, that's it.
- Joy : It's made of plastic, so it's lightweight, but very durable.
- Neil : *(asks the cameramen)* Go in. Go in to the hands!
- Joy : It's extremely absorbent with 300 continuous cotton loops that I looped myself when I designed it.
- Jackie as Joanne : How much is it?
- Joy : It is \$19.95.
- Jackie as Joanne : I like that price. I want a whole bunch of them.
- Joy : Thank you (Relatedness: Expressing her satisfaction derived from her relationships with Jackie).

#### **Scene at 01:21:19 – 01:21:50**

- Joy : *(starts crying for happiness and hugs Neil)* Can you believe it? Can you believe it? I thought for sure you were gonna tell me that your counting machine was broken.
- Neil : I listened to you. You were right.
- Joy : I just can't believe that actually happened.
- Neil : I know. I guess you could say we're friends in commerce.
- Joy : Friends in commerce.
- Neil : Yeah. Let's promise each other that if, one day, and that day may come that we become adversaries in commerce, that we remain friends. Because that's a true friendship indeed.
- Joy : Friends in commerce. I agree. Let's shake on it (Relatedness: Showing her desire for a relationship with Neil) (Joy and Neil shake hands).

#### **Scene at 01:52:43 – 01:53:27**

- Joy : You made this yourself?
- Memphis Woman : Yes, I did, ma'am.
- Joy : I made my first invention myself, too (start trying the product on her clothes). I like this. It's a very good design.
- Memphis Woman : Thank you.
- Joy : Can you stay an extra day, meet with our designers? No, because of your boss? What hotel are you staying in right now?

Memphis Woman : The Holiday Inn, ma'am.  
 Joy : Holiday Inn. (*Talks to Tony*) Let's move them over to the Radisson, get them a suite!  
 Joy : (*talks to the Memphis woman*) You'll be more comfortable with your baby. I'll call your boss and get it taken care of, give you an extra day so that tomorrow you can come in, meet with the designers. We can take it step by step, all right?  
 Memphis Woman : (*starts crying*) Thank you so much.  
 Joy : We'll work on your idea, see if we can do something.  
 Memphis Woman : This means so much to me.  
 Joy : I know what it feels like. I know what it feels like to be in that chair (Relatedness: Feeling a sense of connection to the Memphis woman). We'll see you tomorrow, okay? And good luck.  
 Memphis Woman : Thank you, ma'am.

### Discussion

The research findings provide strong evidence that the main character's intrinsic motivation is significantly influenced by basic psychological needs. These needs are identified as autonomy (the need to control one's own life or decisions), competence (the need to feel effective and masterful), and relatedness (the need to feel connected to others). The total frequency of basic psychological needs mentioned in the observation table is 18 times, with autonomy shown 6 times, competence 7 times, and relatedness 5 times. Based on these numbers, it can be seen that the main character's intrinsic motivation is mostly driven by competence or the need to perform effectively in her pursuit of becoming a successful inventor and entrepreneur. Although the need for competence is the most dominant, autonomy and relatedness are also equally important in driving the main character's intrinsic motivation. The similar concept where motivation is influenced by certain factors has been explained in many theories and it can be found in some studies as well. The research found two previous study that are similar to this research where they include intrinsic motivation and explore aspects that drive motivation of characters from movies. The researchers also found some gap or differences between the two previous studies and this research.

The first previous study is "An Analysis of the Motivation Reflected by the Main Characters in the Movie 42 and its Personality Influence", conducted by Mutiara and Ayu (2017). The study used the Hierarchy of Human Need theory that explains human needs are organized in a pyramid. The pyramid model implies that individuals have to fulfill lower-level needs before progressing to higher ones, making them feel motivated to reach their goals. Meanwhile, Basic Psychology Needs Theory used in this research focuses on three equal basic psychological needs and does not propose a specific order in which the three basic psychological needs must be fulfilled.

The second previous study is “An Analysis of Psychological Aspect of the Main Character in Cruella Movie”, conducted by Aryanti, Winarta, and Santika (2022). This study used the theoretical basis of psychological aspect adopted from Benhardt’s theory. The theory suggests that individuals are motivated by several things and one them comes from external factors. On the other hand, Basic Psychology Needs Theory used in this research focuses only on psychological aspects that can naturally drive or motivate individuals intrinsically.

Based on the explanation above, it can be said that this research is more significant because it highlights core elements (basic psychological needs) that are equally powerful and essential for motivating individuals intrinsically without the need to consider external factors. By conducting this research, the researcher can provide understanding that intrinsic motivation is great tool to help individuals accomplish their goals and in order to raise intrinsic motivation, individuals need autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their lives.

While the findings offer valuable insights into the influence of basic psychological needs on the intrinsic motivation of the main character in the Joy movie, this study has some limitations. For instance, the researcher limited the analysis only to the main character's utterances, while non-verbal expressions and other elements may also have significant impacts. Overall, this research makes a meaningful contribution to understanding the intrinsic motivation of fictional characters and expands the application of the Basic Psychological Needs Theory in the context of movie analysis. Future research may consider broadening the methods of analysis to include additional elements and take into account other variables that may influence the main character's motivation within the narrative of a movie.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based This research adopted the Basic Psychology Needs Theory to analyze the intrinsic motivation of the main character in the Joy movie. Based on the research findings, it is concluded that the main character’s intrinsic motivation is influenced by basic psychological needs, indicating that the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness have an impact on individuals that can foster or enhance their intrinsic motivation.

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