

## Obsessive and Harmonious Passion by Vallerand in *The Fabelman* (2022)

Difan Junaedi

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya

[difan.20049@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:difan.20049@mhs.unesa.ac.id)

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi transformasi dari obsesif menjadi harmonis pada karakter Sammy Fabelman dalam film *The Fabelmans* (2022) menggunakan Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) milik Vallerand. Tujuan utama adalah untuk memahami proses perubahan passion Sammy dari yang bersifat obsesif dan berpotensi merusak menjadi passion yang harmonis dan memenuhi. Analisis kualitatif dilakukan terhadap film tersebut untuk mengidentifikasi momen-momen kunci dan sosial-kontekstual faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi pada perubahan Sammy. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Sammy mengalami transisi dari keterlibatan yang kompulsif dan kaku dalam kegiatan pembuatan filmnya menjadi keterlibatan yang lebih fleksibel, terintegrasi, dan memberikan dampak positif pada kesejahteraan psikologisnya. Studi ini menekankan relevansi dan aplikasi model DMP dalam analisis sastra, serta menyediakan wawasan tentang dinamika yang mempengaruhi perubahan passion individu. Hasil penelitian diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman tentang perkembangan karakter dalam sastra dan film, serta mendorong penelitian lebih lanjut untuk mengeksplorasi passion tokoh-tokoh secara komprehensif, menjembatani kesenjangan antara psikologi dan sastra.

**Kata Kunci:** *Passion, Dualistic Model of Passion, Obsesif, Harmonis, sosial-kontekstual*

### Abstract

This study aims to explore the transformation from obsessive to harmonious passion in the character of Sammy Fabelman in the film *The Fabelmans* (2022) using Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP). The primary objective is to understand Sammy's process of shifting from an obsessive and potentially detrimental passion to a harmonious and fulfilling one. A qualitative film analysis is conducted to identify critical moments and factors contributing to Sammy's transformation. The research findings indicate that Sammy transitions from compulsive and rigid involvement in his filmmaking activities to a more flexible, integrated engagement, positively impacting his psychological well-being. This study emphasizes the relevance and application of the DMP model in literary analysis and provides insights into the dynamics influencing changes in individual passion. The results are expected to contribute to understanding character development in literature and film and encourage further research to explore characters' passions comprehensively, bridging the gap between psychology and literature.

**Keywords:** *Passion, Dualistic Model of Passion, Obsessive, Harmonious, social-contextual*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Passion is a powerful force that significantly impacts an individual's behavior, emotions, and overall well-being. When someone has a strong affection or enthusiasm for a particular activity or pursuit, it becomes a crucial part of their identity (Vallerand et al., 2003). While passion can bring happiness and fulfillment, it also has the potential to become an unhealthy obsession, which may negatively affect well-being. What's remarkable about passion is its ability to spark a deep sense of dedication and excitement, motivating individuals to fully engage in their cherished interests. Passion, therefore, acts as a driving force, pushing people to invest significant time and energy into activities that are deeply meaningful to them (Vallerand, 2015).

The main goal of this research is to delve into the complex nature of passion and its significant impact on behavior and psychology. This study aims to understand the difference between beneficial and harmful forms of passion through Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP). It examines how passion can shift from being an obsessive and potentially damaging force to one that is harmonious and fulfilling. By analyzing the character Sammy Fabelman in Steven Spielberg's semi-autobiographical film, *The Fabelmans* (2022), this research sheds light on the transformation of passion and its effects on personal development.

To address the problem, this study employs Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion (DMP) as the primary theoretical framework. The DMP distinguishes between two types of passion: obsessive passion (OP) and harmonious passion (HP). Harmonious passion involves engaging in activities that bring joy and contribute to overall satisfaction and well-being. In contrast, obsessive

passion entails an all-consuming focus that can lead to stress and conflict (Vallerand et al., 2003; Vallerand, 2015). This model provides a nuanced understanding of how passion can positively or negatively impact an individual's life, depending on how it is internalized and expressed.

Obsessive passion is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to engage in an activity, often leading to stress and conflict. Individuals with obsessive passion integrate the activity so deeply into their identity that it dominates their lives, resulting in adverse outcomes (Vallerand, 2015, p. 64). The symptoms of obsessive passion include compulsive engagement, a rigid approach to the activity, and significant conflict with other life domains, leading to decreased psychological well-being (Vallerand et al., 2003).

In contrast, harmonious passion arises from an intrinsic motivation to engage in an activity. It allows the activity to be a significant yet balanced part of one's identity, coexisting peacefully with other aspects of life (Vallerand, 2015, p. 63). Characteristics of harmonious passion include voluntary engagement, flexible involvement, and a positive impact on well-being and interpersonal relationships (Vallerand, 2015).

The social-contextual factors influencing passion are also crucial. According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the satisfaction of basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—plays a significant role in fostering passion (Ryan et al., 2017). Environments that support these needs enhance intrinsic motivation and promote a balanced, harmonious engagement in activities (Ryan et al., 2017).

The film *The Fabelmans* (2022) offers a rich narrative to explore this transformation. Through the character Sammy Fabelman, the film illustrates the journey from an initial obsessive and relentless commitment to a more harmonious passion. By examining Sammy's progression, the study aims to demonstrate how the DMP can be applied to understand the psychological development of passion in individuals. This analysis will focus on specific elements in the narrative that highlight pivotal moments in Sammy's emotional and psychological evolution, aligning with Vallerand's model.

Previous studies have explored passion in various contexts. For instance, N'Télam Oulam's (2018) "The Power of Passion: A Psychoanalytical Study of *Hamlet*" investigates the destructive potential of uncontrolled passion in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, using psychoanalytic criticism to highlight themes of betrayal, revenge, and tragedy. This study underscores how obsessive passion can lead to negative consequences.

Another significant study is Benghenissa Imène et al.'s (2018) "Passion and Narration in the Contemporary

Arab Novel: Modeling and Passionate Devices in *al-Hayy al-Latini* by Suhayl Idris." This research examines the transformation from passion to modal in narrative semiotics, exploring the interaction between passion and narration through semiotic elements. The study highlights the intricate nature of human experience and emotion in storytelling, emphasizing the importance of passionate techniques in creating narrative meaning.

Dolores Cabrera's (2018) "The Passions of the Vampire in Film: An Example of Affectivity and Cultural Representation in German and Mexican Cinema" analyzes the depiction of passion through the vampire archetype in cinema. Using semiotic analysis, Cabrera uncovers how narrative elements, alongside visual and auditory cues, construct the affective dimension of the vampire, revealing a complex interplay of passion, culture, and cinematic expression.

Another study, conducted by Muhammad Insan Taufika in 2016, is titled "Passion for Saving Country in Dan Brown's Deception Point (2001): An Existentialist Approach." This research aimed to investigate the theme of nationalistic passion in Dan Brown's novel "Deception Point" through an existentialist lens. By employing an existentialist methodology, the study focused on the conflict between individual desires and state interests depicted in the novel. The analysis highlighted how the characters' actions and motivations reflect existentialist principles, revealing themes of passion, personal autonomy, and the tension between individual beliefs and societal expectations. Through this perspective, the study offered significant insights into the human experience as portrayed in the novel.

While these studies offer valuable insights into the nature of passion, this research aims to fill a gap by applying Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion to a contemporary film character. This study's unique contribution lies in its focus on the transformation from obsessive to harmonious passion in the context of a modern cinematic narrative. By analyzing Sammy Fabelman's character in *The Fabelmans* (2022), this research provides a novel perspective on the psychological development of passion.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the transformation of passion in the character Sammy Fabelman in *The Fabelmans* (2022) using Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion. This involves examining Sammy's shift from an obsessive to a harmonious passion and identifying key moments and factors contributing to this transformation. The study aims to demonstrate the relevance and application of Vallerand's model in literary analysis, providing insights into the dynamic processes influencing changes in passion.

By achieving these objectives, this research hopes to contribute to understanding character

development in literature and film, highlighting the importance of psychological perspectives in literary analysis. This study also encourages future research to explore characters' passions for a more comprehensive understanding, bridging the gap between psychology and literature.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the transformation from obsessive to harmonious passion in the character of Sammy Fabelman, as depicted in the film *The Fabelmans* (2022). The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the narrative and character development, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social-contextual factors underlying the evolution of Sammy's passion. The primary data source for this study is the film *The Fabelmans* (2022), directed by Steven Spielberg. The researchers will conduct a close textual analysis of the film, focusing on the narrative structure, dialogues, and visual representations that portray Sammy's journey from obsessive to harmonious passion. In addition to the film, the researchers will also analyze relevant scholarly literature, including Vallerand's (2015) Dualistic Model of Passion and studies on the role of social-contextual factors in the development of passion, such as the work of Ryan et al. (2017). This secondary data will provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing and interpreting the primary data.

The primary limitation of this study is its reliance on a single film as the primary data source. While *The Fabelmans* provides a rich and compelling narrative for analyzing passion, the study's findings may not be generalizable to other cinematic representations of passion. Additionally, the study is delimited to applying Vallerand's (2015) Dualistic Model of Passion and examining social-contextual factors, which may not capture the full complexity of passion development.

The study will employ close observation to examine Sammy's passion's transformation within the film systematically. The researchers will follow a multi-step process, including familiarization with the data, coding and theme development, theme refinement and analysis, and triangulation and validation. As this study involves the analysis of a copyrighted film, the researchers will adhere to all applicable copyright laws and regulations. The study will not involve any human participants, and the data collection and analysis will be conducted solely by examining the publicly available film and scholarly literature.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the evolving passion of Sammy Fabelman, the protagonist in the film *The Fabelmans* (2022). Utilizing Robert Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion as the analytical framework, the chapter investigates the trajectory of Sammy's initial, intense interest as it transforms over time. The analysis focuses specifically on Sammy's experiences, tracing the development of his passion from an all-consuming state to a more balanced and fulfilling one. The chapter aims to illuminate the intricate relationship between a character's internal motivations and external influences by dissecting this internal shift. Understanding this interplay is critical for appreciating character development and recognizing passion's impact on an individual's overall well-being.

### 3.1 Sammy's Obsessive to Harmonious Passion

To understand the remarkable journey of Sammy's passion for filmmaking, we must delve into the clues scattered throughout the film. This analysis will explore three distinct phases in his relationship with this art form: the initial obsessive phase, the transformative period, and the culmination in a harmonious passion.

**Obsessive Passion:** In the beginning, Sammy's passion might manifest as an obsession. This could be characterized by a relentless focus on filmmaking, perhaps neglecting other aspects of his life. He might be fixated on capturing every moment on camera, driven by an insatiable urge to create.

**Transformation phase:** As the story progresses, Sammy's passion undergoes a transformation. This could be influenced by various factors, such as key experiences, encounters with mentors, or even setbacks. He might begin to see filmmaking not just as capturing moments, but as a way to interpret and communicate deeper truths.

**Harmonious Passion:** The final stage reflects a more mature and balanced passion. Sammy has likely gained a deeper understanding of himself and the art form. Filmmaking becomes a way of expressing his vision while existing in harmony with other aspects of his life.

By examining the film's portrayal of these stages, we can gain a richer understanding of how Sammy's passion for filmmaking evolves and matures.

#### 3.1.1 Sammy's Obsessive Passion

Obsessive Passion is a form of passion where an individual is driven to engage in an activity compulsively, often to the detriment of their well-being and social relationships. In the film *The Fabelmans* (2022), Sammy Fabelman's behavior exemplifies this concept, as his overpowering engagement with his passion dominates his life and identity. This is supported by the scenes below.

The first evidence is that the film presents several instances that illustrate Sammy's obsessive engagement

with his passion for filmmaking and reenacting train crashes. In one scene, Sammy suddenly wakes from a dream about a train crash and exclaims his desire for a Hanukkah gift, a train set



**Figure 1.** Sammy wakes up from the bed. (Timestamp: 00.05.23)

According to Vallerand (2015), This immediate, compulsive response, without regard for the late hour or potential disruption, typifies the overpowering need to pursue an activity that is characteristic of obsessive Passion.

Later, when Sammy plays with the train set at night, his interaction is not marked by joy or creative play but by a destructive curiosity.



**Figure 2:** Playing trains in the middle of the night. (Timestamp: 00.08.01)

The set up a scenario where the train crashes into a car, mimicking a scene from a movie. This compulsive need to recreate the exact scenario, as explained by Vallerand (2015) driven by an external influence (the film) rather than autonomous choice, suggests a controlled internalization of the activity, another hallmark of OP.

The disturbance caused by Sammy's night-time activities, which wake his parents, further highlights the inflexibility and lack of balance in his engagement with the train set.



**Figure 3:** His parents wake up as Sammy is playing with his train. (Timestamp: 00.08.29)

This absorption in his passion disrupts normal routines and creates conflict with family relationships, which Vallerand (2015) identifies as a characteristic of OP. The negative impacts on his property, family dynamics, and personal stress levels highlight the detrimental effects of Sammy's obsessive passion.

Sammy's behavior in all these scenes above aligns closely with Vallerand's (2015) description of OP, where individuals are driven by external pressures or internal compulsions rather than a free choice. His uncontrollable urge to reenact the train crash scene, even at inappropriate times, highlights the compulsive nature of his passion, which disrupts his sleep and family life, showcasing a lack of control over his engagement. Sammy's fixation on a specific outcome, the train crash, regardless of parental advice or situational demands, demonstrates a rigid, repetitive behavior pattern. This suggests a controlled internalization, where the passion is driven by internal compulsions rather than autonomous choice (Vallerand, 2015). The potential for property damage, family disturbance, and personal stress highlights the detrimental impact of Sammy's obsessive passion.

### 3.1.2 Sammy's Transformation Obsessive to Harmonious Passion

The analysis of *The Fabelmans* (2022) reveals Sammy's passion for filmmaking transforming from an initial state of Obsessive Passion (OP) towards a more Harmonious Passion (HP), as described in Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion (2015). This section examines the key signs and catalysts for this transformation in Sammy's behavior from the scenes below.

First, Sammy's mother gives him a camera, marking a significant change in his engagement with his hobbies. Previously, Sammy's focus was on repeatedly crashing his toy trains, a behavior characterized by a narrow and destructive obsession.



**Figure 4:** Gift of a camera. (Timestamp: 00.10.57)

The camera, however, allows him to record these events, shifting his interaction from merely staging crashes to documenting and reflecting on them. This initial step suggests a movement from destructive play towards a more thoughtful engagement.

Further evidence of transformation can be seen in the scenes where Sammy starts filming with his sisters.





**Figure 5:** Gift of a Camera. (Timestamp: 00.17.16)

Sammy's interaction with his sisters while making movies illustrates the blend of obsessive and harmonious passion. At first, his actions, such as using all the toilet tissue to create zombie costumes and startling his mother with his sister's screams, reflect his obsessive tendencies (Timestamp: 00:16:08 and 00:16:46). However, as he involves his siblings in creative filmmaking, using everyday items innovatively, Sammy's passion begins to transform. This shift from solitary, repetitive play to collaborative and imaginative filmmaking marks a significant change, indicating the emergence of harmonious passion.

Sammy's open expression of his desire to pursue filmmaking, despite his father's expectations of a conventional career path, highlights a pivotal moment in his development.



**Figure 6:** Debate with father. (Timestamp: 00:33:11)

This confrontation goes beyond a simple family disagreement; it underscores Sammy's dedication to his passion and his assertion of independence in choosing a path that resonates with him personally and creatively, despite external pressures to follow more conventional career routes. According to Vallerand's (2015) Dualistic Model of Passion, this behavior is characteristic of harmonious passion, where individuals exhibit autonomous internalization of activity and integrate it into their identity in a balanced manner.

The progression of Sammy's behavior demonstrates a clear shift from obsessive to harmonious passion. Initially, the camera serves as a tool to extend his obsessive behavior, allowing him to document train crashes. According to Vallerand et al. (2003), obsessive passion is driven by an internal compulsion to engage in an activity, often resulting in negative outcomes. Sammy's early use of the camera reflects this compulsion. However, as Sammy begins to use the camera for more diverse and creative projects, involving his siblings and utilizing everyday materials, his passion becomes more balanced and fulfilling. This change aligns with Vallerand's (2015)

concept of harmonious passion, which is characterized by positive emotions, a sense of volition, and integration with other life aspects, promoting overall well-being. The confrontation with his father further underscores this transformation. Sammy's insistence on pursuing filmmaking reflects his intrinsic motivation and autonomy, essential components of harmonious passion. By choosing a path that resonates with his personal interests and creativity, Sammy moves away from the rigid and compulsive nature of obsessive passion. This transition leads to greater personal fulfillment and reduces conflict in his life, highlighting the benefits of harmonious passion.

### 3.1.3 Sammy's Harmonious Passion

The journey of Sammy Fabelman in *The Fabelmans* (2022) offers a compelling illustration of Harmonious Passion (HP) as articulated in Vallerand's Dualistic Model of Passion. This section examines how HP is reflected in Sammy's filmmaking activities and how it drives his personal and creative development as can be seen from the evidence below.

First, Sammy's inventive approach to simulating gunfire in his movie by using pins demonstrates his deep engagement and technical skill.



**Figure 7:** Sammy uses creative ways to create a scene. (Timestamp: 00.31.45)

His ability to devise such a clever solution underscores his intrinsic motivation and enjoyment in tackling creative challenges, hallmarks of HP (Vallerand, 2015).

Next evidence, Sammy's direction of a war scene reveals his harmonious passion. His interaction with the actor Angelo, focusing on eliciting authentic emotions, shows his commitment to collaborative creativity.



**Figure 8:** Sammy directs Angelo as his actor. (Timestamp: 01.03.57)

Sammy's hands-on guidance helps Angelo get into his role, resulting in a performance that not only resonates more deeply with audiences but also demonstrates the powerful emotional exchange between director and actor. This engagement is not driven by external pressure but by genuine interest and enjoyment, characteristic of HP (Vallerand, 2015).

Also, during a camping trip, Sammy directs a movie involving his friends and father.



**Figure 9:** Sammy does collaboration to make a film. (Timestamp: 01.05.56)

His interaction with the actor Angelo, focusing on eliciting authentic emotions, shows his commitment to collaborative creativity. According to Vallerand (2015), this engagement is not driven by external pressure but by genuine interest and enjoyment, characteristic of HP.

Another scene that shows Sammy's meticulous preparation is showcased as he discusses his storyboard with Boris in his bedroom, surrounded by film editing tools and footage.



**Figure 10:** Sammy's plan for his next film. (Timestamp: )

His enthusiasm and detailed planning demonstrate his deep immersion and excitement for filmmaking. This scene reflects Sammy's thorough engagement and intrinsic satisfaction, which are characteristic of HP. His detailed preparation and excitement reflect the thorough engagement and intrinsic satisfaction associated with it as explained by Vallerand, (2015).

Another pivotal moment shows in the scene when Sammy is seen enjoying the filmmaking process as he operates the camera, completely absorbed in capturing the action on the beach.



**Figure 11:** Sammy enjoys filming Ditch Day. (Timestamp: 01.47.29)

His enjoyment and focused engagement highlight the genuine joy and creativity that define HP, as per Vallerand's model (Vallerand, 2015).

From the evidence above, Sammy's journey showcases key characteristics of Harmonious Passion (HP) in his filmmaking. His engagement is voluntary and intrinsically motivated, driven by personal enjoyment rather than external pressures (Vallerand, 2015). Sammy's innovative approach to simulating gunfire and his detailed planning highlight his intrinsic motivation and adaptive persistence. These qualities enable him to overcome challenges and maintain a flexible, resilient commitment to his craft.

Collaboration during the camping trip scene underscores the non-compulsive nature of Sammy's passion. His ability to work with others and share creative experiences without conflict reflects the social harmony that HP fosters (Vallerand, 2015). Additionally, Sammy's focus and enjoyment while filming "Ditch Day" exemplify the deep flow and concentration associated with HP, leading to enhanced performance and enjoyment.

Sammy's autonomy is evident in his filmmaking decisions, driven by his intrinsic motivation and love for the craft. His meticulous attention to detail and proactive approach to filmmaking illustrate his dedication to continuous improvement, key aspects of HP (Vallerand, 2015). These behaviors highlight his sense of autonomy, a cornerstone of HP, as he pursues his passion with genuine enjoyment and self-direction.

### 3.2 The Social-contextual Factors

To understand the complexity of Sammy's passion for filmmaking, it's essential to consider the social-contextual elements that influence and shape his engagement. This section examines the external factors that play a significant role in Sammy's journey, particularly in his transition from obsessive to harmonious passion. By drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Ryan et al. (2017), this analysis explores how Sammy's environment and interactions impact his dedication to filmmaking. This examination seeks to offer a deeper insight into how external conditions influence individual psychological development and the evolution of passion.

#### 3.2.1

#### Mother's

#### Gift

The pivotal moment when Sammy's mother, Mitzi, presents him with a camera marks the beginning of significant family support for his emerging interest in filmmaking. This gesture not only acknowledges Sammy's passion but also initiates a journey characterized by strong familial support, which plays a crucial role in shaping his passion and intrinsic motivation, as the scenes below.



**Figure 12:** His mother gives a camera. (Timestamp: 00.11.18)

The moment when Mitzi gives Sammy a camera to record the train crash represents the catalyst for Sammy's filmmaking journey. This thoughtful gesture from his mother creates a nurturing environment that values and encourages his artistic pursuits.

According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), social-contextual factors, such as the support provided by Sammy's family, can significantly influence the development and maintenance of an individual's passion (Ryan et al., 2017). Specifically, SDT emphasizes the importance of satisfying three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, in fostering intrinsic motivation and well-being.

Mitzi's gift of a camera to Sammy demonstrates autonomy support, which is crucial in enhancing intrinsic motivation and passion. By providing him with the freedom and resources to explore his filmmaking interests, Mitzi's actions foster a sense of volition and choice, allowing Sammy to align his actions with his personal values and interests (Ryan et al., 2017). This autonomy support empowers Sammy and enables him to take ownership of his creative pursuits, fueling his passion and commitment to filmmaking.

### 3.2.2 Father's Gift

In the film, Sammy's father, Burt, gives him a film editing machine. Burt's gesture comes with the condition that Sammy must use it to edit footage of their recent camping trip to help cheer up his grieving mother. This act is a significant demonstration of family support, blending an understanding of emotional needs with the therapeutic potential of filmmaking. Burt's recognition of Sammy's passion and his request to use it for family healing highlight the intersection of skill, support, and emotional care in fostering Sammy's filmmaking journey.



**Figure 13:** His father gives him an editing machine. (Timestamp: 02.15.54)

Burt's gift of the editing machine is a clear example of autonomy support. SDT suggests that environments promoting autonomy enable individuals to feel a sense of volition and choice, which enhances intrinsic motivation (Ryan et al., 2017). By providing Sammy with the editing machine, Burt supports his autonomy, allowing him to explore and refine his filmmaking skills independently. This support fosters a sense of ownership over his creative process, boosting his intrinsic motivation and commitment to his craft.

Additionally, Burt's gift represents competence support, as it offers Sammy the opportunity to further develop his technical skills and knowledge in the field of film editing. The editing machine and the specific task of editing the camping footage enable Sammy to demonstrate and enhance his capabilities, bolstering his sense of mastery and self-efficacy (Ryan et al., 2017). This competence support nurtures Sammy's passion by providing him with the resources and challenges necessary for skill development and growth.

Furthermore, Burt's gesture of assigning Sammy the task of editing the camping footage to cheer up his grieving mother reflects the need for relatedness support. By recognizing the emotional needs of the family and asking Sammy to use his filmmaking skills to provide comfort and support, Burt fosters a sense of belonging, emotional connection, and mutual understanding within the family (Ryan et al., 2017). This relatedness support contributes to Sammy's overall well-being and passion, as he can engage in his creative pursuits while feeling a strong sense of belonging and social support.

### 3.2.3 The Friends

In *The Fabelmans* (2022), Sammy Fabelman's friends play a crucial role in nurturing his passion for filmmaking. By examining their contributions through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), it can be better to understand how social-contextual factors influence Sammy's engagement and enthusiasm for his craft.





**Figure 14:** Collaboration support. (Timestamp: 00.25.01)

Sammy's friends significantly contribute to his filmmaking efforts, as seen in several key moments. During the production of "Escape to Nowhere," Sammy's friend assists in framing shots and ensuring that the action is captured as intended. This collaboration highlights the practical support Sammy receives

Additionally, during the screening of Sammy's Ditch Day film. The students' applause and cheers showcase the social support and recognition Sammy receives from his peers, enhancing his sense of belonging and validation within his school community.



**Figure 15:** His friend is happy with the results of the Ditch Day Movie. (Timestamp: 02.01.37)

The encouragement and assistance from Sammy's friends foster a sense of autonomy in his filmmaking pursuits. According to Ryan et al. (2017), autonomy support is critical in promoting intrinsic motivation by allowing individuals to feel a sense of volition and choice in their actions. Sammy's ability to direct and make creative decisions, supported by his friends' involvement, empowers him to pursue his passion with greater enthusiasm and dedication.

The collaborative environment Sammy shares with his friends enhances his sense of competence. Ryan et al. (2017) emphasize that environments offering opportunities for skill development are essential for fostering a sense of mastery. Sammy's friends help him refine his filmmaking skills, providing feedback and participating actively in his projects. This support boosts his confidence and self-efficacy, driving his passion and commitment to filmmaking.

The positive reactions and applause from Sammy's peers during the Ditch Day screening underscore the importance of relatedness. SDT posits that feeling connected and supported by others enhances motivation and engagement (Ryan et al., 2017). The social support Sammy receives from his friends and school community

fosters a sense of belonging, further fueling his passion for filmmaking by making him feel valued and understood.

### 3.2.3 The Audience

In "The Fabelmans" (2022), the reactions of the audience significantly impact Sammy Fabelman's passion for filmmaking. By examining these reactions through the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), it can be understood how social-contextual factors play a role in nurturing Sammy's engagement and enthusiasm for his craft.

Two notable instances highlight the audience's impact on Sammy. First, during a screening of Sammy's film, the audience's applause visibly surprises him, gradually replacing his doubts with a sense of achievement and pride.



**Figure 16:** The reaction of the audience. (Timestamp: 00.31.20)

Second, his family's enthusiastic reaction to his war film illustrates their support and admiration. Their applause and appreciation reinforce his creative efforts and validate his talent, acting as powerful motivators.



**Figure 17:** The reaction of his parents. (Timestamp: 01.09.20)

The audience's enthusiastic response to Sammy's films can be interpreted as a form of relatedness support, where Sammy experiences a sense of belonging, acceptance, and connection with his audience (Ryan et al., 2017). This support for his relatedness can enhance his motivation, engagement, and passion for filmmaking, as he feels validated and appreciated by those around him.

However, the family's reactions, while ostensibly supportive, may also contribute to the development of Sammy's obsessive passion. Mitzi's emotional instability and the family's turbulent dynamics create an environment that is not fully conducive to the healthy development of Sammy's passion (Timestamp: 02.15.54). The conditional support and emotional dependency within the family can lead Sammy to internalize a sense of self-worth that is



heavily tied to his filmmaking success and his ability to provide emotional comfort for his mother (Ryan et al., 2017). This can result in an obsessive passion where Sammy's identity and sense of control become excessively entangled with his filmmaking activities, leading to a lack of balance and an inability to disengage from his passion.

Furthermore, the family's limited opportunities for consistent and constructive feedback on Sammy's filmmaking skills may contribute to the development of his obsessive passion. Without adequate competence support, Sammy may seek validation and a sense of mastery through his filmmaking, rather than experiencing it as a harmonious pursuit (Ryan et al., 2017). This can perpetuate the cycle of obsession and the imbalance in Sammy's life, as he becomes increasingly driven to prove his worth and capabilities through his filmmaking.

The analysis of Sammy's passion in *The Fabelmans* (2022) highlights the significant influence of the audience, particularly his family's reactions, on the development of his obsessive passion for filmmaking. While the audience's enthusiastic response provides a form of relatedness support that can enhance Sammy's motivation and engagement, the family's conditional support and lack of consistent competence support contribute to the formation of an obsessive passion, where Sammy's identity and sense of self-worth become heavily invested in his filmmaking pursuits. The interplay between the audience's reactions and the social-contextual factors within Sammy's family environment play a crucial role in shaping the dualistic nature of his passion, leading to the compulsive behavior and imbalance that characterize his obsessive passion.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In Steven Spielberg's *The Fabelmans*, Sammy's journey vividly illustrates the transition from obsessive to harmonious passion, echoing Vallerand's dualistic model. Initially fixated on a train crash scene, Sammy's engagement reflects obsessive passion, driven by internal pressures and often leading to adverse outcomes. However, as he observes deeper into filmmaking, a shift towards harmonious passion becomes evident. Filmmaking evolves into a source of joy and creative expression, fostering intrinsic motivation and balance in Sammy's life. Social factors, such as Mitzi and Burt's support and the enthusiastic reactions from family and friends, play a crucial role in this transformation. These interactions fulfill Sammy's need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, empowering and validating his skills. The collaborative nature of filmmaking further enhances his sense of independence within a supportive community, leading to a more profound, fulfilling passion. This narrative highlights the transformative power of social-contextual influences on passion, underscoring the

importance of supportive environments in nurturing sustainable interests and well-being.

#### 5. SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis, a potential theme for future research could be observed in the theme of resilience concerning Sammy's interest in filmmaking within *The Fabelmans*. Exploring how Sammy's resilience contributes to his passion for filmmaking could offer valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms behind his creative pursuits. Understanding how resilience influences Sammy's ability to overcome challenges, setbacks, and self-doubt in his filmmaking journey could provide a deeper understanding of the factors that shape passion development in individuals facing adversity. This study could investigate the role of resilience as a protective factor against burnout, frustration, and creative blocks, ultimately contributing to a broader understanding of the interplay between passion, resilience, and creative expression. Such research has the potential to shed light on the transformative power of resilience in fostering sustained engagement and fulfillment in artistic endeavors, offering valuable implications for personal growth, education, and mental health interventions.

#### REFERENCES

- Cabrera, D. (2018). The passions of the vampire in film: An example of affectivity and cultural representation in German and Mexican cinema. *ffk Journal*, (3), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/2929>
- Huéscar Hernández, E., Moreno-Murcia, J. A., Cid, L., Monteiro, D., & Rodrigues, F. (2020). Passion or perseverance? The effect of perceived autonomy support and grit on academic performance in college students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(6), 2143. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17062143>
- Imène, B. (2018). Passion and narration in the contemporary Arab novel. *Chinese Semiotic Studies*, 14(1), 57-69. <https://doi.org/10.1515/css-2018-0004>
- Oulam, N. T. (2018). The power of passion: A psychoanalytical study of Hamlet. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 7(9), 18070. <https://doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2018/v7/i9/SEP18070>

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness. The Guilford Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1521/978.14625/28806>.
- Spielberg, S., & Kushner, T. (2022). *The Fabelmans* [PDF script/screenplay]. Universal Pictures.  
[https://awards.universalpictures.com/the-fabelmans/screenplay/The\\_Fabelmans.pdf](https://awards.universalpictures.com/the-fabelmans/screenplay/The_Fabelmans.pdf)
- Spielberg, S. (2022). *The Fabelmans* [Film]. Amblin Entertainment; Hulu.  
<https://www.hulu.com/movie/the-fabelmans-6460529d-7de4-4b3b-8f47-ae2e978890c1>
- Taufika, M. I. (2016). Passion for saving country in Dan Brown's Deception Point (2001): An existentialist approach (Skripsi thesis). Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Available from <https://eprints.ums.ac.id/44204/>
- Vallerand, R. J. (2008). On the psychology of passion: In search of what makes people's lives most worth living. Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 49(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0708-5591.49.1.1>
- Vallerand, R. J. (2015). The Psychology of Passion: A Dualistic Model. Oxford University Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199777600.001.0001>
- Vallerand, R. J., Blanchard, C., Mageau, G. A., Koestner, R., Ratelle, C., Léonard, M., ... & Marsolais, J. (2003). Les passions de l'ame: on obsessive and harmonious passion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(4), 756-767. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.85.4.756>