

## Representation of Hedonism by the Characters in Gossip Girl Series 2021

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to identify the types of hedonism and analyze the effects of hedonism on the characters in the Gossip Girl series. In analyzing the type of hedonism this study used the theory type of hedonism proposed by Weijers (2012). This study also used the theory effect of hedonism by Veenhoven (2003) based on the social groups presented in the series. The data were taken from the series entitled the Gossip Girl. The documentation method and note-taking technique were applied in collecting the data. In analyzing the data this study used a descriptive qualitative approach. The findings show that the character in the Gossip girl Series represents two types of hedonism namely folk hedonism and hedonistic egoism/selfish hedonism. The second finding is hedonism has an effect on the lives of characters namely reducing happiness, disrupting their physical and mental health, being treated arbitrarily.*

## INTRODUCTION

The film is said to be a complex mass media because it consists of audio and visuals. Rabiger (2009) defines the film as moving images and forming a story known as a film that contains meaning and entertainment. The appearance of the film can not be separated from the development of technology and science so that it can produce artworks in visual language. The film also includes part of communication which is the most important part of a system used by individuals and groups that function to send and receive

messages Effendi (1986). Similar to drama, several important elements build the film itself, such as plot, character, and setting. The film has various types that are distinguished by genres such as horror, romantic, action, or comedy.

The progress of the times has also made various forms of film, one of which is a series, however, it has several differences from films such as a series having a continuous storyline so that it is usually presented in several parts which are commonly called episodes, each episode has a story connection, while in films the storyline is finished at that

moment so there is no continuity. Both film and series, with their audio-visual arts, can display phenomena or realities around them so that there are lessons to be learned from films or series.

The story in a film or series reflects the phenomena that occur in society. In this era, especially in the world of film, many raise the phenomena in modern life, such as the phenomenon of hedonism where characters in films are often described as rich people that live in luxurious houses, with luxurious lifestyles, and use their wealth for having fun.

Hedonism is a fun-oriented lifestyle. According to Veenhoven (2003) is a lifestyle that is identical to the pursuit of pleasure. This lifestyle is irrespective of age. Swastha in Putri (2009) said that the characteristics of individuals who have a hedonic lifestyle are: like to seek attention, tend to be impulsive, tend to be followers, less rational, and impressionable. For the hedonists having fun, and satisfying their passions is the goal of their life by putting intellectuals aside. This hedonistic lifestyle is identical to the use of stimulants and happiness including alcohol, smoking, and, drugs, leisure, sex, and, attached to the luxury and glamorous side.

A concrete example of hedonism we can find in the Gossip Girl series. This series shows several types of hedonism such as folk hedonism or stereotypical hedonism where someone seeks pleasure through sex, drugs, etc. And hedonistic egoism which is also called selfish hedonism, namely someone who does everything to get life satisfaction even though it harms or sacrifices other people for personal pleasure.

The Gossip Girl is a series that airs on the movie streaming site namely HBO GO. The first season, released on July 8, 2021, was the latest version of the Gossip Girl series, which aired in 2007. Told the

story of upscale New York students at Constance Billard's private school. The background of their social status as the upper class, these students often show their glamour and luxurious lifestyle, and this becomes the spotlight among school staff.

The selection of utterance Gossip Girl made the object of this study because this series reflects hedonism, seen from the character who is shown as a hedonist. Besides that hedonism is a lifestyle that is currently developing in modern society however until now there are still many peoples who are taboo about the term hedonism itself, a lack of people who recognized what the hedonism lifestyle looks like without them knowing they are also part of the hedonists who have followed the hedonistic lifestyle. This study explained the phenomena of the hedonism in Gossip Girl series and how hedonism affect the character's life and the society around them. Perhaps this study can help the public understand the hedonism phenomena that currently happening in society, especially among young people, and provide education to the public about the phenomena of hedonism so that people can be wiser in responding to this phenomena.

## METHOD AND THEORY

### A. Method

This study used a qualitative method. The data source is the series entitled Gossip Girl, this series has been released on 8 July 2021 and aired exclusively on the movie streaming site HBO GO. It is a sequel to Gossip Girl in 2007-2012 and the adaptation of the novel of the same name (Gossip Girl) written by Cecily Von Ziegesar, it still tells about teenagers from elite private schools on the upper east side of New York, however, in the latest version in 2021, it is made more

adapted to the phenomenon around teenagers currently. These series were used as the research object since this series reflects hedonism, the whole of the episodes contains dialogue that refers to hedonism in several scenes.

In this study, data were collected by using the documentation method and note-taking technique. Note-taking is the practice of recording information from multiple sources by writing down the required data (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, the data were collected through several steps to make accurate data. The data were collected through several steps to make accurate data. First watching and intensively listening to episodes of the Gossip Girl series. Then finding the relevant data which contained hedonism shown in each scene. Finally, note down the data and also take a screenshot of the scene containing the required data.

This study applied a descriptive-qualitative approach. According to Nazir (2003), the descriptive method is a method that presented a systematic, factual, and accurate description, picture, or painting of the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena being investigated. The data were analyzed using several steps the first step was identifying the data in the form of utterances that have been collected referring to the theory types of hedonism by Weijers (2012). Then analyzed the effect of hedonism used the theory by Veenhoven (2003). Analysis of the effects of hedonism on characters is divided into two parts, those parts are analysis of in-group and out-group.

## B. Type of Hedonism

Hedonism is a lifestyle that prioritizes pleasure above all else. A person who has this lifestyle is called a hedonist, a hedonist focuses on finding pleasure in their life and as much as

possible avoiding things that do not bring pleasure. The term hedonism comes from the Greek word (hedone) which means pleasure which refers to several related theories about what is good for us, how we behave, and what motivates us to behave in the way we do, (Weijers, 2012). Based on Weijers (2012) there are 2 categories of hedonism that are used in this study, where this theory is famous. These 2 categories are as follows:

### 1. Folk Hedonism

Folk hedonism is an everyday understanding of hedonism. The Everyday understanding of hedonism means that folk hedonism definition depends on the non-philosopher definition. Non-philosophers tend to think of hedonist as a person who seeks out pleasure for themselves without any particular regard for their future well-being or the well-being of other. According to them, a stereotypical hedonist is someone who never misses an opportunity to indulge in the pleasures of sex, drugs, rock'n roll, drunk, etc, even if the indulgences are likely to lead to relationship problems, health problems, regrets, or sadness for themselves or other (Weijers, 2012).

### 2. Hedonistic Egoism/Selfish Hedonism

Hedonistic egoism is also called selfish hedonism. People who embrace hedonistic egoism tend to do anything to achieve satisfaction in life. People who embrace hedonistic egoism tend to ignore ethics just for the sake of pursuing what can make them happy. Not to care if the way they pursue satisfaction must hurt or sacrifice other people around them (Weijers, 2012).

## C. The Effect of Hedonism

Hedonism proposed by Veenhoven (2003) is a lifestyle characterized by openness to pleasure. This hedonistic

lifestyle is identical to the use of stimulants and happiness including (alcohol, smoking, and, drugs), leisure, and sex. Every behavior or action will have consequences as well as hedonists, who get the consequences of the hedonist behavior which is discussed by Veenhoven in the reality effects of hedonism. Veenhoven's description of the reality effects of hedonism claims that 2 aspects are emphasized receiving the effects of hedonism namely, hedonism is bad for individuals and societal level, which means that hedonistic behavior does not only have an effect on hedonists as individuals but also the surrounding environment. The effects of hedonism at the individual level include :

#### 1. Hedonism Reduces Happiness in The Long Term

Reducing happiness in the long term is the first effect of hedonism on the individual aspect as a hedonist. The hedonistic lifestyle is essentially focused on the pursuit of happiness. As the hedonists said that happiness is defined as the enjoyment of life, making hedonists seek happiness in any way even in the wrong ways that are against the norm and morals. Happiness obtained in the wrong way can harm hedonists in the future. this is one of the reasons why hedonists may end up unhappy because the happiness they get is momentary happiness that can fade over time, which leads to feelings of dissatisfaction or disappointment within the hedonist.

#### 2. Hedonism Can Damage Health

The second effect of hedonism at the individual level as hedonism is that hedonism can damage health (Veenhoven 2003). According to Veenhoven, this argument is devoted to hedonists who pursue sensory pleasures such as drinking alcohol, smoking, drugs, sex, etc. It is said to be a sensory pleasure because it involves the human body or organs and

the fulfillment of desires that naturally come within humans. Hedonists get pleasure from doing these activities, and all of these activities have become a lifestyle for hedonists. Habituation to this activity can lead to addiction which then causes the hedonic to lose control this can result in disturbances to the health of the addict both mentally and physically.

The effect of hedonism on the societal level is as follows :

#### 3. Hedonism Can Erode Social Bonds

Veenhoven (2003) argues that hedonism can create barriers between individuals who in this case are hedonists and those around them who are not hedonists. This is caused by hedonists who are too busy pursuing pleasure to make them less sensitive to others, besides that it is stated that hedonism leads to moral damage, therefore it will allow hedonists to harm or hurt others. The erosion of social ties can also be caused by hedonists who do not want to blend in with their surroundings or are referred to as self-isolation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Type of Hedonism

#### 1. Folk Hedonism

##### Data 1



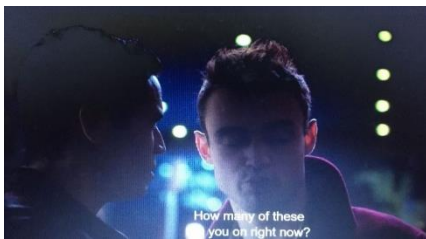
*Audrey's mother: I am gonna go find the bar.*

*Audrey: Should you really be doing that?*

*Audrey's mother: One drink won't kill me, but this party might*

In the quote of the dialogue above, it looks like Audrey and her mother were at a party, Audrey's mother said that she wanted to find a bar to drink, Audrey didn't seem to like it, but her mother insisted on drinking at the party. Therefore, it can be analyzed that this is an example of folk hedonism in which a person does not miss the opportunity to seek pleasure through drinking, especially at a party like Audrey's mother did, by drinking she gets pleasure for herself.

#### Data 2



*Raffa: How many of these are you on right now?*

*Max: It's not for me, okay? It's for inside. I'm macro-dosing some acid, okay?*

In this quote of dialogue Max is at a party but he comes in an over-exhausted condition and makes chaos, Raffa who at that time was in the same place then approached him and asked how much drugs he consumed, then max himself admitted that he used a dose of *acid*. This shows a form of folk hedonism in which someone looks for pleasure through drugs like Max's character does, he consumes *acid* or LSD drugs when he comes to parties, but besides giving him pleasure, the drugs also make him lose control of himself so that he made chaos.

#### Data 3



*Lola: I have this great nude foundation from Dior. No one would ever know you were wearing.*

In this data number 3, this utterance was said by a character named Lola she is telling Julien that she has branded makeup from the “Dior” brand, which is Dior is a luxury brand from France that has an expensive price. According to ordinary people or non-philosophers hedonism is identical to everything luxurious, therefore using luxury goods is one example of folk hedonism such as Lola character, likes to use branded goods, for the character of people like Lola who has a hedonistic lifestyle, has a branded item can bring satisfaction to herself.

#### Data 4



*Max: Okay,well,look. side effects of having your first threesome may include feelings of regret or shame and the intense desire to wanna do it all over again. That one's me.*

In data number 4 the utterance was talking about sex activity carried out by the three characters, namely Max, Audrey, and Aki, in that conversation Max explained the side effects of a



threesome or sexual activity involving 3 people simultaneously. Based on this, this is a form of folk hedonism where the three characters seek pleasure through unusual sexual activities without thinking about the impact that might affect their health as a result of the sexual deviations they did.

## 2. Hedonistic Egoism/Selfish Hedonism

### Data 5



*Luna La: Rayon gives me nosebleeds. Could you move? We should have a no-Zara rule at school.*

Data number 5 is a form of hedonistic egoism or selfish hedonism carried out by a character named Luna La, which is a high-class student, in her utterance she is mocking her teacher because the clothes are considered not classy so it is not appropriate to be used in their elite school. Luna La was so proud of her social status that she insulted others who did not in the same class as her and she felt satisfied after doing so. because of pride in his social status, he puts aside ethics and hurts others this is identic with hedonistic egoism.

### Data 6

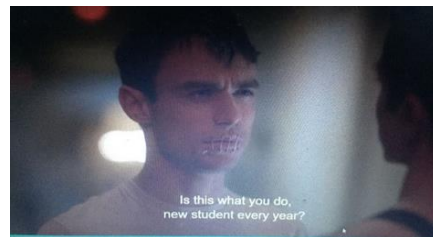


*Audrey's Mother: I am putting this apartment on the market and that is final.*

*Audrey: You can live whenever you want. Katherine. But I'm not going anywhere.*

Data number 6 is a dialogue made by the character Audrey and her mother who are arguing in their apartment. Audrey's mother went bankrupt she decided to sell her luxury apartment to solve their financial problems, but Audrey was against it, she didn't want to move out of her apartment. So it can be assumed that this is a form of selfishness from Audrey who does not think about the condition of her parents and only cares about prestige by maintaining her luxurious apartment.

### Data 7



*Max: Is this what you do, new student every year?*

*Raffa: Not every year. And you chased me. Or did you forget? This is still fun, Max.*

Data number 7 is a form of hedonistic egoism or selfish hedonism carried out by a character named Raffa who is a homosexual. The quote of dialogue above took place at a Halloween party, at that time max had found out that Raffa was a sexual predator who slept with many underage students and Max was also one of the victims, but Raffa denied it because he didn't want to let Max, who is currently in a relationship with him. Based on this, it can be analyzed that Raffa's character has a selfish side where he makes his students as satisfying his

desires, he only thinks about his personal satisfaction and sacrifices the future of his victims who are still underage.

## B. The Effect of Hedonism

In the Gossip Girl series, there are two social groups, namely in-group and out-group which are distinguished by social class. The in-group consists of Julian's circle of friends who are upper-class students at Constance Billard and other characters belonging to the upper class. They are groups that implement hedonism because they come from the upper class who have money and power. On the other side, the outgroup in this series are people who do not come from the upper class and do not live a hedonistic lifestyle. In this discussion, The analysis of the effects of hedonism is divided into the effects of hedonism at the individual level (in-group) and the effects of hedonism on the social level (out-group) using the theory of effects of hedonism proposed by Veenhoven (2003).

### 1. The Effect Of Hedonism Toward In-Group

- a. The first effect of hedonism by Veenhoven (2003) on the individual level is hedonism can reduce happiness in long term.

#### Data 1

*Zoya : I could've handled the first boy I've ever loved cheating on me.  
But the fact that it was with you.  
That you kept it a secret from me, lied to me. We're not sisters we're not friends, we're not even enemies, we're nothing.*

In the Gossip Girl series, the effect of hedonism is experienced by Julien's

character. Julien is a hedonist who seeks pleasure and enjoyment by having sex with her sister's boyfriend, but unfortunately, her actions are known by her sister named Zoya, which then causes conflict between them. The above statement is an expression of Zoya's anger towards Julien. After Zoya finds out what she did with Zoya's boyfriend, Julien's anxiety and regret arise because her relationship with her sister getting worse. Therefore it can be assumed that Julien accepts the effects of his hedonistic behavior, the pleasure and enjoyment she gets from sex does not last long and instead causes problems for her.

- b. The second effect of hedonism by Veenhoven (2003) on the individual level is hedonism can damage health.

#### Data 2

*Raffa : Max, you shouldn't be in here.  
Max : Why not? It's the school gym. And I go to the school.  
Raffa : Wow. You look like shit.  
Raffa : You need to lay off the drugs, and deal with your shit.*

The second effect of hedonism on individuals is that hedonism can damage health which in this case is experienced by the character inside the group, namely Max Wolfe. He is called a hedonist because he is a drug addict. This tendency is shown in the utterance above where he goes to school in an over-exhausted condition, then he approaches his teacher Raffa who is taking a bath in the school bathroom, and invites him to have sex in that place. Drugs make max lose his mind and control over himself. Because of this drug habit, he became a drug addict which causes disturbance in his physical and mental health every time he takes drugs.

**Data 3**

*Julien : If you guys wanna know how I keep my face fresh after early-morning travel, I've reposted my crucial flight-the-flight routine.*

The next effect of hedonism on health especially mental health is narcissism. This is experienced by the character of Julien. Julien is a character who is obsessed with herself therefore he claims to be an influencer who always appears on social media. As a socialite, Julien actively uses social media to post everything about herself most of them her beauty and glamour life. Like in the utterance above where she is sharing her beauty tips on her Instagram story. Julien's habit makes her dependent on social media and always wants to be the center of attention, it is an effect of her hedonic lifestyle.

- c. The Effect of Hedonism Toward Out-Group Is Hedonism Can Erode Social Bonds.

**Data 4**

*Luna la : Trio of sad, Incoming.*  
*Monet : Which one of them should get fired next?*  
*Miss Keller : What did you just say?*  
*Monet : I wasn't talking to you. About you, maybe, but it depends on your behavior. But, I'm pretty sure you know that now.*

According to Veenhoven (2003), hedonism can erode social bonds, it can cause hatred or hostility. This happens in the gossip girl series where there is disharmony in the relationship between the in-group (the upper class) and the out-group (people who are not from the

upper class). It is shown from the above dialogue that a group of teachers including Miss Keller received unpleasant treatment from their students, namely Monet and Luna La, this group of teachers was mocked and threatened to be fired. This shows that people are not from the upper class (out-group) or in this case, a group of teachers who get the effect of the hedonistic behavior of their students. they feel they have money and power so which makes them arrogant, as a result, they act arbitrarily against people whose social status is below theirs.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the explanation above, several conclusions can be drawn. The findings show that the character in the Gossip Girl series represents the types of hedonism by Weijers (2012) namely folk hedonism and hedonistic egoism/selfish hedonism. In folk hedonism the character shows the tendency to drunk, use drugs, use branded goods, and have sex, Meanwhile, in hedonistic egoism or selfish hedonism the character shows a tendency to be proud of their high social status, having random sex with underage teens, and prioritizing prestige over everything.

The second finding is hedonism has an effect on the lives of characters inside the group, namely reducing happiness and disrupting their physical and mental health. Besides that, hedonism affects out-groups, since they live among people from the upper class, they are affected by the hedonistic lifestyle carried out by the upper class, such as being treated arbitrarily and underestimated. Because they don't have money, and power like them.



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