Unmasking Marlina: psychoanalytic perspectives on women's supremacy and subordination in Indonesian cinema
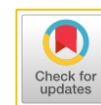
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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the unconscious motivations and character development portrayed in the film "Marlina, the Murderer in Four Acts" through a psychoanalytic point of view. The objectives include analyzing the visual attributes and emotional states of the character Marlina, categorizing them into complex emotions, and examining the relation between supremacy and subordination along the film storyline. By conducting a detailed visual psychoanalytic approach, integrating psychological theories and visual analysis techniques. Data collection was conducted by observing and interpreting visual attributes such as shot types, camera angles, character actions, and environmental situations in all scenes Marlina portrayed. The findings reveal how Marlina's unconscious emotional states are intricately reciprocal interactions with the male characters. Also about how supremacy and subordination are signified by her resistance against patriarchal oppression in more complex emotional states. The research highlights the method to do psychoanalytic analysis in understanding character emotion and narrative construction in cinematic works, while also focusing on approaches to explore the complexities of human emotion and behavior in film work.

1. Introduction

Psychoanalysis was originated by Sigmund Freud at the end of the nineteenth century, during the same time as other major social sciences such as psychology and sociology. Frosh stated that Psychoanalytic origins were a major discipline in the professions of psychotherapy and counseling, but Freud was interested in how it could be applied in another discipline since the first time [1]. Psychoanalysis nowadays also involves to artistic or humanistic approach to imaginative interpretation which is identified as the natural origin of psychological human life. Artistic research using psychoanalysis is conducted on film or cinema aim is to understand the deeper psychological visual representation. That's related to Rose stated psychoanalytic visual analysis illuminates the depths of subjectivity, sexuality, and unconsciousness [2]. This study emphasizes how to illuminate what appears to be happening on the screen and how the audience experiences it. The term illuminate here reveals the complexities of the situation portrayed in the storyline. There are no specific framework, procedural steps, or standardized methodologies to conduct psychoanalytic visual analysis on a film yet. As McGowan stated, the film can reveal about them when it arouses their unconscious aspect precisely because this aspect is unconscious [3]. Though no film aspect is precisely alike, the film delivers a site for the formulation of emotional aspects that are widespread and rooted within the social order. In the film experience, the unconscious dimension portrays itself on the screen. To understand more about psychoanalysis on film, this research attempts to break down a framework of unconscious interpretation of Marlina's character that is portrayed in the film.

In this research, psychoanalytic research was conducted systematically by analyzing visual elements, narrative storylines, and psychological contexts. Based to Rose psychoanalysis analyzes the conceptualization of understanding the viewer of an image and the image itself, which means the study is about the image in the film and the audience's subjectivities point of view [2]. To break down the gender issue in a film, research was conducted on "Marlina, the Murderer in Four Acts" film, a psychoanalytic Visual Analysis focused on Marlina as the main character. this movie was chosen as the research object as an extreme example of an Indonesian film with complicated psychological dimensions and gender issues. Marlina, the Murderer in Four Acts, directed by Mouly Surya, is a cinematic work that intricately weaves narrative, visual aesthetics, and cultural backstory of women in Sumba Island, Indonesia. This film creates a multi-layered exploration of the gender issue, women's empowerment, and socio-cultural value. The film's characters are strongly developed to unveil the gender issue as a woman who lives in a rural area on Sumba Island. Marlina the main character in this film, portrayed by Marsha Timothy, performs a drastic transformation in the character's psychological depth and emotional complexity. The Marlina character portrays the development of woman supremacy and subordination at the same time on screen against patriarchal oppression. Barrett stated that rather than illustrating emotions and action as the classical view does, psychoanalysis explores deep substances of how unconscious emotion affects the development of the character [4].

The film portrays women's issues as characterized by a subversion of rooted patriarchal oppression. This subversion is evident in various instances, such as Marlina's refusal to submit to man intimidation, her action in confrontations traditionally dominated by men, and her reclaiming of spaces traditionally reserved for masculine authority. Salberg stated that the provocative visual representation becomes an instrument through the film support for a transformation from patriarchal hegemony to a narrative of woman supremacy [5]. This research pinpoints to breakdown of how to conduct a psychoanalysis in a film to understand how it builds an idea about culture and gender dynamics. To break the supremacy and subordination, the researcher attempts to uncover the deeper understanding behind the characters' portrayals by applying psychoanalytic principles and visual analytics. To get into a deeper view, this research focused on how the main character's unconscious emotion builds women's supremacy and subordination narrative portrayal on screen.

2. Method

Based on Rose [2] psychoanalytic concepts are used to interpret aspects of visual images and, in particular, their effects on the audiences. This research is pointing to the subjectivity of the audience. Researchers stand as the research instrument to gain the audience's point of view. The research methodology analyzing "Marlina, the Murderer in Four Acts" employs a detailed visual psychoanalytic approach, integrating psychological theories and visual analytics techniques to explore the nuances of character portrayal and thematic representation within the film. To acquire visual psychoanalytic data, Rose writes that psychoanalysis conceptualizes the visual analysis that captures the point of view of the audience and the image itself [2]. To collect the visual data from the film narratives, the researcher breaks down any visual attributes that the character Marlina portrays in the film. Initial data collection involves capturing various visual attributes such as shot types, camera angles, character actions, situations, emotions, and reactions. The researchers did self-observation to describe and break down all shots that portray Marlina's character (Fig 2). There are a total of 64 shoots that Marlina portrays on screen. Each of the 64 shots portrays Marlina's character undergoing detailed analysis to determine Unconscious Motivations, character development, and Gender and Sexuality.

The research is structured into three distinct processes (Fig 1). The first phase is visual data collection, the second phase is visual data analysis to break down any emotional attributes and actions of the character. analysis focuses on identifying specific visual elements and her narrative significance in building the contextual framework of supremacy and subordination. The third phase is the character development timeline that centers on the storyline of the film and emotional patterns, aiming to capture the comprehensive dynamic pattern of Marlina's emotional flux. Moreover, the research using Lewis approach uses a two-dimensional state of emotion, these dimensions were called "positive affect" and "negative affect." [6]. In this case,

emotion state concepts contain the notion of being engaged in an experience while feeling subordination, unpleasant and highly activated ("negative activation"), and the notion of being engaged in an experience of supremacy, pleasant and highly activated ("positive activation"). This approach focused in identifying Marlina's emotions, highlighting how specific character visual portrayal contribute to the audiens emotional point of view. Barrett *et al,* stated the Emotional elements is put together at the time of its shown. The Emotional elements portray various linked components [7]. The elements flux, evolve and transform as the character interacts with surroundings. All the emotional components is the part of how to build character portrayal along the storyline.
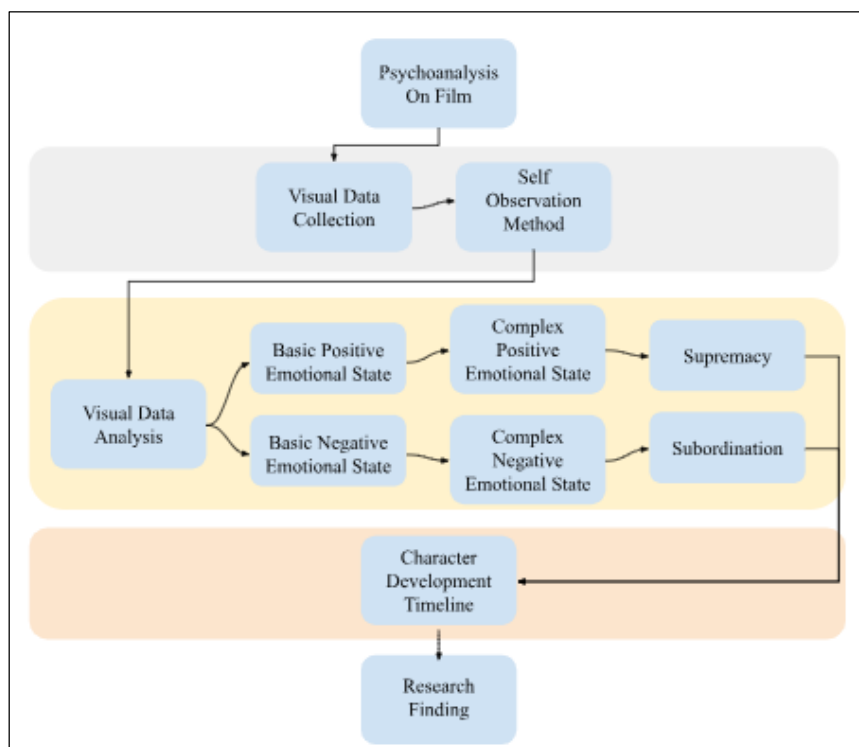

Fig 1. Research Process

Minsky states in Lewis that to classify emotions begin by describing some of them as basic emotions and then try to show how these might combine to produce more complex states of mind [6]. For example, we might start with the likes of pleasure, anger, fear, and disgust and then combine these to represent such emotional states as happiness, grief, and anxiety. Drawing upon the network methodological analysis of Miles *et al,* [8], visual analysis points are connected by links or lines that display thematic streams of the basic emotion about actions, expressions, and activities. Furthermore, integrating data network analysis enhances the understanding of uncovering underlying patterns and connections within the visual elements of the film. To acquire the basic emotions state of Marlina's character, the visual elements of the film character are collected and grouped according to a certain category. After all of the basic emotions states were collected, it grouped into positive and negative emotions. This method helps identify the supremacy and subordination of the character in an focused scheme. In the completion of the research, the analysis phase undertakes to solve the complexities of the film's visual language, feminist themes, and character progression. Miles *et al,* stated assembling patterns in a timeline diagram to pull together the separated pieces of data, researchers focus on clarifying the basic emotions state to build the concepts of supremacy and subordination [8]. This is focused on the method to understand Marlina's supremacy and subordination gender issue development in the film storyline and the broader socio-cultural implications constructed within the film.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Unconscious motives

Freud in Storck stated unconscious is part of psychoanalysis related to human desires [9]. However, these lead to a mental conflict, that is associated with pleasurable emotions, but at the same time with unpleasurable ones. Marlina's actions and emotions can be interpreted as representations of unconscious motivation against patriarchal norms along the storyline. Marlina's journey throughout the film is signified by a struggle against oppressive male characters and a journey for independence and empowerment. However, underlying this external threat may lie deeper unconscious emotions, shaped by her personal problems, cultural context, and societal conditioning. Barrett *et al,* underscore the dynamic nature of unconscious emotions as episodic events constructed in real-time through complex combinations of simple fragments of expressions and actions [7]. This perspective aligned with Strongman concept of emotions as purely internal responses, emphasizing external effects such as situational contexts and interpersonal interaction [10]. This research found that the theoretical complexity is intrinsic in viewing emotions not merely as individual reactions but as the interaction shaped by the characters between individuals and their surrounding environments. In Marlina's case, most of her emotions are produced from interpersonal interaction. Her unconscious emotions are reciprocally affected by interaction with malevolent male characters in the film (Fig. 2).

Fig 2. #Shoot 8 Marlina's Interaction and Emotional State

The observation of character reciprocal actions and reactions is more likely a behavioristic approach rather than an introspective analysis. This is related to Weitzenkorn study that focuses on character behavioristic methods to unveil the unconscious [11]. The emotional states are divided as positive related to supremacy and negative related to subordination of the character. Through detailed shot-by-shoot visual self-observation of Marlina's visual portrayal in every 64 shots of the film. in total researchers found 28 basic emotional states have been identified along with Marlina's actions in the film (Fig. 3). Each emotional states are defined by what the researcher sees on screen. All identified emotional states will be used as tools to get deeper into her psyche and unconscious motives. Isserow study notes, that a narrative and consciousness may emerge out of old memories or past events [12]. As the result of reassembling unconscious emotional states recall and represent Marlina's traumatic event. This is related to this research finding that all of Marlina's emotional states that the researcher sees along the film were the result of reciprocal actions and reactions. Furthermore, the research underscores the reciprocal nature of Marlina's actions and reactions, indicating that her emotional responses are intricately linked to her interactions with other characters. To get a deeper understanding of Marlina's supremacy and subordination, researchers need to

characterize Marlina's unconscious emotional states into categories of supremacy and subordination to deepen the understanding of her psychological state and her development along the film storyline.

Positive activation (Supremacy)		Negative activation (Subordination)	
Furious	Scold	Scared	Lie
Response	Self-Reliant	Hide	Depend
Resist	Calm	Obey	Puzzled
Intimidate	Tough	Hesitate	Shocked
Agile	Approach	Hallucinated	Walk Away
Revenge	Support	Cry	Pushed
Restrain	Struggle	Stunned	Abused

Fig 3.   Emotional state dimension

The categorizing of emotional state is based on Laird in Lewis writes, that complex emotions that appear to be unique to humans are built on emotional states [6]. Complex emotions depend on conscious appraisals that relate to models of character personalities, and often to comparisons between alternative possibilities or between actual events and possibilities that are inflicted by imagining certain experiences. In order to break down the supremacy and subordination in this research case, the 28 emotional states that have been identified need to be organized into more complex emotional categories for efficient analysis. Hess & Hareli [13] stated that Differential emphasis on the emotion states or referent across discrete emotion notions may signify that some emotions are about "relative" aspects of the environment specific to the character while others concern universal and thus more focused on aspects of the emotion domain (Fig 4).

To get more focused on supremacy and subordination, four key complex emotions are notion as signifiers of her supremacy: independence, courage, willpower, and persistence. These signify Marlina's resistance against patriarchal constraints, signify her power and determination to challenge traditional gender roles. The complex emotion of supremacy, as portrayed through Marlina's actions, underscores her resistance against patriarchal norms. For example, the characteristic of "Persistency" is illustrated through her physical struggles and acts of revenge against male characters who abuse her. This persistence reflects Marlina's resilience and her refusal to surrender to the oppressive forces that try to dominate her. Through these complex emotions, Marlina's character is portrayed as tough, and resisting the power dynamics. In other words, the vulnerable aspects signifier of her subordination encompasses traits such as cowardice, submissiveness, depression, and hopelessness. These emotions emphasize Marlina's vulnerabilities against the patriarchal framework, displaying the internal conflicts she faces against the intimidation of the male character. For example "hopelessness" is illustrated and portrayed in moments of physical powerlessness when she is abused and pushed by male characters.
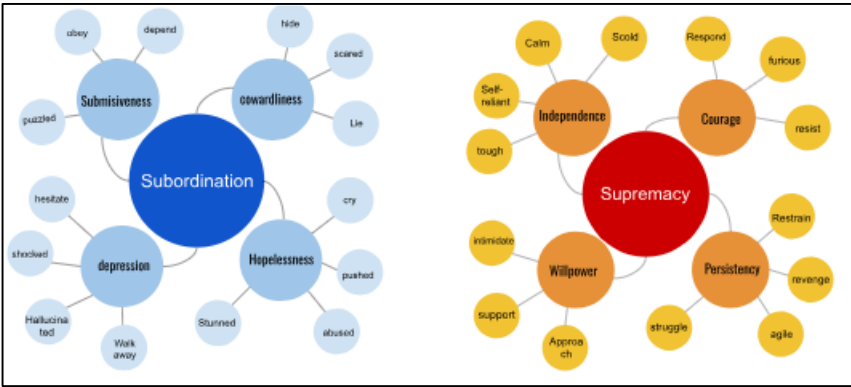

Fig 4.   The Complex Emotion Characterization Scheme

This characterization (Fig. 5) is about to be used to break down character development, allowing researchers to analyze Marlina's psychological development throughout the film. By mapping her emotional states onto a timeline, researchers can identify key moments of transformation and growth, as well as recurring patterns or triggers that affect Marlina's behavior. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of how her emotions shape her character development and contribute to building her supremacy and subordination along the storyline. Additionally, by analyzing the progression of her emotions from moments of vulnerability to instances of empowerment, researchers can define the trend pattern of Marlina's journey toward her character development.

Shoot		
Act Of Marlina	**Subordination**	**Supremacy**
Action: **Shocked** Turning Point: Unwanted Guests enter the house Reaction: **scared** and **pushed** from the entrance	- Subservient = - Cowardice = **Shocked, Scared** - Depressed = - Hopelessness = **Pushed**	- Independency = - Courage = - Will Power = - Persistence =

Fig 5. Marlina's Character Action and the emotion complex characterization

3.2. Character Development Timeline

To understand Marlina's character development, this research set the emotional states in timeline order. This is to pinpoint the character development pattern process along the film storyline. The trend pattern of the emotional states is used to observe episodic or ongoing actions and personal behaviors. There are Four Acts in this film, each act arranged by Marlina's portrayal in systematic timeline order. The action timeline is to learn about the details of the character development process. Hamilton' study said that the imaged symbolization that people experience is processed in a periodical timeline to be fully aware of the real emotional experience [14]. Applying this understanding to character development analysis, the image of the emotional states at once symbolizes the experience at the time of the event to get the full awareness of the supremacy and subordination of Marlina's character is the main point of the development process. The first Act timeline (Fig. 6) shows that Marlina is submissive and depressed more at the beginning. The antagonist male character is always giving Marlina hard times (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Rusbult [15] study found that women pay more attention to interactional change, and may as a consequence develop a greater number of superior cognitions that center on both their own and others' interactions. Women may also more persistently react in such an approach to keep out of unwanted interaction. This is also portrayed along the storyline, Marlina gets more willpower and independence to fight back and plan an act of revenge. Marlina has an act of courage and persistence by giving poisonous food to the antagonist man character. At the end of the act, even though Marlina succeeds in doing her revenge, she is still depressed and hopeless.
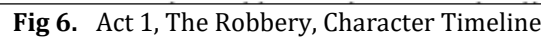
Fig 6. Act 1, The Robbery, Character Timeline

Marlina has a hallucination after she is raped and kills all the male character antagonists. In the second act timeline (Fig. 7), Marlina never met the male antagonist character directly. Most of the time, Marlina shows willpower and courage. She looks so calm and tough all the time except when the male antagonist is around her. When the male antagonist is around even though she has not met them directly, Marlina shows depression and hopelessness, she hides, hallucinates, and is stunned. This act, researchers felt has similarities with most of Alfred Hitchcock's film storylines. This is related to Szmigiero [16] study that contemporary filmmakers take advantage of motifs mastered by Hitchcock, such as amnesia, dissociation, belief in spontaneous disappearance of even the most disturbing symptoms as well as looking for sources of criminal behavior in past trauma, pathological relation, and mental illness. This is more likely portrayed by Marlina's character, she shows her supremacy almost all the time, she also shows disturbing hallucinations and depression symptoms as the vulnerable side of her subordination.

Fig 7. Act 2 The Journey, Character Timeline

The third act timeline (Fig. 8) shows that Marlina almost loses her persistence, but she still has her independence and courage. This act is about Marlina's confession in order to get justice. Marlina confessed to the robbery and rape that she got to the cops. In that confession, she realized that justice does not work just as she thinks. Marlina gets depressed and hopeless by the policeman's reaction to her confession. It is related to Jensen [17] that supremacism is always other-oriented. Not in the importance of caring for or about others, but instead in the sense that supremacism is always comparative because humans can't be superior to ourselves. In this case, supremacy is about how a character can be superior to another. Marlina's character is trying to show her superior side, but against more superior figures in strength, sex, and class, she always gets pushed to show her weak side.
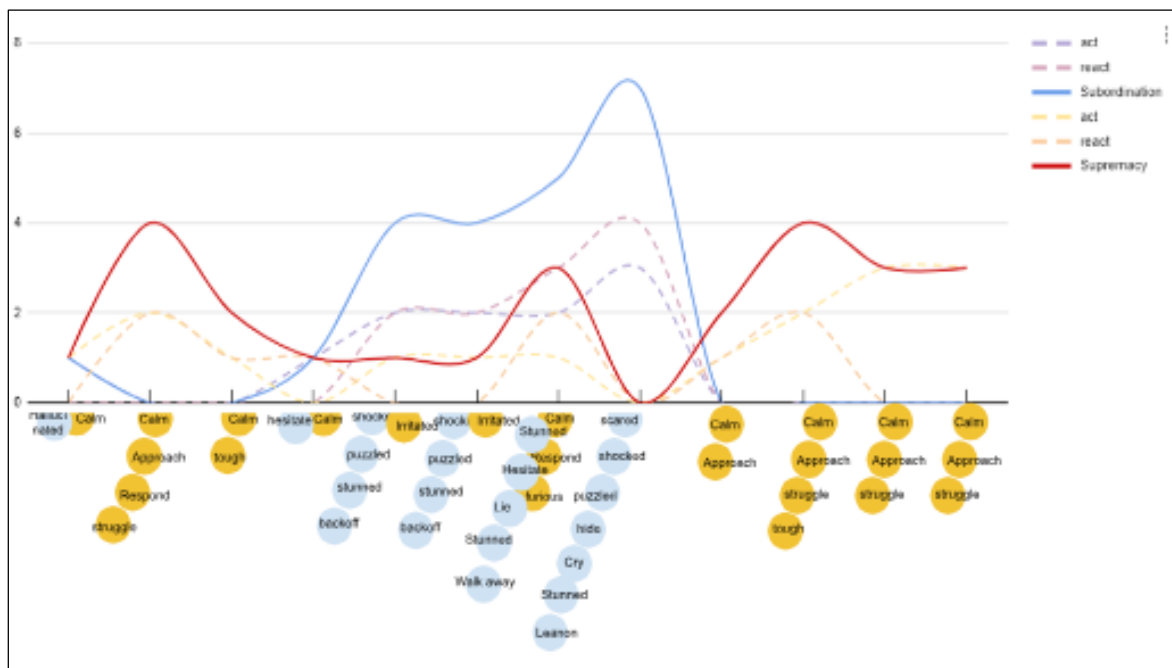

Fig 8. Act 3 The Confession, Character Timeline

In this act Marlina's Subordination is highlighted as her incapability to take a stance to fight for her right. Her portrayal simply portrays her hopelessness in front of the policeman, this is related to [18] study that the audience doesn't need long explanations but instead allows the audience simply to see the depressed woman's behavior. thereby allowing the audience to reach for an emotional understanding of her despair becomes especially deep and affecting. The last act timeline (Fig. 9) portrays less of Marlina's character, There are only 7 shots of her in this act. Marlina's character developed drastically from submissive, depressed, and hopeless into courage, willpower, and persistence in no time. This act portrays Marlina's rendezvous with the male antagonist character. She gets abused and raped for the second time, but she struggles and fights back. At last, she supported her friend to take revenge and kill the male antagonist character. The next shots portray how Marlina supports her friend to give birth. Mulvey [19] said that while the tragic character is conscious of his fate and torn between conflicting forces, characters are caught in the world of melodrama and a big factor of supremacy development. Based on the development of Marlina's character in this psychoanalysis research, is like watching an antelope face off against a pack of hyenas in the wild savanna. At first, Marlina seems a vulnerable and subordinate object, like an antelope cautiously moving through the grasslands, cautious of the hyena-like male antagonist characters. But as the story goes, Marlina becomes more persistent, like an antelope evading a hungry hyena's grasp. She uses courage and willpower to outsmart her foes and stand up against patriarchal oppression. Just as an antelope learns to survive in the savanna, Marlina realizes to challenge the dangerous foes. Her journey portrays how she can overcome misfortune and inspire others to stand strong and show her supremacy.
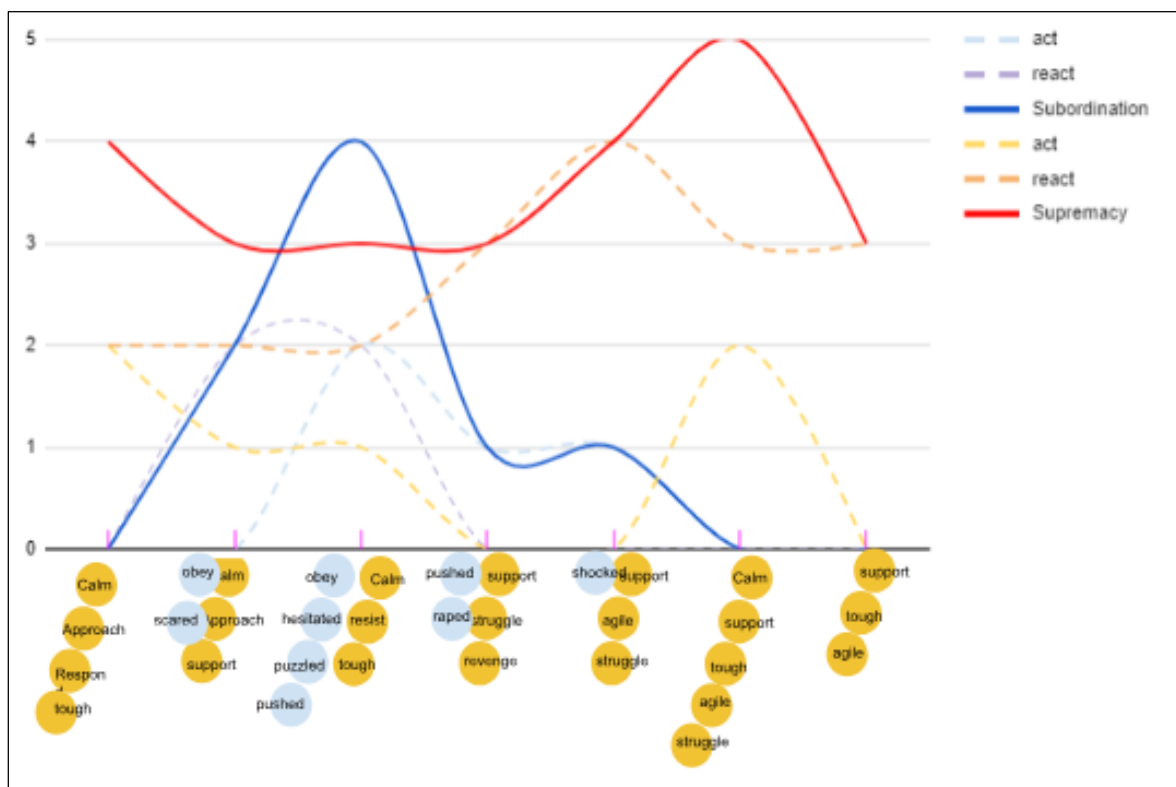
Fig 9. Act 4 The Birth, Character Timeline

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has employed a detailed structured methodological approach, combining psychoanalytic principles with visual analysis techniques to get more understanding of the unconscious motivations and emotional development of the character Marlina in "Marlina, the Murderer in Four Acts" Film. By characterizing emotional states into more complex emotions and analyzing her supremacy and subordination, this research has gained deeper insights into Marlina's psyche and her resistance against patriarchal oppression along the storyline. Her character development is like an antelope who fought against a pack of hyenas in a wild savanna. Moving forward, it is important to further research the implications of unconscious emotions on character development and narrative storyline in film study. While this research has attempted to gain insights and methods, future studies could attempt to explore more viewpoint approaches. Researchers suggest inviting psychologists to take part in the next research to get more points of view from psychoanalysis experts. Nevertheless, the limitation of this research is the focus only on the main character development. Future studies should be held to pinpoint incorporating a wider range of psychoanalytic concepts and exploring additional aspects of character psychology. Researchers recommend the future research works aim to bridge the gap between psychoanalysis and cinematic studies, enabling a more holistic understanding of the complexities of human emotion and behavior depicted in films. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach and pointing out the intrinsic challenges and nuances of character analysis, we can increase our knowledge of the intricate interplay between the conscious and unconscious mind in cinematic storytelling.

Acknowledgment

Declarations

Author contribution	:	All authors contributed equally to the main contributor to this paper. All authors read and approved the final paper
Funding statement	:	This research is supported by the Kampus Merdeka Competition Program (PKKM) 2023
Conflict of interest	:	The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Additional information	:	No additional information is available for this paper.

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