



Pedagogical Care Ethics: Analysis of Mental Models in Caregiving Role Transformation Through Character Dialogues in the Film 1 Kakak 7 Ponakan

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the dynamics of care relationships and caregiving burden in extended families as represented in the film *1 Kakak 7 Ponakan* directed by Yandy Laurens. The 129 minute film tells the story of Moko, an architecture student who must become the sole caregiver for his seven nieces and nephews after his sister and brother in law pass away, abandoning his dream of pursuing a master's degree at Columbia University. This study employs Cognitive Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk) integrated with care ethics (Gilligan, Noddings, Tronto) and pedagogical philosophy (Freire, Biesta) to explore mental models shaping caregiving discourse. Findings reveal three key aspects: (1) transformation from natural caring to ethical caring involving moral conflicts between personal aspirations and family responsibilities; (2) tension between justice ethics emphasizing fair distribution of responsibilities and care ethics prioritizing relationships and contextual responsiveness; (3) construction of caregiving mental models as obligatory pedagogy learned through direct experience and critical reflection. Laurens' slow-burn directorial approach presents emotional complexity through expressive close-ups and visual compositions reflecting family dynamics. This research contributes to integrating three analytical frameworks and provides practical implications for family caregiver support policies in Indonesia, including formal recognition of informal caregiving burden, culturally sensitive intervention programs, and moral education integrating care values.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Cognitive Discourse Analysis, Caregiving Burden, Care Ethics, Pedagogical Philosophy, Obligatory Pedagogy*

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of care and caregiving burden has become one of the fundamental challenges in the context of contemporary Indonesian families. This phenomenon reveals inequalities in relations and social roles among family members, especially in extended families where caregiving responsibilities are often not distributed fairly. The burden experienced by informal caregivers in extended families encompasses physical, emotional, social, and financial dimensions that can significantly impact their well-being (Longacre et al., 2025; López-Martínez et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, extended family caregiving practices remain highly prevalent, yet systematic research on these dynamics remains limited (Kristanti et al., 2020; Purba et al., 2020).

In pedagogical philosophy, care is understood not merely as an affective action, but also as a process of moral education that shapes human character and ethical consciousness (Freire, 2020; Noddings, 2020). The pedagogy of care emphasizes that the ability to care is a result of learning that occurs in relational contexts, not merely a natural disposition. Nel Noddings (2013) developed the concept of caring that distinguishes between natural caring care that emerges spontaneously from affection and ethical caring care driven by moral commitment and ethical reflection. The transformation from natural caring to ethical caring is a pedagogical

process involving the learning of moral values, development of empathy, and internalization of responsibility toward others.

The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach enables researchers not only to analyze linguistic features but also to uncover power relations and ideologies contained in discourse (Fairclough, 2021; Hart & Cap, 2021). Teun A. van Dijk (2008, 2014, 2020) developed the Cognitive Discourse Analysis framework that integrates the cognitive dimension specifically mental models into discourse analysis. Mental models are subjective cognitive representations of situations, events, or actions that control how discourse is produced and understood. In the caregiving context, mental models influence how caregivers interpret their responsibilities, manage moral conflicts, and construct their identity as caregivers.

Film as a medium of cultural representation plays an important role in shaping and reflecting social values about family and caregiving. The film '1 Kakak 7 Ponakan' (2025) directed by Yandy Laurens presents a rich representation of caregiving dynamics in Indonesian extended families. The film was adapted from the 1996 classic TV series by Arswendo Atmowiloto and has attracted widespread attention since its premiere at the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival on December 7, 2024. Since its theatrical release on January 23, 2025, the film has been watched by over 1.2 million viewers, making it one of the highest grossing Indonesian films of 2025.

This research aims to: (1) analyze forms of care relationships and shifts from natural caring to ethical caring in the Indonesian extended family context; (2) identify moral conflicts between justice ethics and care ethics emerging in caregiving practices; (3) explore the construction of mental models that shape and are constructed through caregiving discourse; (4) evaluate pedagogical implications of care praxis represented in the film. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to the integration of care ethics, cognitive discourse analysis, and pedagogical philosophy, as well as provide practical insights for developing policies and family caregiver support programs in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with the Cognitive Discourse Analysis method developed by Teun A. van Dijk (2008, 2014, 2020). The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the complexity of care experiences and moral transformation represented in film texts.

The film that serves as the research object is '1 Kakak 7 Ponakan' (2025) directed by Yandy Laurens with a runtime of 129 minutes. The film tells the journey of Hendarmoko (Moko), an architecture student who must become the sole caregiver for his seven nieces and nephews after his brother Atmo and his wife Agnes pass away, while facing pressure from relatives who have different views about family obligations.

Research data were collected through documentation techniques in the form of film dialogue transcription (Bowen, 2009; Rapley, 2007) by watching the film repeatedly to ensure accuracy (Poland, 1995).

Dialogues were selected using purposive sampling techniques that represent the transformation of care, moral conflicts, and the construction of caregiver identity (Patton, 2015).

Data analysis integrates pedagogical care ethics using the frameworks of Noddings (2013, 2020) and Tronto (1993, 2020), as well as cognitive discourse analysis with Van Dijk's framework (2008, 2014, 2020). The analysis process includes identification of key dialogues, analysis of linguistic structures, interpretation of moral transformation (Freire, 2020), and evaluation of ethical consciousness formation (Biesta, 2020), with validity maintained through theoretical triangulation and researcher reflexivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Natural Caring to Ethical Caring

Analysis of the main character's utterances in the film '1 Kakak 7 Ponakan' reveals a complex role transformation from a sibling to a substitute parent caregiver. This transformation does not occur naturally or spontaneously, but through a process full of moral dilemmas,

personal sacrifice, and painful learning. Nel Noddings (2013) distinguishes between natural caring care that emerges from spontaneous affection and the desire to respond to the needs of loved ones and ethical caring care driven by moral commitment and ethical reflection when natural affection is insufficient or absent.

The analysis of utterances in caregiving discourse requires not only attention to linguistic features but also to the values, attitudes, and implicit meanings embedded within the text. Askurny et al. (2023) emphasize that language is used for specific purposes in social practices, including to identify values, attitudes, and evaluations contained in texts. In the context of this research, the dialogues between characters reveal implicit pedagogical values about responsibility, sacrifice, and moral commitment that are not always explicitly stated. Furthermore, Pamungkas and Syihabuddin (2025) argue that implicature provides deep insights into hidden pedagogical messages in discourse, which aligns with educational goals that balance individual development with social contribution.

In caregiving discourse, implicature functions as a vehicle for transmitting moral values without explicit didacticism, allowing characters to learn through indirect communication and contextual interpretation. The transformation from natural caring to ethical caring can thus be understood not merely as a behavioral shift, but as a process of internalizing implicit pedagogical messages conveyed through discourse.

In the context of this research, the main character (Moko) experiences a significant identity shift when he must take over the caregiving role for his seven nieces and nephews. The dialogues in the film clearly show how this caregiving burden affects various aspects of Moko's life, from professional career, romantic relationships, to mental and physical health. One key dialogue revealing the impact of caregiving on career is Moko's conversation with his supervisor:

"Ya, Pak, saya minta maaf tapi kemarin keponakan saya sakit." (Moko to Bayu)

"Yes, Sir, I apologize, but my nephew was sick yesterday." (Moko to Bayu)

"Ya, gua paham kondisi lu, Mo, tapi gua gak bisa bilang alasan lo ke klien."

Lo udah commit, bilang on time, kan?" (Bayu)

"Yeah, I understand your situation, Mo, but I can't give the client that excuse. You already committed to delivering on time, right?" (Bayu)

This dialogue excerpt shows how caregiving burden affects Moko's professional performance, ultimately leading to lost career opportunities. This phenomenon aligns with findings by Kent et al. (2020) and Malhotra et al. (2024) showing that informal caregivers often experience significant disruptions in their professional lives due to caregiving demands. Bayu's response emphasizing professional commitment reveals the tension between work world demands and family caregiving reality, reflecting structural injustice faced by caregivers in an economic system that does not accommodate caregiving responsibilities.

The impact of caregiving is also deeply felt in Moko's romantic relationship with Maurin. The following dialogue reveals how caregiving burden forces Moko to end the relationship:

"Ya, aku aku kita putus. Rin kamu kalau sama aku itu udah punya 4 anak, Rin, dan itu gak akan bisa. Kita mau buka biro sendiri dan itu gak bakal kejadian." (Moko to Maurin)

"Yeah, I... we're breaking up. Rin, if you're with me, you'd instantly have 4 children, Rin, and that won't work. We wanted to open our own firm and that's not going to happen." (Moko to Maurin)

"Gak bisa, Rin, kamu gak ngerti keadaan aku di sini gimana, Rin... Ya, aku aja cerita gak bisa, Rin. Gak ada waktunya." (Moko)

"I can't, Rin. You don't understand what my situation is like here... I can't even talk about it, Rin. There's just no time." (Moko)

These utterances reveal Moko's emotional ambivalence in carrying out his caregiving role. On one hand, he shows strong commitment to his nieces' and nephews' well-being, but on the other hand, he must relinquish personal aspirations and his romantic relationship. The phrase 'there's no time' literally indicates temporal limitations, but metaphorically also signifies the loss of personal space and autonomy in his life. This phenomenon reflects the reality experienced by many family caregivers, especially those in the sandwich generation who must balance various responsibilities without adequate support.

A crucial moment showing the shift from natural caring to ethical caring occurs when Moko must decide whether to accept Ais, an additional nephew who is not his direct family responsibility. This dialogue reveals a profound moral dilemma:

"Pak, saya bukannya gak mau ngebantu, Pak, tapi di sini juga saya ngurusin empat keponakan saya." (Moko)

"Sir, it's not that I don't want to help, but I'm already caring for my four nieces and nephews." (Moko)

"Tolong saya Dek Moko, tolong saya. Saya janji akan jemput Gadis lagi."
(Ais's father)

"Please, Moko, please help me. I promise I'll pick her up again."
(Ais's father)

The dialogue with his sibling, Woko, after accepting Ais reveals an even deeper moral dilemma:

"Kak Moko yakin Kak?" (Woko)

"Are you sure?" (Woko)

"Enggak." (Moko)

"No." (Moko)

"Lah? Terus kenapa Kak Moko bilang iya?" (Woko)

"What? Then why did you say yes?" (Woko)

"Gak ada pilihan, Wo." (Moko)

"I have no choice, Wo." (Moko)

Moko's response acknowledging his uncertainty "No" yet still accepting additional responsibility demonstrates the shift from caring driven by spontaneous affection (natural caring) to caring driven by moral commitment and ethical obligation (ethical caring). The phrase 'no choice' indicates this decision is not based on personal desire or feelings, but rather on the internalization of moral values about responsibility toward others, especially vulnerable children. This is a crucial pedagogical moment where Moko learns that authentic caring sometimes requires uncomfortable sacrifices and decisions that contradict personal interests.

Moral Conflict between Justice Ethics and Care Ethics

One of the central findings in this research is the identification of moral conflict emerging between justice ethics and care ethics principles. Carol Gilligan (1982) distinguishes these two ethical orientations: justice ethics emphasizes abstract principles, individual rights, and fair distribution of responsibilities; while care ethics emphasizes concrete relationships, responsiveness to specific needs, and situational context. In caregiving practice, these two orientations often collide, creating complex moral dilemmas for caregivers.

This conflict is intensified by the intervention of his brother-in-law, Mas Eka, who explicitly encourages Moko to prioritize his own aspirations. Dialogues between Moko and his extended family clearly reveal this tension:

"Gini Mo, Mas Eka sama Kak Osa tahu persis kamu tuh berjuang nya gimana. Kamu tuh berjuang nya dua tahun sampai kamu batalin S-2 kamu... Besarin Ima sampai kaya anak kamu sendiri, belum lagi kamu bantuin Nina, Woko, Ano." (Mas Eka)

"Look Mo, Mas Eka and Kak Osa know exactly how hard you've been struggling. You've been fighting for two years you even canceled your master's degree... You've raised Ima like your own child, not to mention helping Nina, Woko, and Ano." (Mas Eka)

Although seemingly praising, Mas Eka's utterance actually constructs a narrative that Moko's sacrifice is excessive and unfair to himself. He uses the concept of 'sandwich generation' to frame Moko's situation:

"Anak ini hebat loh, ngorbanin masa mudanya buat ponakan-ponakannya. Itu kan kalau Aussie namanya sandwich generation... Ada orang yang diapit sama tanggungan yang seharusnya gak ditanggung." (Mas Eka)

"This kid is amazing, you know, sacrificing his youth for his nieces and nephews. In Australia, we call that the sandwich generation... When people are squeezed by responsibilities they shouldn't have to bear." (Mas Eka)

Mas Eka's argumentation is based on justice ethics principles emphasizing fair distribution of responsibilities and Moko's individual right to pursue his own life (Engster & Metz, 2020; Swartz, 2020). From this perspective, caregiving burden should not fall disproportionately on one individual, especially one who is not the biological parent of these children. Mas Eka is even more explicit in criticizing Moko's decision to accept Ais:

"Belum lagi Ano, kalau Woko, Nina, Ima, Mas Eka paham mereka ponakan kandung kamu, lah kalau Ano? Tolong dong." (Mas Eka about Ais)

"Not to mention Ano. I mean, Woko, Nina, Ima. I get it, they're your actual nieces and nephews. But Ano? Come on, Mo." (Mas Eka about Ais)

"Kamu gak usah sok jadi pahlawan kesiangan... Prinsip Mas Eka, orang sungkan itu selalu dipertemukan sama orang gak tahu diri." (Kak Osa and Mas Eka)

"You don't have to be a martyr... It's Mas Eka's principle, people pleasers always end up with people who exploit them." (Kak Osa and Mas Eka)

This dialogue reveals a fundamental conflict between two moral paradigms. From the justice ethics perspective represented by Mas Eka, caregiving should be distributed based on biological or legal responsibility, and individuals have the right to protect their personal interests. Conversely, from the care ethics perspective internalized by Moko, caring is a response to the concrete needs of others, especially vulnerable children, regardless of whether there is formal obligation. The label 'belated hero' used sarcastically by Mas Eka actually indicates his disapproval of this care-based moral orientation.

Moko's dialogue with his friend at the car wash reveals the internal struggle between these two moral orientations:

"Apa ini bener ini jalannya ya? Jalan supaya aku bisa punya hidupku sendiri. Kok rasanya aneh ya, Rin? Ya berpikir punya hidupku sendiri tuh salah gitu rasanya." (Moko)

"Is this really the right path? A path so I can have my own life. It feels strange, doesn't it, Rin? Just thinking about having my own life feels wrong somehow." (Moko)

This ambivalence shows that Moko has internalized care ethics values so deeply that prioritizing himself actually generates moral guilt. Maurin's response provides a more balanced perspective:

"Gak aneh kok, Mo... Aku tuh sempet benci banget Mo sama diri aku sendiri. Benci tuh karena merasa, yang tadi prioritas kamu tuh kita, tapi sekarang kok kegantu ya sama

anak-anak. Aku benci banget setengah mati. Tapi lu yang buat aku sadar, kalau misalkan aku nuntut kamu, berarti aku egois.” (Maurin)
“It's not strange, Mo... I actually really hated myself, Mo. Hated myself because I felt that your priority used to be us, but now it's been replaced by the kids. I hated it so, so much. But you made me realize that if I demanded things from you, that would make me selfish.” (Maurin)

These findings show that moral conflicts in caregiving cannot be resolved merely through the application of abstract justice ethics principles. Instead, resolution requires an approach that integrates both moral orientations: acknowledging caregiver rights and needs (justice) while remaining responsive to the needs of those being cared for (care). Joan Tronto (1993, 2020) argues that a caring society requires institutional restructuring that distributes caring responsibilities more fairly, not just relying on individual sacrifice.

Construction of Mental Models in Obligatory Pedagogy

Mental models, as conceptualized by Van Dijk (2008, 2014, 2020), are subjective cognitive representations of situations, events, or actions that control how discourse is produced and understood. In the caregiving context, mental models influence how caregivers interpret their responsibilities, manage conflicts, and construct their identity as caregivers. Analysis of dialogues in the film reveals how Moko gradually constructs and internalizes complex caregiving mental models.

The dialogue with Ano reveals how caregiving mental models have become an integral part of Moko's identity:

“Kak Moko tuh bilang ke Ano, kalau kita tuh gak pernah ngebebanin Kak Moko, jauh dari lubuk hati Kak Moko, Kak Moko tuh pengen ngejagain kita semua, Kak Moko tuh udah kaya Bapak Ano sendiri.” (Ano)
“You told me that we never burden him that thought never even enters his heart. He wants to protect all of us. Kak Moko is like my own father.” (Ano)

When Nina and the other children question the burden they create, Moko's response reveals deeply embedded mental models:

“Nina, kamu setiap hari masakin semuanya yang ada di rumah ini, nyusahin dong?... Udah kalian semua berhenti kerja ya, kakak kerja pagi, siang, malem, ini gak pernah sekalipun berpikir untuk kalian keluar dari rumah ini. Karena buat kakak, kalian adalah keluarga kakak.” (Moko)
“Nina, you cook for everyone here every single day isn't that troublesome too? Just stop. All of you, stop working. I'll work mornings, afternoons, nights. I've never once thought about making you leave this house. To me, you're my family.” (Moko)

This dialogue reveals a caregiving mental model based on reciprocal principles and shared responsibility, not on individual cost-benefit calculations. Moko rejects framing caregiving as a burden and instead constructs it as a mutually beneficial relational praxis. The statement 'you are my family' indicates that the caregiver identity has integrated with the identity of family members being cared for, not as an externally imposed role.

However, the climactic conflict in the film occurs when Nina, hearing Mas Eka's criticism, expresses her desire to break away because she feels like a burden:

“Nyusahin aja ya lu semua... Yang bayarin pasti kakak lu kan? Lu gak lihat tuh mukanya, hah? Masih muda, masih punya harapan, masih punya masa depan, tapi malah lu gelondotin... Nina gak mau nyusahin kakak lagi.” (Nina)

"You're all just a burden... It's your brother who's paying for everything, right? Don't you see his face? He's still young, still has hope, still has a future, but you're all weighing him down... Nina doesn't want to burden Kak Moko anymore." (Nina)

Nina's emotional response reveals that she has internalized the narrative about 'burden' constructed by Mas Eka, replacing the previous mental model of family as a mutually supportive network. This shows how mental models about caregiving can be transmitted and changed through discourse, confirming Van Dijk's argument about the dialectical relationship between cognition and discourse. Moko responds with an attempt to restore the previous mental model:

"Kak Moko minta maaf ya, Kak Moko baru ngerti keadaannya Nina kemarin. Kak Moko juga minta maaf karena Nina ngerasa diatur-aturl sama Kak Moko." (Moko)

"I apologize, Nina. I only just understood your situation yesterday. I also apologize for making you feel like I've been controlling you." (Moko)

This dialogue demonstrates obligatory pedagogy learning that occurs in the context of real moral responsibility. Moko learns to adjust his caregiving approach based on each child's specific needs, rather than applying universal rules. This aligns with Freire's (2020) argument that true education is a dialogical process involving critical reflection and responsiveness to concrete contexts.

These research findings align with pedagogical philosophy perspectives emphasizing that care is learned moral praxis, not a natural disposition (Freire, 2020; Biesta, 2020; Hicks, 2020). Moko was not born with the ability to be a good caregiver; he learned through direct experience, trial-and-error, critical reflection, and dialogue with people around him. This learning process is not linear or conflict-free, but full of mistakes, regrets, and continuous adjustments.

Implications for Policy and Practice

These research findings provide theoretical contributions by integrating three frameworks: care ethics (Gilligan, Noddings, Tronto), cognitive discourse analysis (Van Dijk), and pedagogical philosophy (Freire, Biesta). This integration enables more comprehensive analysis of how moral values, cognitive structures, and learning praxis interact in the family caregiving context.

Practically, these findings have important implications for social policies and family caregiver support programs in Indonesia. First, there needs to be formal recognition of the informal caregiving burden experienced by extended family caregivers. Current social support systems in Indonesia largely focus on formal institutional caregiving, ignoring the reality that most caregiving occurs in informal family contexts (Kristanti et al., 2020).

Second, intervention programs to support family caregivers need to be sensitive to the Indonesian cultural context, where collectivism values and extended family responsibilities remain strong. Programs that overemphasize individualism or personal autonomy without considering these relational values may be ineffective or even counterproductive. Instead, programs supporting redistribution of caregiving responsibilities within broader family networks may be more sustainable and culturally relevant.

Third, moral and character education in Indonesia needs to integrate care values more explicitly. The current education system tends to emphasize academic achievement and individual competition, giving less attention to developing caring capacity, empathy, and relational responsibility. The film's final dialogue shows the possibility for fairer caregiving reconfiguration:

"Mau sampai kapan, Mo? Mau sampai kapan kamu larang aku buat perjuangiku kamu tuh sampai kapan? Aku mau hidup sama kamu, anak-anak juga." (Maurin)

"How long, Mo? How long are you going to keep me from fighting for you? I want to live with you, with the children too."(Maurin)

This dialogue shows that redistribution of caregiving responsibilities need not mean abandoning care, but rather can take the form of expanding care networks involving more people. This model is more sustainable and fair compared to relying on one individual's sacrifice. Policies supporting this model can include incentives for shared caregiving, work flexibility, and community support.

Practical implications of this research include the need for: (1) social policies recognizing and supporting informal caregivers through formal recognition, financial support, and legal protection; (2) intervention programs sensitive to Indonesian cultural contexts and supporting redistribution of caregiving responsibilities within broader family networks; (3) moral education integrating care values, empathy, and relational responsibility into formal curriculum; (4) workplace policy changes accommodating family caregiver needs through work flexibility and caregiving leave.

Future research can explore: (1) variations in caregiving practices across different cultural contexts in Indonesia to understand how ethnicity, religion, and social class influence caregiving mental models; (2) development of evidence-based intervention models to support family caregiver well-being considering local contexts; (3) longitudinal analysis of how caregiving mental models change over time and experience; (4) comparative studies of caregiving representations in Indonesian media to understand how media discourse shapes social values about family and responsibility.

Limitations of this research include focus on one film as the object of analysis, which may not represent the diversity of caregiving experiences in Indonesia. Research using ethnographic methods or in-depth interviews with actual family caregivers could complement these findings with more diverse and contextual perspectives. Nevertheless, film analysis as a cultural artifact remains relevant because films play an important role in shaping and reflecting social values about family and caregiving.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals complex dynamics in extended family caregiving practices through analysis of the film '1 Kakak 7 Ponakan' directed by Yandy Laurens. Main findings demonstrate three critical aspects: (1) role transformation from natural caring to ethical caring involving profound moral conflicts between personal aspirations and family responsibilities; (2) tension between justice ethics emphasizing fair distribution of responsibilities and care ethics prioritizing relationships and contextual responsiveness; (3) construction of caregiving mental models as an integral part of obligatory pedagogy learned through direct experience, trial and error, and critical reflection.

Yandy Laurens' directorial method using a slow-burn approach over 129 minutes successfully presents emotional complexity through simple moments, expressive close-ups, and visual compositions reflecting family relationship dynamics. This approach allows the audience to viscerally experience caregiving burden without falling into cheap melodrama, creating space for critical reflection on family values and social responsibility.

Analysis of dialogues in the film reveals that caregiving is not merely distribution of responsibilities based on formal justice principles, but rather relational praxis involving love, moral commitment, continuous learning, and identity negotiation. Mental models controlling caregiving discourse are not static, but can be transformed through alternative discourse and reflective praxis.

The conflict between justice and care orientations in the film reflects broader tensions in contemporary society between modern individualism emphasizing rights and personal autonomy, and traditional communal solidarity emphasizing collective responsibility. This research shows that resolving this conflict cannot be achieved through domination of one orientation over the other, but requires creative integration acknowledging the value of both orientations in different contexts.

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