
MORAL VALUES AS PRINCIPLE OF SURVIVING IN THE MOVIE *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>Moral is one of the most important things to be possessed in a person's life, the absence of moral can lead to decisions that prioritize personal gain over the well-being of others. It can result in systemic injustices, human rights violations, and societal unrest. This study aims to discuss about the forms of moral values that shown in the movie, and how the forms of moral values are used as principle of surviving in the movie To Kill a Mockingbird by Robert Mulligan. The method used in this study is qualitative descriptive, as for the data they are collected from scenes from the movie. Dialogue and actions in the movie as primary data, in addition, the researcher utilizes secondary data such as books, journals, and previous studies to help analyze and solve the research questions of this study. The result of this study is the researcher found forms of moral values contained in the movie and the moral values found indeed can be used as principle of surviving. Atticus moral behavior helps him maintain a good and peaceful life.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Moral Values, Principle of Surviving, Deontology, Categorical Imperatives</p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 11/09/2025</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 23/09/2025</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 25/09/2025</p>

INTRODUCTION

Moral is one of the most important things to be possessed in a person's life. People without moral values become immoral. Immoral behavior is the man who see his desires and gives in them without regard for duty, others, his eternal salvation. The absence of moral can lead to decisions that prioritize personal gain over the well-being of others. It can result in systemic injustices, human rights violations, and societal unrest. Moral or morality is the human attempt to define what is right and wrong about actions and thoughts, and what is good or bad in being a human. The statement above supported by Edwards' statement as follows, "a morality contains belief about the nature of the man, belief about ideals, about what is good or desirable or worthy or pursuit for its own sake, rules lying down what ought

to be done and motivates that incline us to choose the right or the wrong course.” (Edwards, 1967).

According to the explanation above, moral values can be defined as principles or standards that guide an individual’s behavior and choices based on what is considered right or wrong. They are shaped by culture, religion, upbringing, and personal experiences, and can include honesty, empathy, loyalty, and respect for others. It means what motivates people to do certain acts is derived from a person's individual background. One popular theory about moral that denies morality is solely about the consequences of the action is known as Deontology. The word deontology comes from the Greek word *deon*, meaning “obligation” or “duty.” Deontology is an ethical theory that uses rules to distinguish what is right from wrong. Deontology is often associated with philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant believed that ethical actions follow universal moral laws, such as “Don’t lie. Don’t steal. Don’t cheat. Immanuel Kant (2012) believed that the end result is not of primary importance; rather, the real importance is in determining the moral intent of a decision or action itself.

Kant’s deontology claims that human beings should be most concerned with complying with our duties, not attempting to bring the most good. One relatively simple concept that lies at the center of Kant’s ethical system is the categorical imperative. Categorical Imperative is the supreme principle of morality that is a standard of rationality. Categorical imperative is the moral principle that is unconditional or absolute for all agents, the validity or claim of which does not depend on any hidden motive or end. Principle is a fundamental truth, law, or assumption that serves as the basis for a system of belief or behavior. It provides a foundational rule or guideline that helps in understanding and guiding actions and decisions. There must be principle of any actions of human beings that underlies their actions and behaviors. Surviving also has the principle in it, hence the principle of morality (Categorical Imperative) as stated above can be used to survive. The researcher discusses two variables, they are moral values and principle of surviving. This research mostly focuses solely on what are forms of moral values found and how the moral values found are used as principle of surviving. The researcher hopes that this research can benefit others such as providing further information about morality and keeping social harmony in our society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deontology by Immanuel Kant

The term deontology is derived from the Greek *deon*, “duty,” and *logos*, “science.” The first great philosopher to define deontological principles was Immanuel Kant, the 18th-century German founder of critical philosophy. Kant held that nothing is good without qualification except a good will, and a good will is one that wills to act in accord with the moral law and out of respect for that law rather than out of natural inclinations. According to Kant (2012), “duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law.” It is clear that the deontology theory emphasizes the implementation of duty. Based on the citation above, the researcher explains that the action is morally good if it based on the desire to fulfill the duty.

An act will be good if it is based on the performance of the duty, as long as a person does the duty is already morally good.

Moral values are the beliefs and standards that govern individuals' behavior and judgments about what is right and wrong. They help to define ethical conduct and are often shaped by cultural, societal, religious, and personal influences. There are so many forms of moral values. In this research, the researcher found seven moral values form in the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Three of seven moral values found in the movie is to be explained below.

1. Patience

Patience can be defined as the quality of being patient, as the bearing of provocation, annoyance, misfortune, or pain, without complaint, loss of temper, irritation, or the like. Leaney (2004) express that when you have patience, you stay calm and do not get upset if you have to wait for a long time or do something that is difficult or complicated. The researcher explains that in other words, patience is the act of staying to keep being composed no matter what. "Patience is the strength of the weak, impatience is the weakness of the strong" (Kant, 2012)

2. Hard Work

Maximum effort combined with optimistic attitude to reach one's need or goal, is the definition of hard work. Miller (2002) stated that hard work usually associated with the construct work ethic, which denotes an attitudinal construct that reflects deeply held values regarding the fundamental place of work in one's life. Kant (2012) believed that "perfect duties are more important than imperfect duties..." This means that hard work is the effort which is carried out earnestly based on the work environment to fulfill the duty.

3. Bravery

What it means to being brave is to have a sense of confidence and steadiness in facing danger or trouble. Bravery is the state of having mental or moral strength to face difficulty, danger, fear or the like. Clancy (2003) states that courage is likely defined as a willingness to face tough choices as well as overcoming fear associated with them. It means that being brave is to be able to accept to face all complicated problem and fear with determination. "Have the courage to use your own reason- That is the motto of enlightenment." (Kant, 2012)

Categorical Imperatives (CI) by Immanuel Kant

Fundamental principle of morality (CI) is none other than the law of an autonomous will. "Autonomy of the willing by it is a law to itself (independently of any characteristic of the object of willing)" (Kant, 2012). The key to understanding and justifying the authority that moral requirement have over a person is to understanding the idea of autonomy. It contains first and foremost the idea of laws made and laid down by oneself. In virtue of this, laws that have decisive authority over oneself.

Every autonomous will is the will to survive because every human being has the goal to survive against anything in this world. The will to survive is the will of human being that

is very strong and based on norms, which is done to maintain life. Categorical imperative (CI) has three formulations, which can be used as the principle of surviving in this research.

1. Principle of Universality

Principle of Universality offers a decision procedure for determining whether a given course of action is in accordance with the moral law. Kant (2012) explained that “one must be able to will that a maxim of our action become a universal law” if it possible to will that everyone act according to that maxim, then the action under consideration is morally permissible, but it is not simply would be undesirable for everyone to act according that maxim.

2. Principle of Humanity

Principle of humanity states that a person should act in such a way that he treats humanity whether in himself or in others, never as a means only but always as an end itself. Kant (2012) stated that, “humanity as an end itself.” This is often seen as introducing the idea of respect for persons, for whatever it is that is essential to one’s humanity. Principle of humanity is the term of morality. It is the respect to humanity. “So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, never simply as a means, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.” (Kant, 2012).

3. Principle of Autonomy

The principle of autonomy explained that all actions should be done purely due to the own will and desires, not because of the influence or coercion of others. According to Kant (2012), “... the principle of every human will as a will universally legislating through all its maxims.” Principle of autonomy is the principle of the will. It is the will which wants to do something based on the will itself. This is the concept of a willing that does not operate through the influence of factors outside of this responsiveness to apparent reasons, but rather through an internal moral compass that aligns with universal rational principles, grounded in duty and moral self-legislation, ensuring that ethical decisions reflect personal integrity and genuine moral responsibility.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher chose qualitative research type for this study. This type of research is a process of naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting. Its goal is to gain a deeper understanding of a person’s or group’s experience. The data form in this type is usually not in the form of numbers. Creswell (2018) stated that “qualitative research relies on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs.”. The method the researcher use in this research is descriptive method. Descriptive method is a method that is used to describe characteristics and/or behavior of sample. According to Walliman (2010), “descriptive research relies on observation as a means of collecting data. It attempts to examine situations in order to establish what

is the norm...”. In this study, the researcher uses two sources of data, they are primary and secondary data. Primary data is the data collected directly from the object which is analyzed in the study. Primary data of this study is using a movie entitled *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Robert Mulligan. Secondary data as supporting data is information that is already available to be the comparison of or say. Secondary data of this research are from some books, e-books, journals that are related to the topic or the object of research being discussed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Forms of Moral Values

This section contains the discussion of the findings above. First of all, the researcher discusses the form of moral values found in the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Then the researcher discusses how are moral values found can be used as principle of surviving.

1. Patience

Patience is an attitude of holding back emotions and desires, and in order to survive, we cannot complain in difficult situations. Patience is the quality to be able to control one’s action which is also seen as an attitude that has high value and reflects the robustness of the soul of the person owns it.



Figure 4.3 (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1962)

You’re going to hear some ugly talk about this in school, but I want you to promise me one thing, that you won’t gets into fight over it, no matter what they say to you. (53:03-53:18)

The excerpts above indicates that Atticus is a patience person, it is proved by the words he says to one of his children to always be patient and not get into trouble no matter what people say about them. The sentence “that you won’t gets into fight over it, no matter what they say to you”. That statement suggest that Atticus possesses a strong sense of patience, which is evident through the advice he gives to one of his children. He encourages them to remain calm and composed, advising them to avoid conflict regardless of any negative or provocative remarks made by others.

2. Hard Work

Hard work refers to putting in a significant amount of effort, diligence, and perseverance towards achieving a goal or completing a task. It’s not just about the quantity of time spent working, but also the intensity, focus, and dedication involved.



Figure 4.12 (To Kill a Mockingbird, 1962)

The Judge: I was thinking about appointing you to take this case, I realize you're very busy these days with your practice, and your children need a great deal of your time

Atticus: Yes sir, I will take the case (17:11-17:38)

In this scene, despite being very busy, Atticus still takes the case knowing well that it is his duty as a lawyer to take the case and do the job willingly. This scene shows that Atticus is a hard-working man, where he cherishes his job and is willing to work with heart, dedicating his time, energy, and principles to fight for justice despite overwhelming public pressure. He remains focused, committed, and determined even when faced with extreme social criticism. This shows his moral value as a hardworking man, demonstrating perseverance, responsibility, and integrity in the face of adversity.

3. Bravery

Bravery is the quality of facing and confronting fear, danger, or adversity with courage and determination. It involves acting with resolve and confidence despite the potential for harm or risk. Bravery is characterized by the ability to act courageously in the face of fear, adversity, or risk, driven by a sense of purpose and moral conviction.



Figure 4.14 (To Kill a Mockingbird, 1962)

Atticus: No need to be afraid of him son, he's all bluff (47:17-47:22)

The excerpt above shows Bob Ewell under the influence of alcohol and trying to do something to Jem and Scout, who are waiting for Atticus in their car. When Atticus arrives, Bob Ewell says that Atticus is a niggers lover and then leaves them. The sentence "no need to be afraid of him, Son" explains that Atticus is a brave man;

he told his children to never be afraid if they never did something wrong, showing his calm strength, moral integrity, and refusal to be intimidated by hatred or ignorance.

Moral Values as Principle of Surviving

The researcher uses Kant's categorical imperatives in this research to solve the second research question. Categorical Imperatives contains three formulations, the first one in principle of universality, second is principle of humanity, and the last one is principle of autonomy.

1. Patience as Principle of Universality

The Principle of Universality states that an action is morally right if and only if the rule or maxim guiding that action can be consistently universalized. This means that one should act according to principles that they would want to be applied universally, to everyone, in similar situations.



Figure 4.3 (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, 1962)

You're going to hear some ugly talk about this in school, but I want you to promise me one thing, that you won't get into fight over it, no matter what they say to you. (53:03-53:18)

In this excerpt, Atticus being patience when dealing with prejudice relates with the principle of universality. If everyone were to follow this maxim, conflicts would be addressed through non-violent means, leading to a more harmonious and less aggressive society. This principle could be consistently applied to everyone, as avoiding violence aligns with universal ethical standards of maintaining peace and respect. The advice reflects a maxim that could be universally applied, promoting non-violence and respect in the face of provocation, ultimately fostering a more just, rational, and morally guided society.

2. Confidence as Principle of Humanity

The Principle of Humanity is another crucial component of Immanuel Kant's ethical framework, specifically within his formulation of the Categorical Imperative. This principle emphasizes the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. The Principle of Humanity states that one should act in a way that treats humanity, whether in oneself or in others, always as an end in itself and never merely as a means to an end. This means recognizing and respecting the

intrinsic value of each person and not using them merely to achieve personal goals.



Figure 4.18 (To Kill a Mockingbird, 1962)

Atticus: I am confident that you gentleman will review, without passion, the evidence you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this man to his family (97:48-98:09)

In the excerpt above Atticus Finch addresses the jury with the statement, “I am confident that you gentlemen will review, without passion, the evidence you have heard, come to a decision, and restore this man to his family,” he is urging the jury to make an objective and fair decision based on the evidence presented. By urging the jury to review the evidence without passion and to make a decision that restores Tom Robinson to his family, Atticus is advocating for a process that respects Tom’s dignity and rights.

3. Hard Work as Principle of Autonomy

The Principle of Autonomy is a key concept in Immanuel Kant’s moral philosophy. It focuses on the capacity of rational individuals to govern themselves according to their own principles and rational deliberation. The Principle of Autonomy asserts that every rational being should be treated as an autonomous agent, meaning they should have the freedom to make their own decisions and govern their own lives based on their rational will.



Figure 4.12 (To Kill a Mockingbird, 1962)

The Judge: I was thinking about appointing you to take this case, I realize you’re very busy these days with your practice, and your children need a great deal of your time
Atticus: Yes sir, I will take the case (17:11-17:38)

Atticus agrees to represent Tom Robinson despite the personal and professional demands on his time. Atticus' decision also reflects his own autonomy, as he chooses to act according to his ethical convictions, even though it requires significant personal and professional sacrifice.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the discussion in this study is this thesis has explored how *To Kill a Mockingbird* utilizes moral values as essential principles for survival in a prejudiced society. Through a detailed analysis of characters such as Atticus Finch and Scout Finch, it is evident that values like wisdom, patience, and responsibility are portrayed as crucial for navigating both personal and societal challenges. Atticus's unwavering commitment to justice and Scout's evolving understanding of morality illustrates how these principles enable individuals to confront and survive adversity, while also influencing those around them to reflect, grow, and reconsider their own beliefs and actions within a biased environment.

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