



Representation of the Sandwich Generation in Home Sweet Loan: Implications for Social Education and Life Literacy

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Abstract: This study examines the representation of the sandwich generation in the film *Home Sweet Loan* through the lens of social construction theory and its relevance to social education. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the study analyzes scenes, dialogues, and narrative elements through repeated observation and thematic coding. The findings show four interconnected themes: economic pressure, role conflict, unequal family responsibility, and identity negotiation. These themes indicate that the sandwich generation is not merely an individual condition, but a socially constructed reality shaped by family expectations, collectivist values, and unequal power relations. The film also demonstrates educational potential as a contextual medium for teaching social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking about family dynamics in contemporary society. This study contributes a social-educational perspective to film analysis and offers a conceptual basis for using audiovisual media to discuss intergenerational responsibility in learning contexts. By linking media representation and classroom reflection, the study extends communication studies into practical pedagogical discussion.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi generasi sandwich dalam film *Home Sweet Loan* melalui perspektif konstruksi sosial dan relevansinya bagi pendidikan sosial. Dengan desain kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menganalisis adegan, dialog, dan unsur naratif melalui observasi berulang serta pengodean tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat tema yang saling berkaitan, yaitu tekanan ekonomi, konflik peran, ketimpangan tanggung jawab keluarga, dan negosiasi identitas. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa generasi sandwich bukan sekadar kondisi individu, melainkan realitas yang dikonstruksi secara sosial melalui harapan keluarga, nilai kolektivistik, dan relasi kuasa yang tidak seimbang. Film ini juga memperlihatkan potensi pendidikan sebagai media kontekstual untuk mengajarkan literasi sosial, empati, dan berpikir kritis tentang dinamika keluarga dalam masyarakat kontemporer. Penelitian ini memberi kontribusi perspektif sosial-educatif dalam kajian film serta dasar konseptual untuk pemanfaatan media audiovisual dalam pembelajaran tentang tanggung jawab antargenerasi. Selain itu, temuan ini membantu pendidik mengaitkan teks media dengan pengalaman nyata mahasiswa agar pembelajaran lebih reflektif, bermakna, dan relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari di kelas pendidikan sosial.

A. Introduction

The demands of twenty-first-century education require learning processes that go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge toward the development of social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking. In practice, however, social education often remains abstract and text-oriented, limiting students' ability to connect theoretical concepts with real-life social dynamics. This limitation is particularly evident in topics related to family life, where learning tends to focus on normative concepts rather than the complex realities experienced by individuals within family structures. As a result, students may possess conceptual understanding but lack the capacity to critically interpret social issues such as inequality, role conflict, and emotional burden within the family. This condition highlights the urgent need for contextual learning approaches that enable students to engage with authentic social phenomena as part of their educational experience.

One of the most relevant contemporary issues within family sociology is the emergence of the sandwich generation, referring to individuals who simultaneously bear responsibility for both older and younger family members. This phenomenon reflects not only economic pressure but also complex relational dynamics, including role conflict, unequal distribution of responsibilities, and identity negotiation within the family. In the Indonesian context, the sandwich generation is increasingly visible among young adults facing unstable economic conditions, limited job security, and strong cultural expectations regarding filial responsibility. Previous studies indicate that such conditions often lead to financial strain, emotional exhaustion, and reduced psychological well-being (Husain et al., 2021; Muhammad, 2022; Roring & Simanjuntak, 2024). From a family sociology perspective, this phenomenon represents a structural issue shaped by cultural values, intergenerational expectations, and social norms. Therefore, integrating this issue into educational contexts is essential for fostering students' awareness of family dynamics as a critical dimension of social life.

Within this context, film emerges as a powerful pedagogical medium capable of bridging the gap between abstract knowledge and lived experience. As a form of audiovisual text, film presents social reality through narrative, visual expression, and emotional engagement (Jati, 2021), allowing students to observe and interpret complex social interactions in a more concrete way. Asri (2020) argues that film can be understood as a social text that reflects and constructs meaning about society, while Rachman (2020) emphasizes the ability of visual language to represent multiple layers of social reality simultaneously. In educational settings, film has been shown to support contextual learning by enhancing students' empathy, critical reflection, and understanding of real-world issues (Budhiharti & Hariyanto, 2022; Devi et al., 2024). Consequently, film can function not only as a representational medium but also as a pedagogical tool that facilitates meaningful engagement with social phenomena, particularly those related to family relationships and responsibilities.

The film *Home Sweet Loan* (2024), directed by Sabrina Rochelle Kalangie, provides a compelling representation of the sandwich generation within the framework of family life.

The narrative centers on Kaluna, a young woman who is burdened with financial and emotional responsibilities toward her family while simultaneously striving to fulfill her personal aspirations. The film portrays the tension between individual desires and collective family expectations, illustrating how economic pressure, role conflict, and relational imbalance shape the lived experiences of individuals within the family. This representation aligns with findings from previous studies highlighting the challenges faced by individuals in fulfilling family obligations amid socio-economic constraints (Hona & Dewi, 2024; Faidah & Rahardjo, 2025). In the context of family sociology, the film reflects how family roles are socially constructed and maintained through repeated interactions and cultural expectations. As such, the film offers rich material for analyzing the intersection between individual agency and structural constraints within family systems.

Despite the growing body of research on the sandwich generation and its representation in film, existing studies remain limited in scope and analytical integration. Rosanti et al (2025) focus on semiotic aspects of representation, while Pamungkas & Tutiasri (2025) emphasize individual resilience. Similarly, Khorinur et al (2025) examine representational elements but do not extend the analysis into educational implications. Representational analyses of other Indonesian media texts, including television dramas and film, have likewise prioritized textual analysis over pedagogical implications (Sholihah et al., 2025; Rais, 2025). On the other hand, studies in educational contexts often discuss film as a general learning medium without specifically linking it to contemporary family-related social issues. This indicates a significant research gap: the absence of an integrative framework that connects economic pressure, role conflict, family relational imbalance, and identity negotiation within the perspective of social construction while simultaneously positioning film as a medium for social education. Addressing this gap is crucial to advancing both family sociology and educational practice, particularly in developing context-based learning that reflects real social conditions.

To address this gap, the present study employs Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality as its primary analytical framework (Dharma, 2018). This theory posits that social reality is not naturally given but is constructed through dialectical processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization. In the context of *Home Sweet Loan*, the experiences of the main character are understood as products of social construction shaped by family expectations, cultural norms, and socio-economic conditions (Hartini & Indarti, 2025). By applying this theoretical lens, the study not only analyzes how the sandwich generation is represented in the film but also explores how such representations can be utilized as contextual learning resources in education. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: how does *Home Sweet Loan* represent the sandwich generation through social construction processes integrating economic pressure, family relationships, and identity negotiation, and what are its implications for social education? This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the fields of family sociology and media studies, while also offering practical insights into the use of film as a pedagogical

tool to enhance students' social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking in understanding family-related social realities

B. Method

Data analysis is carried out using thematic analysis through three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This study adopts a qualitative approach consistent with established frameworks for qualitative inquiry (Safarudin et al., 2023; Supriandi, 2025). In the open coding stage, relevant data segments are identified and labeled. In the axial coding stage, these codes are grouped into categories based on conceptual relationships. Finally, selective coding is used to synthesize these categories into broader themes representing the sandwich generation phenomenon, including economic pressure, role conflict, inequality of responsibilities, and identity negotiation (Masdah et al., 2025). Importantly, these themes are further interpreted through an educational lens by linking them to the development of social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking in learning contexts. This integrative analysis allows the findings to move beyond representation toward pedagogical relevance.

Based on these analytical stages from data collection, transcription, coding (open, axial, and selective coding), to thematic categorization and interpretation within an educational framework the overall research process is systematically organized into a structured analytical flow. This process is visually presented in Figure 1 to provide a clearer overview of how the data are processed and interpreted throughout the study. The figure illustrates that each stage is interconnected, beginning with problem identification and data collection, followed by coding and thematic analysis, and culminating in interpretation based on the social construction perspective as well as its implications for social education.

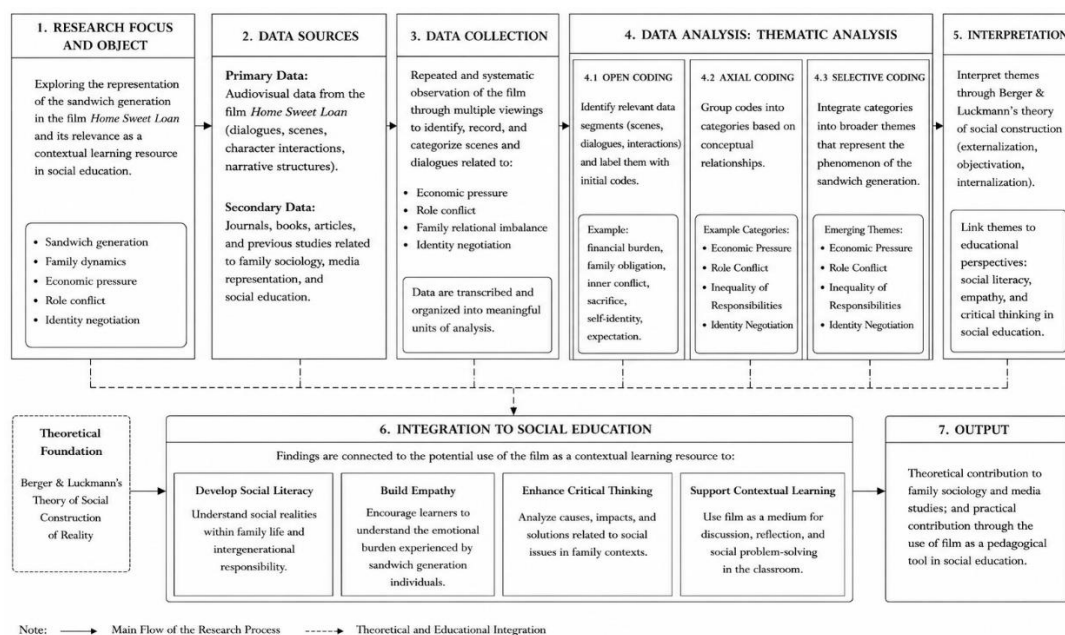


Figure 1. Research Analytical Flow of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmability are applied (Mekarisce, 2020). Credibility is established through theoretical triangulation by comparing findings with relevant literature. Dependability is maintained by ensuring consistency in the coding and analysis process through systematic documentation. Confirmability is achieved by grounding interpretations in empirical data, particularly scenes and dialogues from the film, thereby minimizing researcher bias. Through these procedures, the study ensures both analytical rigor and relevance to educational practice.

C. Result

The results of the data analysis indicate that the representation of the sandwich generation in the film *Home Sweet Loan* is constructed through a systematic coding process involving open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. This analytical process produces four interconnected major themes: economic pressure, role conflict, inequality of responsibilities, and identity negotiation. These themes reflect recurring patterns within family dynamics and illustrate how individual experiences are shaped by broader social structures.

Table 1. Coding Process of Sandwich Generation Representation in *Home Sweet Loan*

Data Unit	Category	Main Theme	Dialogue/Scene Excerpt	Meaning (Interpretation)
Personal financial burden	Family financial pressure	Financial pressure	"Kau yang berhutang, kenapa aku yang melunasi?" 	Indicates a financial burden concentrated on a single individual as the family's primary breadwinner.
Family expectations of children	Legitimization of responsibility	Economic pressure	"Kenapa aku terus Bu, yang harus mengalah?" 	Family expectations shape the social construct that the main character must meet the family's economic needs.

Data Unit	Category	Main Theme	Dialogue/Scene Excerpt	Meaning (Interpretation)
The desire for independence	Conflict between roles and personal needs	Role conflict	"Kapan Ibu bisa mengerti?" 	Reflects the tension between personal identity and social expectations within the family.
Family pressure	The dominance of collectivist values	Role conflict	"Aku ikhlas. Ini semua demi keluarga." 	Collectivist values reinforce the pressure on individuals to prioritize the family's interests.
Family members' dependence	Uneven distribution of responsibilities	Inequality of responsibilities	(Scene depicting Kaluna working overtime while other family members remain dependent) 	Illustrating an imbalance of roles within the family that is legitimized as a social norm.
Family debt burden	Individual structural burden	Inequality of Responsibility	(Kaluna bears the family debt alone) 	The economic burden is not distributed fairly and falls on specific individuals.
The desire for personal freedom	The process of self-redefinition	Identity negotiation	"Orang biasa seperti aku mau mimpi saja harus tau diri." 	Reflects an individual's efforts to build an identity outside of family social pressures.

Data Unit	Category	Main Theme	Dialogue/Scene Excerpt	Meaning (Interpretation)
Indecision in decision-making	Internal identity conflict	Identity negotiation	<i>(Expression of hesitation when choosing between family and personal needs)</i>	Describes the process of internalization and resistance to social values that shape identity.
				

The table shows that the themes identified are not isolated but interrelated, forming a coherent representation of the sandwich generation as a multidimensional social phenomenon within the family context. Economic pressure appears to be the dominant theme, influencing the emergence of other themes such as role conflict and identity negotiation. These findings demonstrate that family dynamics are structured not only by emotional relationships but also by economic and social expectations that shape individual roles.

Economic Pressure as a Structural Foundation

Economic pressure emerges as the most dominant theme in the representation of the sandwich generation. This is reflected in dialogues such as *"Kau yang berhutang, kenapa aku yang melunasi?"*, which illustrates how financial burdens are disproportionately assigned to a single individual within the family. The main character is positioned as the primary economic provider, despite not being the origin of the financial problem. This condition indicates that financial responsibility is socially constructed and legitimized through family expectations.

Furthermore, the dialogue *"Kenapa aku terus Bu, yang harus mengalah?"* highlights how economic obligations are reinforced through moral narratives within the family. These findings suggest that economic pressure operates not only as a material condition but also as a structural force that shapes individual roles and decision-making within the household. As a result, economic pressure becomes the foundation upon which other forms of inequality and conflict are built.

Role Conflict within Family Expectations

The findings also reveal the presence of role conflict, where the individual is required to fulfill multiple and often contradictory roles simultaneously. This is evident in dialogues such as *"Kapan Ibu bisa mengerti?"*, which reflect the tension between personal aspirations and family obligations. The character experiences a dilemma between pursuing individual goals and meeting collective family expectations.

In addition, the expression *"Aku ikhlas. Ini semua demi keluarga."* illustrates the internalization of collectivist values that prioritize family interests over personal needs. This

condition shows that role conflict is not merely a personal struggle but is embedded within the social structure of the family. The expectation to sacrifice for the family becomes normalized, creating a continuous tension between autonomy and obligation.

Inequality of Responsibilities in Family Relations

Another significant finding is the inequality of responsibilities within the family. This is depicted through scenes where the main character is shown working intensively while other family members remain dependent. Such representation reflects an uneven distribution of roles, where responsibility is concentrated on a single individual.

The burden of family debt further reinforces this imbalance, as the main character assumes financial obligations that are not equally shared. This inequality is not only material but also symbolic, as it is legitimized through moral expectations of duty and sacrifice. These findings indicate that family relationships are not always egalitarian but can reproduce patterns of structural inequality through repeated social interactions.

Identity Negotiation as an Internal Process

The final theme identified is identity negotiation, which reflects the internal struggle of the individual in responding to social expectations. This is evident in the dialogue "*Orang biasa seperti aku mau mimpi saja harus tau diri.*", which illustrates the limitation imposed on personal aspirations due to family responsibilities. The character attempts to redefine her identity within the constraints of social expectations.

Additionally, scenes showing hesitation in decision-making reflect an ongoing internal conflict between the "social self" and the "personal self." This process indicates that identity is not fixed but continuously negotiated through interaction with social structures. The findings suggest that identity negotiation becomes a critical response to the pressures generated by economic demands and family expectations.

Overall, the four themes: economic pressure, role conflict, inequality of responsibilities, and identity negotiation are interconnected and collectively construct the representation of the sandwich generation in the film. These findings confirm that the phenomenon is not merely an individual condition, but a socially constructed reality shaped by economic structures, cultural values, and family dynamics.

From an educational perspective, these results provide a strong foundation for contextual learning in social education. The themes identified can be used to facilitate students' understanding of family sociology, particularly in relation to intergenerational responsibility, social inequality, and identity formation. By engaging with these representations, students are encouraged to develop social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking skills, enabling them to interpret and reflect on real-life social issues within their own contexts.

D. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the film *Home Sweet Loan* represents the sandwich generation as a complex and multidimensional social reality, encompassing economic pressure, role conflict, inequality within family relations, and identity negotiation. These findings indicate that the experiences of the sandwich generation cannot be understood as purely individual conditions, but rather as outcomes of dynamic interactions between social structures, cultural values, and family relationships. Within the framework of the social construction of reality, the conditions experienced by the character Kaluna reflect the dialectical processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization, through which socially constructed expectations become perceived as natural and inevitable (Hartini & Indarti, 2025). This suggests that the burdens experienced by the sandwich generation are not accidental but structurally reproduced through recurring family practices and cultural norms.

Economic pressure emerges not only as a material condition but as a structural mechanism that organizes family roles and responsibilities. The disproportionate financial burden borne by Kaluna reflects the limited capacity of broader social support systems, positioning the family as the primary institution responsible for economic survival. The dialogue “Why is everything my responsibility?” highlights how unequal financial obligations are normalized through family expectations. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that individuals in the sandwich generation often sacrifice personal needs to fulfill family demands, leading to financial strain and psychological stress (Muhammad, 2022). However, beyond confirming prior studies, this finding also suggests that economic pressure functions as a legitimizing force that reinforces hierarchical role distribution within the family. In collectivist contexts, values such as filial piety further strengthen the internalization process, leading individuals to accept unequal burdens as moral obligations rather than structural inequalities.

The role conflict experienced by Kaluna reflects a deeper tension between individual agency and collective expectations. The character’s dilemma illustrates how individuals are required to navigate competing roles that are often incompatible, resulting in role strain. The expression “I have my own life too, Mom” indicates an attempt to resist dominant family norms that prioritize collective interests. This finding supports the argument by Annisah (2023) that the sandwich generation is particularly vulnerable to role conflict due to overlapping demands. From a social constructionist perspective, this tension reveals the ongoing negotiation between objectified social structures and individual efforts to redefine personal roles. Importantly, this study extends previous findings by highlighting that such conflicts are not only situational but structurally embedded within family expectations, making them difficult to resolve at the individual level.

The inequality of responsibilities identified in this study further challenges the assumption that family functions as an inherently supportive and egalitarian institution. The representation of Kaluna as the central provider, contrasted with the dependency of other family members, indicates that family roles are unevenly distributed and socially

legitimized. This finding aligns with research showing that unequal family responsibilities can lead to stress, interpersonal conflict, and reduced relationship quality (Sari & Artha, 2025). However, this study also suggests that such inequalities are not merely incidental but are reproduced through moral narratives that emphasize sacrifice and obligation. As a result, inequality becomes normalized within the family structure, making it less visible and more difficult to challenge.

From a family communication perspective, the findings reveal predominantly hierarchical communication patterns, where authority is concentrated in the older generation. The dialogue “This is all for the family” illustrates how collective justification is used to legitimize individual sacrifice. This supports previous findings that closed and non-dialogic communication patterns can intensify conflict and reduce relational quality (Nofita et al., 2025; Nasution & Fatria, 2025). At the same time, the study highlights generational differences in interpreting family roles: while older generations emphasize sacrifice, younger individuals increasingly value personal fulfillment. This tension suggests that communication is not merely a medium of interaction, but a site where social meanings and expectations are continuously negotiated.

The process of identity negotiation experienced by Kaluna demonstrates that the sandwich generation faces both external and internal pressures in defining the self. The coexistence of the “social self” and the “personal self” reflects the internalization of social expectations, as described in social construction theory. The character’s hesitation and attempts to redefine her role indicate that identity is not fixed but continuously reconstructed through interaction with social structures. This finding is supported by research showing that individuals in the sandwich generation are vulnerable to emotional exhaustion and reduced life satisfaction due to excessive responsibility (Roring & Simanjuntak, 2024). However, this study further emphasizes that identity negotiation also represents a form of agency, where individuals actively reinterpret and challenge the roles imposed upon them.

From an educational perspective, these findings highlight the potential of film as a contextual learning medium for developing students’ social literacy. The representation of economic pressure, role conflict, and identity negotiation provides concrete examples that can facilitate critical discussion and reflection on family dynamics. Previous research has shown that audiovisual media can enhance empathy, critical thinking, and social awareness (Sari et al., 2020). This study extends this argument by demonstrating that film-based learning can bridge the gap between abstract sociological concepts and students’ lived experiences. However, the effectiveness of such an approach depends on the ability of educators to guide interpretation and encourage critical engagement, rather than passive consumption of media content.

While the findings provide a comprehensive interpretation of the sandwich generation as a socially constructed phenomenon, several limitations must be acknowledged. As a cinematic text, *Home Sweet Loan* is shaped by narrative selection, dramatization, and directorial perspective, which may not fully represent the complexity of

real-life family dynamics. Certain experiences are emphasized, while others may be overlooked. In addition, the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis introduces subjectivity, as the identification of themes is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework. Although this study employs systematic coding and theoretical triangulation (Mekarisce, 2020), alternative interpretations of the same scenes and dialogues remain possible. Therefore, the findings should be understood as one of several possible interpretations rather than a definitive representation of the sandwich generation in society.

E. Implication

These findings imply that the representation of the sandwich generation in *Home Sweet Loan* can be strategically utilized as a contextual learning resource in social education. The depiction of economic pressure, role conflict, inequality of responsibilities, and identity negotiation provide concrete entry points for students to understand complex family dynamics and intergenerational relationships. By integrating film into the learning process, educators can facilitate more reflective and discussion-based learning environments that encourage students to connect sociological concepts with real-life experiences. This approach supports the development of social literacy by enabling students to critically analyze social issues, recognize structural inequalities within the family, and reflect on their own social positions. In addition, the emotional engagement generated through film can foster empathy and deepen students' awareness of the challenges faced by individuals in different social contexts. Therefore, the use of film as a pedagogical medium not only enhances conceptual understanding but also promotes meaningful learning that is relevant, critical, and socially responsive.

F. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the analysis is based on a single film, *Home Sweet Loan*, which means that the findings may not fully represent the broader portrayal of the sandwich generation across different media and cultural contexts. Each film is shaped by specific narrative choices, cinematic techniques, and social backgrounds that influence how reality is constructed and presented. Second, the study relies on qualitative interpretation of audiovisual texts, which inherently involves a degree of subjectivity in identifying themes and meanings. Although systematic coding procedures were applied, alternative interpretations of the same scenes and dialogues remain possible. In addition, the study focuses on representation rather than audience reception, so it does not capture how viewers, particularly students, interpret and respond to the film in actual learning settings.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to expand both the scope and methodological approach of similar studies. Further studies can incorporate multiple films or media texts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the generation phenomenon across different contexts. In addition, integrating audience-based research,

such as reception analysis or classroom-based studies, would offer deeper insights into how film is interpreted and utilized as a learning resource. Experimental or mixed-method approaches are also suggested to examine the effectiveness of film-based learning in enhancing students' social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking. By combining interpretive analysis with empirical investigation, future research can strengthen the connection between media representation and educational practice, contributing to the development of more robust and evidence-based learning models.

G. Conclusion

This study concludes that the representation of the sandwich generation in *Home Sweet Loan* reflects a socially constructed reality shaped by the interaction of economic pressures, family relationships, and identity negotiation. The findings show that individual roles and responsibilities within the family are not naturally formed, but are produced and maintained through social expectations, cultural values, and relational dynamics that position certain individuals as primary bearers of responsibility. Through the processes of externalization, objectification, and internalization, these conditions become normalized and perceived as inevitable, reinforcing patterns of inequality and role imbalance within the family.

At the same time, the study highlights that such representations hold significant potential for educational purposes. The film provides a contextual and relatable medium through which students can engage with complex social issues, particularly those related to family sociology and intergenerational responsibility. By integrating film into the learning process, educators can foster students' social literacy, empathy, and critical thinking, enabling them to interpret social realities more reflexively and meaningfully. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the understanding of media representation and family dynamics but also emphasizes the importance of developing pedagogical approaches that are responsive to contemporary social challenges and grounded in real-life experiences.

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