

The Motivation Behind the Struggles of Characters with Disabilities in You Xiaoying's Film Big World

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Abstract.

This study examines the motivation underlying Liu Chunhe's struggle and the representation of disability in Big World. A descriptive interpretive qualitative approach was employed through repeated film observation, dialogue documentation, screenshots, and a literature review. The analysis combines Maslow's needs perspective, Self-Determination Theory, and John Fiske's levels of reality, representation, and ideology. The findings indicate that Chunhe's struggle involves aspirations for education, meaningful work, autonomy, and recognition. His grandmother's encouragement supports competence and relatedness, while maternal overprotection and institutional rejection constrain his choices. Gestures, facial expressions, dialogue, framing, and contrasting domestic and public settings construct these motivational tensions. The film presents disability as an experience shaped by interactions between bodily conditions and social barriers. The study concludes that Chunhe's agency develops through the relationship between personal aspirations and opportunities for participation, emphasizing recognition and supportive relationships in an inclusive understanding of disability.

Keywords: Big World; disability representation; motivation; self-determination and semiotics.

I. INTRODUCTION

The representation of people with disabilities in film is related to who is given the opportunity to speak, make decisions, and determine the direction of their lives. While characters with disabilities may be central to the story, their presence does not necessarily guarantee equal representation. Plot, dialogue, and visual choices can demonstrate a character's abilities while simultaneously perpetuating the perception that their lives are defined by limitations. Therefore, film studies need to consider the relationship between physical conditions, social experiences, and characters' actions. This issue becomes crucial when stories of struggle are understood solely as individuals' successes in overcoming adversity, while the rejection and limitations they face receive less attention.

Disability studies provides a foundation for critically examining these relationships. Goodley (2017) situates disability within a cross-disciplinary discussion that connects individual experiences to social and cultural structures. This perspective helps explain that difficulties in participation are not simply explained through one's bodily characteristics. The ways in which environments regulate access, assess abilities, and treat differences also need to be examined. In film analysis, attention is then drawn to the actions of other characters and institutions that determine whether people with disabilities have opportunities to attend school, work, build relationships, and express their will.

Jeffress (2022) points to the importance of diverse depictions of disability in film, television, and print media. Portrayals limited to victims, objects of pity, or exceptional figures can simplify the experiences of people with disabilities. Characters need to be understood through a more complete life, including their desires, abilities, conflicts, and social relationships. In this context, success stories still need to be read with attention to the social conditions that made that success possible. Recognition for someone should not depend on their ability to demonstrate impressive achievements.

The film Big World is a relevant object because it depicts Liu Chunhe, a young man with cerebral palsy, in his struggle for education and independence. Directed by Yang Lina and screenplayed by You Xiaoying, the film was released in 2024. The story juxtaposes Chunhe's desire to determine her future with her grandmother's support, her mother's anxiety, and her environment's responses. These conflicts present struggles as everyday experiences: seeking teaching opportunities, pursuing work, defending choices, and expressing thoughts to others. Thus, the characters' motivations can be traced through the actions and relationships developed throughout the story (Yang, 2024).

In this study, motivation is understood as a process that directs and sustains a character's actions. Urhahne and Wijnia (2023) explain that motivation theory can help connect situations, self, goals, actions,

and expected outcomes. This framework is relevant for distinguishing Chunhe's desires, her actions, and the circumstances that support or hinder them. However, because the subject of this study is a fictional character, motivation is interpreted as a narrative construct. This interpretation is not intended as a clinical assessment of the characters, actors, or people with disabilities outside the film.

Maslow's needs perspective is used primarily to understand the pursuit of esteem and self-actualization. Kaufman's (2020) discussion of Maslow's thinking places the development of potential, connectedness, and purpose in life as part of human growth. In the film, Chunhe's desire to become a teacher can be interpreted as an effort to build a life that she values. The need for recognition is also evident when she desires her abilities to be assessed through her actions. This perspective is used flexibly to read the characters' experiences, without assuming that all needs must be met in a rigid order.

Self-Determination Theory complements this reading through the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Ryan and Deci (2017) explain that support for or resistance to basic psychological needs is related to the quality of motivation. Autonomy refers to the experience of acting based on a recognized will, competence to the experience of being able, and relatedness to meaningful relationships. In this study, family support is treated as a social condition that can maintain a character's motivation. External support does not automatically equate to extrinsic motivation, because the quality of motivation also depends on the character's reasons for taking action.

This distinction is necessary so that the desire for independence is not equated with a rejection of all support. A person can make choices while accepting the support of others. Conversely, seemingly independent actions can be driven by pressure to gain approval. Ryan (2023) places the quality of the social environment as a crucial element in the discussion of self-determination. Within this framework, Chunhe's relationship with her grandmother and mother can be understood through the distinction between support that opens up space for choice and protection that takes over the character's decisions.

This motivation is conveyed through audiovisual forms. Bordwell et al. (2024) outline the relationship between narrative form and *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound in film analysis. Therefore, the interpretation of Chunhe's struggle does not stop at the dialogue. Camera distance, body position, relationships between characters in space, and the transition from the living room to the public space also shape the interpretation. John Fiske's semiotic analysis provides three levels of reading: reality, representation, and ideology, which have been used in disability studies by Wicaksono and Tutiasri (2023). All three help connect visible signs with constructed social meanings.

Previous research has shown several directions related to this issue. Wicaksono and Tutiasri (2023) used Fiske's semiotics to examine discrimination against people with disabilities in *Miracle in Cell No. 7*. Banjarnahor and Cindoswari (2023) examined the moral message of the Indonesian version of the film through Roland Barthes's semiotics. Both studies demonstrated that the characters' experiences can be read through the relationship between signs and values conveyed in the story. These differences in approach also demonstrate the need to establish a clear analytical framework so that the description of the moral message is not directly equated with the explanation of the character's motivational process.

Permana et al. (2024), through their study of *Dunia Tanpa Suara*, linked cinematic elements to the principles of non-discrimination, awareness, participation, and accessibility. Meanwhile, Andira and Malayati (2024) found a dilemma between developing empathy and reinforcing stereotypes of helplessness in the representation of disability in the Indonesian version of *Miracle in Cell No. 7*. These findings serve as a reminder that the appearance of characters who elicit sympathy requires further examination. Analysis should examine whether the story provides space for characters to act and determine goals, and how the environment responds to their actions.

Based on this study, this research focuses on the relationship between motivation and representation within a single character in a Mandarin-language film. The focus goes beyond identifying scenes of discrimination, but also explores how personal aspirations, support, and limited opportunities relate to Chunhe's struggle. The research questions cover the forms of internal drive and external factors that influence the character's struggle, as well as how the film constructs these through audiovisual cues. The research aims to explain this relationship by combining the perspectives of needs, self-determination, and

Fiske's semiotics. The expected contribution is a reading of disability that considers both the character's empowerment and the social conditions that shape her space for action.

II. METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach with a descriptive interpretive type. This approach was chosen because the research objective was to interpret the meaning of actions, dialogue, and character representation within the context of the story. The data were not used to calculate motivation levels or statistically test relationships between variables. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize the importance of a congruence between questions, data sources, and the interpretation process in qualitative research. In this study, this congruence is realized by making Liu Chunhe's experiences in the film the center of the reading.

The primary data source is the Mandarin-language film "Big World" (Yang, 2024), approximately 131 minutes long. Data include dialogue, actions, expressions, gestures, interactions between characters, and visual elements related to Chunhe's struggle. The unit of analysis is a series of scenes depicting personal goals, attempts to demonstrate abilities, support, or limitations on opportunities. Time markers are used to indicate the location of footage within the documented version of the film. These markers aid data tracking but are not a measure of the frequency or magnitude of a form of motivation.

Data collection was conducted through repeated film observations, documentation, and literature review. Initial observations focused on understanding the plot and character relationships. Subsequent observations focused on dialogue, expressions, conflicts, and actions related to the research focus. Documentation resulted in scene notes, dialogue excerpts, and screenshots. Dialogue was discussed in Indonesian based on documented translations along with the clips. The study did not conduct a linguistic analysis of the accuracy of the subtitle translations.

A literature review is used to explain the concepts of motivation, disability representation, and film analysis, and to situate the findings in relation to previous research. Hart (2018) emphasizes the role of literature review in constructing arguments and assessing relationships between ideas. The literature serves as an interpretive tool, while evidence about Chunhe's actions remains derived from the film. This limitation prevents previous research findings from being interpreted as evidence that the character automatically experiences the same psychological states as other research subjects.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument, assisted by a categorization guide. The first category encompasses internal drives, such as educational aspirations, the will to make choices, self-esteem, and skill development. The second category encompasses external factors, such as family support, environmental responses, and institutional rejection. The third category encompasses representations of disability through the body, language, interactions, and cinematic elements. Categories can overlap, as a single scene can depict both a character's desires and the social response to those desires.

Analysis was conducted through data recording, grouping themes, semiotic reading, and motivational interpretation. At the level of reality, attention was directed to behavior, expressions, gestures, clothing, settings, and conversations within the story world. At the level of representation, attention was directed to image framing, camera distance, character placement, lighting, and the presentation of interactions. At the level of ideology, data were interpreted in relation to norms of ability, recognition, equality, and the right to participate. The use of these three levels refers to the application of Fiske's framework in Wicaksono and Tutiasri (2023) and Andira and Malayati (2024).

The results of the semiotic reading are then linked to the needs for esteem and self-actualization in Maslow's perspective, as well as autonomy, competence, and relatedness in Self-Determination Theory. The term internal drive is used for the desires expressed or demonstrated by the character, while external factors indicate the social circumstances surrounding them. This grouping is not intended to be an absolute equation with the dichotomy of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This distinction is necessary because educational and occupational goals can simultaneously encompass personal satisfaction, internalized values, economic needs, and the hope for recognition.

The discussion prioritizes footage with relevant action or dialogue and traceable time signatures. Relationships between findings are examined through rereading the context of scenes and narrative

sequences. Interpretations of meaning are differentiated from descriptions seen in screenshots; still images are not sufficient to prove the overall sound or editing patterns. The scope of the study is limited to the construction of characters within a single film. The study does not involve interviews with filmmakers, measurement of audience response, or assessment of the real lives of people with disabilities.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that Liu Chunhe's struggle is shaped by the relationship between the goals she maintains and the opportunities available in her environment. Her desire to obtain an education, work, and express her thoughts guides her actions. Her grandmother provides support that strengthens her beliefs, while her mother's anxiety and rejection from her environment create tension. The film brings these two sides together in everyday scenes. Therefore, Chunhe's empowerment cannot be explained simply as a fixed personal trait; empowerment emerges when the character's desires gain or lose space for realization. Table 1 summarizes the relationship between scene evidence and the motivational themes discussed.

Table 1. Evidence of motivational scenes and themes

Scene and time	Theme and basis of interpretation
Teaching 00:14:17	Competence is evident through the delivery of poetry and learning activities in class.
School refusal 00:16:53–00:16:55	Opportunities are limited by considering children's responses. Personal recognition is different from institutional access.
Working at the shop 00:57:43–00:57:46	Job roles demonstrate ability and participation in daily service activities.
Desire to teach 01:09:57	Professional goals and income indicate personal values and the will to participate in determining life.
Family conflict 01:20:44–01:21:24	Chunhe demands to be heard amidst family relationships that limit her choices.
Grandma's support 01:29:15	Recognition of concrete actions demonstrates competence and reciprocity within the family.
College admissions 01:51:03–01:51:34	Institutional opportunities support educational aspirations; achievements are shared in meaningful relationships.
Poetry in public space 02:00:47–02:01:05	The idea of happiness gives place to the voice of the characters in communal life.

Source: Big World scene documentation (Yang, 2024).

Early in the story, Chunhe's position within the urban landscape introduces the relationship between the individual and social space. The shot at 00:02:00 shows the character against a backdrop of buildings that dominate the picture plane. Descriptively, the difference in scale between the body and the environment is clear. Interpretatively, this framing can be read as an introduction to a world larger than the character's personal space. This image does not directly demonstrate discrimination, but provides visual context for Chunhe's journey through various social spaces throughout the film.



Fig.1. Chunhe in urban space Source: Big World (Yang, 2024), 00:02:00.

The desire to become a teacher is one of Chunhe's central motivations. This goal presents education as a path to developing skills and establishing a social role. What the character strives for is not simply acceptance into an institution, but the opportunity to find a place for her intellectual abilities. This reading aligns with the self-actualization perspective, which links the development of potential with a life deemed meaningful (Kaufman, 2020). Within the context of the story, this aspiration provides direction for Chunhe's efforts to confront the persistent doubts emanating from her environment.

The scene at 00:14:17 shows Chunhe reciting poetry in front of the classroom. Her body posture and difficulty in articulation remain visible alongside her delivery. This connection is important because the film does not erase the body's role in demonstrating competence. Instead, competence is demonstrated through the activities she performs with her body. The character is present as a conveyor of ideas and a participant in learning activities. At the ideological level, this scene opens up the possibility of separating assessments of competence from assessments based on the body's suitability to environmental customs.

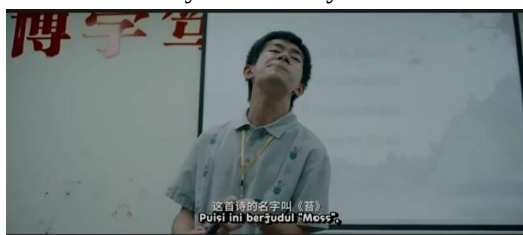


Fig. 2. Chunhe recites poetry in classSource: Big World (Yang, 2024), 00:14:17.

The grandmother's positive response after the teaching activity at 00:16:40 reinforces this reading. The grandmother's praise focuses on Chunhe's actions, providing concrete basis for the recognition. This scene brings together the experience of trying, demonstrating ability, and receiving feedback from those close to her. From a competency perspective, the meaning lies in the opportunity to gain experience of being capable. However, the grandmother's positive assessment does not resolve the issue, as the institution's decision may take into account a different perspective than the newly demonstrated skills.

This tension becomes apparent in the conversation with the school administrator around 00:16:53–00:16:55. The rationale for considering the children's feelings emerges when Chunhe's opportunity is discussed. The cautious language doesn't directly address her teaching shortcomings. Concern about others' reactions becomes the basis for the restrictions. At the level of reality, meaning emerges through the conversation and the characters' positions. At the level of ideology, the scene can be read as an exclusionary practice that operates through social propriety, rather than through an overt assessment of individual performance.



Fig. 3. School administrators' considerations regarding ChunheSource: Big World (Yang, 2024), 00:16:55.

It's important to distinguish the rejection the film represents from a general statement about all educational institutions. This data reveals a limiting mechanism within the story world: the characters' demonstrated abilities are insufficient when appearance and potential environmental responses are the primary considerations. This mechanism explains why personal motivation requires social opportunities. Chunhe may have a clear goal, but institutions still play a role in determining whether that goal is achievable. The struggle, therefore, revolves around the relationship between will and access.

These findings resonate with Wicaksono and Tutiasri's (2023) study, which positions discrimination as a representational issue in *Miracle in Cell No. 7*. In *Big World*, attention can be focused on how limitations occur after a character demonstrates competence. This distinction places analytical emphasis on the process of recognition: someone can be personally appreciated but not yet afforded equal opportunities

institutionally. This relationship necessitates reading emotional recognition and access to participation as interconnected, without assuming they are necessarily coexistent.

The pursuit of work reveals another side of the desire to determine life. At 00:57:43–00:57:46, Chunhe is seen handing over drinks and making coffee. These activities connect independence to concrete tasks in the workplace. Attention is drawn not only to resilience in the face of adversity, but also to coordination of actions and engagement in service. By depicting everyday work, the film places emphasis on abilities that do not necessarily manifest through spectacular achievements. Participation becomes important because the characters acquire roles that can be played and recognized by others.



Fig. 4. Chunhe carries out service workSource: Big World (Yang, 2024), 00:57:43.

At the level of reality, the work scene presents Chunhe's body as one performing a task within a social interaction. At the level of representation, the tavern environment and the involvement of other characters provide context for these actions. The meaning of competence emerges from the character's relationship to the tasks, objects, and people around her. Independence does not necessarily mean the ability to do everything without support. Instead, work demonstrates that independent living also occurs through interdependent relationships that enable individuals to contribute.

The desire to earn income is emphasized in the conversation around 01:09:57. Chunhe expresses a desire to earn money through teaching. This statement links educational aspirations with responsibility for her life. At the same time, this desire should not be simplified as purely intrinsic motivation. Income is an outcome external to the activity, while the desired profession has personal value for the character. Urhahne and Wijnia (2023) explain that autonomously experienced motivation can include instrumental actions deemed important by the individual.

Thus, Chunhe's aspirations demonstrate several intertwined reasons for acting. She wants to develop her skills, become a teacher, earn income, and reduce dependence on others for decision-making. Analysis does not necessarily need to single out one reason as the sole cause. The presence of multiple goals helps explain the character's persistence and the tension she experiences. When teaching opportunities are limited, not only her income is threatened, but also Chunhe's way of envisioning herself as a contributing adult with a sense of direction and purpose.

The conflict with the mother presents a different obstacle than institutional rejection. In the sequence around 01:20:44–01:21:24, the family interaction reveals emotional tension through the characters' expressions, utterances, and positions within the domestic space. The mother cannot be read simply as unloving of Chunhe. The scene demonstrates the conflict between affection, environmental anxiety, and the desire to control risk. In this article, this conflict is understood as a narrative context that limits Chunhe's choice space, without establishing a diagnosis or intention not stated in the data.

Chunhe's remark about her unwanted fate at 01:21:24 demonstrates a need to be heard within family relationships. This response demonstrates her awareness of her life's hardships and her desire to be recognized as someone with her own perspective. The struggle extends beyond leaving the house or seeking employment. It also occurs when Chunhe expresses experiences that differ from her mother's assessments. This dialogue shifts the character's position from being spoken to expressing her experiences and desires.

The differences between mother and daughter's positions highlight the issue of autonomy. Family support can provide protection, but it can also be limiting if decisions are continually made without room for individual will. The self-determination framework focuses on the experience of choice and ownership of actions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, reading the conflict goes beyond the question of whether the

mother's intentions are good. A more relevant analytical question is how protective actions affect Chunhe's opportunities to set goals and explore her abilities.

The mother's conversation around 01:37:18–01:37:23 expands on this context. Her reluctance to celebrate birthdays or apply for disability certificates, as documented in the scene, demonstrates the burden she associates with her child's condition. This scene is not sufficient to encompass the experiences of all families with disabilities. However, in the story, it demonstrates how social anxiety can infiltrate the domestic sphere. Protection, then, is not only a response to the physical condition, but also to the perception of how society will judge the family and child.

This relationship illustrates the dual nature of the immediate environment. Family is both a place of support and a place where one's decisions can be limited. Chunhe fights for space to act within a relationship that remains meaningful to her. Therefore, independence is not represented as a severance of the relationship with her mother. Instead, the conflict demonstrates the need to acknowledge the child's will within that relationship. The film opens up the understanding that affection and autonomy need to be negotiated through listening, providing opportunities, and recognizing demonstrated abilities.

Family pressure also cannot be immediately considered beneficial simply because Chunhe persists. In the data, rejection and arguments reveal the emotional costs the character endures. Persistence after experiencing pressure demonstrates how the character responds to circumstances, not evidence that pressure is necessary to generate motivation. This limitation of interpretation prevents the narrative of struggle from becoming a justification for oppressive treatment. Chunhe's resilience can be appreciated while still critiquing the conditions that limit her options.

In contrast to this pattern, the grandmother's support is more often associated with acknowledging Chunhe's actions. At 01:29:15, the grandmother responds positively when receiving food prepared by her granddaughter. This excerpt showcases support in a simple, everyday exchange. Chunhe doesn't just receive attention; she also does something for her grandmother. Their relationship is therefore reciprocal. The disabled character is presented as someone who can provide, care for, and bring joy to family members.



Fig. 5. Grandmother's confession of Chunhe's actions Source: Big World (Yang, 2024), 01:29:15.

Praising concrete actions provides a different form of recognition than pity. Grandmother gives meaning to Chunhe's newly demonstrated abilities and positions her as a capable actor. On the level of reality, this meaning emerges through the conversation and closeness between the characters. On the level of representation, the placement of the two in the same space demonstrates a direct interaction. On the level of ideology, the scene can be read as a recognition of the value of everyday activities, including those not always considered major accomplishments by the social environment.

The connectedness of the relationship does not eliminate the need for autonomy. Instead, the grandmother's support creates a space for Chunhe to act on her own initiative. Ryan (2023) emphasizes that a supportive environment for psychological needs is related to the quality of an individual's engagement. In the film's interpretation, this idea helps explain why the warmth of the relationship and the opportunity to act can coexist. The grandmother doesn't have to solve all of Chunhe's problems to be a source of support; the recognition of her actions already provides a space for the character to experience herself as a capable person.

The moment of university acceptance at 01:51:03–01:51:34 reconciles personal aspirations with institutional recognition and family support. Chunhe shows her grandmother the acceptance news. In this excerpt, the document they read together becomes an object that connects hope with future possibilities. This scene contrasts with the school rejection earlier in the story. In the beginning, social responses limited

opportunities after demonstrated ability; here, an institution presents an opportunity that brings Chunhe closer to her educational goals.



Fig. 6. News of Chunhe's acceptance into universitySource: Big World (Yang, 2024), 01:51:06.

This acceptance can be interpreted through the need for esteem and self-actualization. However, its meaning should not be overstated as proof that all obstacles have been overcome. The film simply shows the opening of a significant opportunity in the character's journey. This success is part of development, not a guarantee that a subsequent life will be free from discrimination. This reading maintains the connection between personal achievement and social conditions: abilities need to be developed, while access to education remains a prerequisite for that development.

The grandmother's response to the news also demonstrates that Chunhe's achievement has a relational dimension. Her joy is not solely focused on the status she attained, but also on the possibility of pursuing her dreams. She shares this experience with those who previously supported her. Thus, autonomy is not an experience entirely separate from community. The opportunity to shape one's future gains meaning when it can be discussed and celebrated within a relationship that recognizes individual choice.

The poetry reading in the public space around 02:00:47–02:01:05 showcases another stage of Chunhe's empowerment. The character speaks of a happiness that encompasses everyone. The meaning of the scene goes beyond her own desire for acceptance. She conveys ideas that reach out to others, connecting personal experiences with a shared perspective on life. The film places the character's voice at a crucial point in the plot. Chunhe appears as a voice of thought, not merely the center of attention due to her physical condition.



Fig. 7. Chunhe conveys views on happinessSource: Big World (Yang, 2024), 02:01:05.

At the level of reality, facial expressions and articulation remain integral to conveying ideas. At the level of representation, the close proximity of the image draws attention to Chunhe's face. This proximity allows speech and expression to be read together, without obscuring the perceived difficulty. Ideologically, the scene opens up space for interpreting public speaking as participation. The focus is not on the conformity of the speaking style to a specific standard, but rather on the character's opportunity to convey ideas deemed important.

This final scene can be linked to Martela and Ryan's (2023) discussion of psychological functions and basic needs in understanding well-being. Well-being is not only related to fleeting feelings of pleasure, but also to the ability to lead a meaningful life and relationships. In the context of Chunhe, this reading helps understand the relationship between opportunities to speak, feelings of competence, and social recognition. This interpretation remains limited to narrative meaning; the film does not provide a measure of the characters' psychological well-being.

When all the excerpts are read together, the level of reality reveals the body, expression, and interaction as interconnected signs. Chunhe's gestures do not stand alone as markers of limitations. The same gestures are present when she teaches, works, debates, gives something to her grandmother, and recites poetry. This variety of contexts is important because it prevents the character's body from being limited to a single

meaning. Physical condition is part of the character's portrayal, while the value of her actions is also determined by her goals, the situation, and the responses of others.

The levels of representation reveal how space and framing organize attention. The classroom connects ability to institutional judgment, the shop connects it to work activities, the home shows negotiations within the family, and the public space provides a place for self-expression. The transition between spaces helps the reader see that obstacles and supports do not always appear in the same form. Visual choices become meaningful through their relationship to the characters' actions, not through the assumption that one camera technique always has one fixed meaning.

This relationship between form and meaning aligns with Bordwell et al.'s (2024) discussion of film style analysis. In *Big World*, audiovisual cues need to be read as part of the narrative context. Close-ups, for example, can emphasize either tension or conviction, depending on the scene in which they are used. Because the study focused on documenting specific scenes, conclusions about the film's overall style were not extended to claims about all shots or the entire sound design. The analysis maintained a focus on elements that support the interpretation of the selected data.

At the ideological level, the film contrasts judgment based on physical appearance with recognition of will and action. School rejection, family restrictions, and grandmother's confession demonstrate that individuals can be judged by different standards in different social spaces. The value of inclusivity emerges when Chunhe is given the opportunity to engage in activities and express choices. However, a critical reading is still necessary to prevent acceptance from being interpreted as a gift granted only after the character has proven her exceptionality.

This consideration relates to Andira and Malayati's (2024) warning regarding the dilemma of empathy and stereotypes of powerlessness. Scenes that elicit sympathy can open up attention to a character, but are not enough to ensure an equal portrayal. In *Big World*, Chunhe's actions in education, work, and family relationships provide the basis for a broader reading of empowerment. Recognition emerges not only through public performances but also through ordinary activities that demonstrate the ability to choose, try, and give.

Permana et al.'s (2024) study places cinematic elements in relation to participation and accessibility. The *Big World* findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between being present in social spaces and having the opportunity to play a role within them. Chunhe could be in school, but institutional decisions limit her opportunities. She could be in a loving family, but still must fight for her space of choice. Conversely, employment opportunities and educational attainment allow her to have a more concrete role. This distinction helps focus discussions of inclusivity on the quality of participation.

Compared to Banjarnahor and Cindoswari's (2023) reading of moral messages, this analysis emphasizes the process by which characters' actions are shaped. Compassion and perseverance retain moral value, but the study also examines how they relate to opportunity, recognition, and control. Thus, the focus goes beyond the message that one must continue to struggle. The discussion reveals why the struggle occurs, how the environment shapes it, and what conditions provide greater room for characters to pursue their chosen goals.

The relationship between internal drives and external factors can be summarized as a mutually influencing process. Educational aspirations provide direction for action; opportunities to work and teach provide empowering experiences; grandmother's support provides validation; and restrictions force Chunhe to negotiate her choices. This relationship is not mechanical. One form of support can have different meanings depending on the context, while rejection can lead to disappointment without necessarily eliminating goals. The film demonstrates these dynamics through changing situations and actions, not through a scoreable psychological measure.

A disability studies perspective helps prevent motivational interpretations from placing all responsibility on the individual. Goodley (2017) provides a framework for connecting disability experiences to social relations. In Chunhe's analysis, perseverance is a crucial part of the story, but the opening of opportunities also requires environmental responses. Characters cannot override institutional decisions simply by sheer will. This reading avoids the conclusion that success is solely the result of positive attitudes or that obstacles can be overcome without changing the way others provide access.

Considering Jeffress (2022), the film's representational contribution can be seen in the diversity of positions given to the characters. Chunhe appears as a family member, a prospective student, a worker, and a voice of opinion. This diversity allows for a broader reading than the opposition between victim and hero. However, claims that the film is completely free of stereotypes require further research. A depiction that allows for empowerment can still be interpreted differently by viewers, particularly those with experiences of disability.

Overall, the research findings demonstrate that the motivation for struggle and the representation of disability are two interrelated dimensions. Motivation theory helps identify the goals and needs portrayed, while semiotics demonstrates how those goals are made legible through dialogue and visuals. The combination of the two demonstrates that empowerment is not simply a message conveyed at the end of the story. It is constructed through a series of opportunities, constraints, and relationships that enable Chunhe to experience herself as an actor in social life.

The implications of this research primarily lie in the film's interpretation and use in educational discussions. Selected scenes can be used to discuss the differences between assisting and taking over decisions, between admiring and enabling, and between presence and participation. Such use requires discussions that accommodate the perspectives of people with disabilities. This research has not proven that watching the film can reduce stigma or increase empathy. Educational potential is understood as the potential use of the text, not as the results of an effectiveness test.

Other limitations relate to the focus on a single character, a single film, and the researcher's interpretation. The data are insufficient to represent the experiences of people with cerebral palsy or the social conditions of all Chinese society. Dialogue translation also mediates interpretation of meaning, so a Mandarin-language study of subtitles could enrich the results. Further research could compare other films, examine audience experiences, or incorporate perspectives from the disability community to assess potential discrepancies between narrative intent and the social acceptance of these representations.

IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Liu Chunhe's motivation for struggle in *Big World* can be understood as an effort to maintain the right to determine one's life amidst social support and restrictions. Educational and occupational aspirations guide actions, while experiences of acceptance, trust, or rejection shape the space for those actions. Readings of esteem and self-actualization needs explain the value of goals for the character. The self-determination perspective highlights the importance of opportunities to choose, experience abilities, and build meaningful relationships. Thus, character development cannot be sufficiently explained through personal resilience without considering environmental responses.

Fiske's three levels of semiotics demonstrate the relationship between visible conditions, the way stories are presented, and the social values they construct. Bodies, expressions, and dialogue become part of the lives of diverse characters; framing and spatial shifts contextualize these relationships; while the conflict between denial and recognition opens up a critique of norms of ability. The research's contribution lies in explaining that characters' empowerment is formed through opportunities to play roles, not simply through narratives of success in overcoming adversity. Inclusive recognition therefore requires making room for the choices and daily activities of people with disabilities.

This film can be used as discussion material in language learning, film studies, and inclusive education by placing scenes for critical interpretation. Educators can direct discussions toward forms of support that respect autonomy and mechanisms for limiting opportunities. Media creators can consider the depiction of characters with goals, reciprocal relationships, and diverse social roles. Future research is recommended to include audience reception studies, dialogue translation studies, and perspectives from people with disabilities. Such development is necessary to assess how representation is understood beyond the film text and to broaden the discussion without generalizing the experiences of one character.

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