

Comparison of Patriotism Values based on the Existence of Superhero Films: Comparative Study of Indonesia and America

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to compare the value of Patriotism in Indonesian and American superhero films.

Methodology: This study adopts a qualitative approach with a content analysis design to conduct a comparative analysis. The primary data for this research is obtained through the observation of films available on streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney+. The data collection technique involves viewing films on these platforms. The analysis techniques employed in this research encompass three main stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions or verification.

Results: The research findings indicate similarities and differences in portraying patriotism in Indonesian and American superhero films. Similarities include emphasising values such as love for the country, courage, perseverance, and readiness to make sacrifices for the greater good. However, differences emerge in how patriotism is expressed: Indonesian superheroes often demonstrate pride in cultural heritage, while American counterparts typically exhibit pride in national symbols. Moreover, Indonesian superheroes showcase patriotism through actions, whereas American superheroes convey it through words and actions. It is also noted that American superhero films may sometimes present a form of false patriotism, which could potentially harm the country and its citizens. Overall, the study suggests that both Indonesian and American superhero films effectively promote patriotism due to the presence of patriotic elements within their narratives.

Applications/Originality/Value: The research findings reveal similarities and differences in the depiction of patriotism in Indonesian and American superhero films.

Introduction Section

Patriotism remains an intrinsic facet of human identity, ingrained within individuals as an inherent allegiance to their nation of birth or residence. Rooted in sentiments of empathy and solidarity towards the homeland, patriotism embodies a steadfast commitment to safeguarding the nation and upholding its values. Thus, it epitomises a noble spirit of leadership, valour, and unwavering dedication to the nation's welfare and its populace, particularly within the context of Indonesia.

This principle underscores the indispensability of patriotism among citizens, even in an era devoid of armed conflicts akin to the colonial period in Indonesia's history. Amidst the pervasive influence of globalisation, technological advancements, and the infiltration of foreign cultures, the preservation of patriotism assumes heightened significance. It is a bulwark against diluting national identity and cultural heritage, necessitating concerted efforts to cultivate and perpetuate this cardinal virtue. However, contemporary trends indicate a concerning erosion of patriotic fervour among Indonesian citizens, notably the younger demographic, who increasingly gravitate towards foreign cultural paradigms. This shift is exacerbated by the waning interest in indigenous traditions and customs, posing a threat to preserving Indonesia's rich cultural tapestry.

Proactive measures are imperative to instil and uphold patriotic values among the populace to counteract this trend. This entails fostering a deep-seated appreciation for Indonesia's cultural heritage, history, and ethos. Furthermore, initiatives to foster national pride and engendering a sense of civic responsibility are essential in fortifying the nation's collective identity. Beyond rhetorical gestures, tangible endeavours are warranted to engage citizens, particularly the youth, in activities that foster a profound attachment to their homeland. Through such holistic approaches, Indonesia can effectively safeguard its cultural legacy and reinforce its national identity amidst globalisation.

One intriguing medium for imbuing the essence of patriotism is the realm of cinema, particularly within the genre of superhero films. Various studies have delved into portraying patriotic values in such cinematic endeavours. For instance, Auralia & Suyato (2022), Primary (2022), and AndAtmaja et al. (2022) have explored the thematic underpinnings of Indonesian superhero films, notably highlighting the depiction of patriotism in productions like "Gundala." Conversely, Briseno (2019) has scrutinised the portrayal of American patriotism in iconic superhero franchises such as "Captain

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America” and “Iron Man.” Additionally, Arbi (2021) conducted an in-depth analysis of character dynamics in the film “Avengers: Endgame,” while Khairunnisa (2017) examined the spectrum of nationalistic sentiment portrayed in the “Captain America” series. Furthermore, Damsuki (2018) has elucidated the representation of patriotism in the acclaimed film “Black Panther.”

While existing research has extensively explored the theme of patriotism within Indonesian and American superhero films individually, a lacuna exists in comparative analyses juxtaposing the portrayal of patriotism in these distinct cinematic contexts. Hence, this study seeks to bridge this gap by undertaking a comparative examination of patriotism across a selection of Indonesian and American superhero films. Specifically, this research scrutinises films such as “Gundala,” “Sri Asih,” “Spiderman 2,” “Captain America: The First Avenger,” and “Captain America: Civil War” as primary objects of analysis. By employing predetermined criteria such as love for one’s country, courage, perseverance, and readiness to sacrifice, this study aims to elucidate the contrasting manifestations of patriotic values within these cinematic narratives. Consequently, this investigation’s overarching research question is: “What are the comparative delineations of patriotism in Indonesian and American superhero films based on predefined thematic elements?”

Literature review

As Richard (1999) articulated, patriotism embodies a profound love and devotion towards one’s country or nation, often demonstrated through self-sacrifice in service of the country or government. Building upon this sentiment, Merry (2009) further elucidates patriotism as a deep emotional connection and affinity individuals feel towards their homeland, fostering a sense of pride and psychological attachment. Moreover, Merry (2009) conceptualises patriotism as a form of identity that is a cohesive social force that delineates individuals into distinct groups or communities, ultimately contributing to the collective entity known as the state. In a complementary vein, Rahim and Rashid (2004) characterise patriotism as a fervent struggle that ignites a sense of national and state-centric fervour, compelling individuals to strive for the betterment and dominance of their country’s position, status, and influence. Additionally, drawing from the insights of Staub & Bar-Tal (1997), patriotism is construed as an individual’s allegiance and attachment to their group, encompassing ethnicity, government, and political affiliation, underscored by an ardent enthusiasm, love, and a readiness to make sacrifices.

To ascertain whether an individual embodies the value of patriotism, one can examine the presence of certain constituent elements. As delineated by Rahim and Rashid (2004), patriotism encompasses key attributes such as loyalty, courage, willingness to sacrifice, and a profound love for one’s nation and country. Furthermore, Francisca (2011) outlines several defining characteristics of patriotism, including a deep-seated love for the homeland, a readiness to make sacrifices for the nation’s interests, prioritising unity and the nation’s security over personal or group concerns, fostering a spirit of reform, and displaying unwavering perseverance. Echoing these sentiments, Wijayanto and Marzuki (2018) underscore the essential elements of patriotism, including a resolute attitude, unwavering determination, and a willingness to make sacrifices for the betterment of the nation and state. Thus, it can be surmised that patriotism comprises four fundamental elements: love for one’s country, resolute determination, courage, and a readiness to make sacrifices.

Staub and Bar-Tal (1997) delineate patriotism into two distinct categories: blind and constructive. Blind patriotism, characterised by a negative orientation and intolerance towards criticism, fails to prioritise critical reflection. On the other hand, constructive patriotism prioritises two essential elements: the promotion of love and human values. Further nuances within constructive patriotism are outlined by Lewin (2013), who distinguishes between political and moral constructive patriotism. Constructive patriotism accepts criticism while asserting that morality and ethics cannot be compromised. In contrast, moral constructive patriotism embraces criticism and upholds the values of truth and justice.

Archard (1999) also introduces the dichotomy of true, critical, and false patriotism. True patriotism entails loyalty to one’s country without causing harm to other nations or compromising ethical principles. Conversely, while loyal to the homeland, false patriotism can be destructive, promoting claims that adversely affect other nations. Therefore, patriotism can be categorised into two types: (1) patriotism that serves the common good and advances the nation without harming others, and (2) patriotism that is detrimental and destructive, with adverse impacts on both the nation and other states.

The Communitarian Patriotism Theory, as Walzer (1983) proposed in his seminal work “Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality,” underscores the significance of community membership in understanding patriotism. Walzer posits that every community possesses its unique code of ethics, and patriotism manifests as an expression of affection towards this ethical framework.

The content of patriotism values is not typically part of formal classroom instruction. Instead, it is cultivated through a developmental process comprising three stages. Firstly, students understand the importance of patriotism through learning activities that foster moral knowledge. Secondly, patriotism-related emotions, such as admiration, caution, and guidance, are developed through activities that strengthen moral sentiments. Lastly, practical examples and actions encourage students to demonstrate patriotism, thus embodying moral values (Ministry of National Education, 2010). Isnaeni et al. (2023) suggest that patriotism values can be instilled through targeted programs to familiarise children with love for their country. This aligns with the viewpoint of Daryanto and Suryatri (2013), who advocate for integrating patriotism education into the curriculum to cultivate loyalty, concern, and appreciation for the nation’s heritage. In summary, the primary

objective in fostering patriotism lies in nurturing individuals' affection for their country and encouraging them to engage in patriotic endeavours.

Method

Type and Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a content analysis design, specifically focusing on a comparative study. The research aimed to compare the portrayal of patriotism in Indonesian and American superhero films. The analysis considered four key elements of patriotism: love for one's country, perseverance, courage, and readiness to make sacrifices.

Data and Data Sources

The primary data for this research comprises the textual and visual content extracted directly from the selected films, including dialogue exchanges between characters and various scenes. The films under examination include Gundala, Sri Asih, Spiderman 2, Captain America: The First Avenger, and Captain America: Civil War.

Data Collection Technique

The data collection process used Google to search for Indonesian and American superhero film titles. Subsequently, the films were viewed via streaming platforms such as Netflix and Disney+. Specifically, the films examined include Gundala (available on Netflix), Sri Asih (available on Disney+), Spiderman 2, Captain America: The First Avenger, and Captain America: Civil War (all available on Disney+). During the viewing process, the author meticulously observed and took notes on elements within the films that encapsulated the value of patriotism. The collected data was then organised and presented in tabular format for analysis.

Data Validity

The author ensured the validity of the data through two key methods: extended observations and source triangulation. Firstly, extended observations involved a thorough re-analysis of the content on patriotism values in the superhero films under study. This process allowed for a comprehensive understanding and validation of the data collected during the initial viewing. Secondly, source triangulation was employed by reviewing and examining references from previous studies and journal articles addressing patriotism themes in Indonesian and American superhero films.

Data Analysis

The analysis technique employed in this research follows the framework outlined by Huberman and Miles (1994), which encompasses three key stages: data reduction, data presentation, and concluding/verification. Data reduction involved the summarisation and alignment of patriotism values depicted in the films with the identified elements of patriotism. These elements encompassed the love of the country, perseverance, courage, and willingness to sacrifice. Subsequently, the data was presented by categorising and organising the findings into an Excel spreadsheet, facilitating a systematic overview of the observed patriotism values across the selected films. Drawing conclusions involved comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences in the patriotism values portrayed in the Indonesian and American superhero films. This process was facilitated by creating tables summarising the comparative results, providing a concise overview of the findings.

Results and Discussion

After observing films with four elements of patriotism as criteria, the results of comparing patriotism values in Indonesian and American superhero films were obtained in a table as follows [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Results of patriotism values in Indonesian and American superhero films

Element	Indonesia	America
Love the country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Block the plans of the mafia, who want to destroy the nation's morals - Fight criminals who are suffering citizens - Looking for solutions together regarding state problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Save citizens from criminal attacks - Carrying out duties as a soldier - Determination to serve the nation and state - Proud of the country's flag

	- Proud of Indonesian culture	- Work together to maintain the integrity of the country
Courage	- Demanding rights to what should be obtained - Not willing to be a mafia friend - Fight criminals who terrorise and hurt citizens - Not afraid to face powerful criminals	- Fight criminals who create chaos in the city and disturb citizens - Remain brave even though you lose physically - Dare to fight the government
Element	Indonesia	America
Never give up	- Do not give up on demanding the rights you should get - Do not be afraid to stick to your main goal even when facing obstacles	- Keep trying to achieve your goals even if you fail many times - Determined to carry out tasks even though they are underestimated - Continue to continue your dreams even if your colleagues leave you behind
Willing to sacrifice	- Sacrificing personal safety to protect citizens and the country - Putting aside ego for the sake of mutual safety	- Offering work, college, and friends to protect citizens - Sacrificing personal safety to protect citizens and the country - Destroy self-made tools that could harm residents - Limiting one's power to protect the security of citizens

The Value of Patriotism in Indonesian Superhero Films

The depiction of love for the country in Indonesian superhero films is multifaceted. Firstly, it involves thwarting attempts to undermine the nation's moral integrity, as depicted in *Gundala*, where official figures prevent criminals from perpetrating acts that could erode future generations' morality. Secondly, characters engage in discussions to find solutions to state problems, particularly those affecting citizens' well-being, as evidenced in a scene from *Gundala* where the dialogue emphasises the importance of calming the populace amidst the turmoil. Thirdly, superheroes are portrayed as protectors of citizens, as seen in both *Gundala* and *Sri Asih*, where they assist and safeguard individuals from criminal threats. Lastly, Indonesian culture is celebrated, exemplified in *Sri Asih* through scenes featuring traditional practitioners, showcasing pride in heritage and efforts to preserve cultural identity.

The portrayal of courage in Indonesian superhero films is multifaceted. Firstly, characters demonstrate the courage to demand their rights, as depicted in *Gundala*, where high-ranking officials assert their entitlements as workers. This aligns with Primary's (2022) findings, which underscore the valour exhibited in upholding justice and humanity. Similarly, Auraliaa and Suyato (2022) highlight the protagonist's courage in seeking justice for fellow workers, reflecting broader themes of governmental integrity. Secondly, characters exhibit bravery in resisting criminals who inflict harm upon citizens. In *Gundala*, this is exemplified in a scene where individuals refuse to associate with mafia elements despite the risks involved, demonstrating a refusal to condone actions that cause suffering. This refusal to compromise with criminals underscores their commitment to opposing injustice, even in perilous circumstances. Thirdly, superheroes are portrayed as fearless defenders against criminals who terrorise and harm society. In *Gundala* and *Sri Asih*, these characters bravely confront criminal threats, showcasing their unwavering resolve to protect innocent lives and maintain societal order. Lastly, characters are audacious to confront powerful adversaries, even when facing overwhelming odds. In *Gundala* and *Sri Asih*, despite facing formidable opponents, the protagonists courageously confront them to stem the tide of criminality and alleviate people's suffering.

The value of perseverance in Indonesian superhero films is prominently portrayed in several instances. Firstly, characters demonstrate unwavering determination in demanding their rights, as seen in *Gundala*, where they persist in their efforts despite initial setbacks. Their refusal to relent after an unsuccessful demonstration underscores their resilience and commitment to achieving justice. Secondly, characters exhibit steadfastness in pursuing their primary goals despite encountering numerous obstacles. In *Gundala*, the titular superhero continues to thwart the mafia's nefarious plans despite sustaining injuries. Similarly, in *Sri Asih*, the protagonist remains resolute in confronting criminals, even in the face of repeated threats and personal hardships.

The theme of sacrifice is also poignantly depicted in Indonesian superhero films. Firstly, characters willingly endanger themselves to protect citizens and uphold the nation's integrity, as evidenced by *Gundala*'s superhero enduring severe injuries while defending civilians from terrorists. Similarly, in *Sri Asih*, superheroes often put their safety on the line to safeguard the welfare of others, exemplifying selflessness and valour in the face of danger. Furthermore, characters demonstrate the willingness to set aside personal ego for the greater good, emphasising the importance of empathy and altruism in serving society. In *Gundala*, the superhero grapples with internal conflict but ultimately chooses to intervene and aid those in need.

The Value of Patriotism in American Superhero Films

The portrayal of love for the country in American superhero films is multifaceted and poignant. Firstly, superheroes in films like *Spiderman 2* and *Captain America: Civil War* are depicted as valiant defenders, tirelessly safeguarding citizens from criminal threats. This unwavering commitment to protecting the populace underscores their deep-seated affection for their homeland. Secondly, characters in films such as *Captain America: The First Avenger* exemplify patriotism through their willingness to serve as soldiers, viewing it as a vital component of their duty to defend their nation. The protagonist's fervent desire to serve his country, as expressed in dialogue from the film, underscores the profound sense of duty and devotion to the homeland. Thirdly, the determination to serve the nation and state is highlighted through the characters' resolute commitment to their roles, as seen in *Captain America: The First Avenger*. The protagonist's unwavering resolve to join the front lines and contribute to the war effort reflects his deep-seated patriotism and dedication to his country's cause. Fourthly, characters proudly display symbols of their country, such as the American flag, as depicted in *Captain America: The First Avenger*. The protagonist's choice to adorn his costume and shield with the American flag represents his profound pride and reverence for his nation's emblematic symbols. Finally, superheroes in films like *Captain America: Civil War* demonstrate the importance of collective action in upholding the nation's integrity.

The depiction of courage in American superhero films is multifaceted and compelling. Firstly, superheroes exhibit remarkable bravery in confronting criminals who sow chaos and terrorise civilians, as portrayed in *Spiderman 2*, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, and *Captain America: Civil War*. Their unwavering determination to protect the city and its inhabitants underscores their courage in facing danger. Secondly, characters demonstrate resilience even in the face of physical adversity. In *Captain America: The First Avenger*, the protagonist, despite his diminutive stature, fearlessly confronts adversaries who tower over him. This unwavering resolve to stand firm, regardless of physical limitations, exemplifies courage. Thirdly, superheroes in films like *Captain America: Civil War* courageously challenge governmental authority when they perceive injustice or wrongdoing. Despite the risks involved, they fearlessly oppose government actions they deem unjust.

The theme of perseverance and resilience is vividly portrayed in American superhero films through various scenarios. Firstly, characters exemplify the importance of persistence in the face of adversity by continuously striving to achieve their goals, even in the face of repeated failures. This is evident when superheroes persistently pursue their objectives despite encountering numerous setbacks. Secondly, superheroes demonstrate an unwavering determination to fulfil their responsibilities, even when others underestimate or undervalue their capabilities. In *Captain America: The First Avenger*, the protagonist faces repeated failures in his attempts to join the military but remains resolute in his determination to serve his country. Despite being assigned menial tasks and overlooked for significant duties, he perseveres, ultimately earning recognition for his efforts in protecting the nation. Thirdly, characters exhibit resilience in the face of adversity, even when abandoned by their allies. In *Captain America: Civil War*, despite the division within the superhero community, individuals remain steadfast in their pursuit of justice, refusing to abandon their mission to uncover the truth and combat the real enemy. This unwavering commitment to their goals, despite internal conflict, underscores the importance of perseverance and determination in adversity.

The theme of sacrifice is prominently featured in American superhero films, illustrating the characters' willingness to prioritise the safety and well-being of others above their interests. Firstly, characters often sacrifice personal pursuits, such as work, academic endeavours, and social engagements, to devote themselves to protecting citizens. In *Spiderman 2*, the protagonist struggles to balance his responsibilities but prioritises his duty to save people, showcasing a willingness to sacrifice personal pursuits for the greater good. Secondly, superheroes frequently endanger their safety to safeguard citizens and the nation. This is exemplified in *Spiderman 2*, *Captain America: The First Avenger*, and *Captain America: Civil War*, where characters willingly put themselves in harm's way to protect others. Research by Rifwan et al. (2015) further corroborates this, highlighting instances where characters like Steve Rogers sacrifice themselves for the greater good, as seen when he crashes a plane into the Arctic sea in *Captain America: The First Avenger*. Thirdly, characters are ready to destroy potentially harmful tools or devices they have created, recognising the threat they pose to society. In *Spiderman 2*, the villain destroys his creation to prevent further chaos and harm to the residents, underscoring the importance of sacrificing personal ambitions for the greater good. Lastly, superheroes may voluntarily limit their powers or submit to government regulations to ensure the safety of citizens. In *Captain America: Civil War*, several superheroes agree to government oversight and restrictions on their abilities, acknowledging the potential dangers posed by unchecked power and prioritising the protection of civilians.

Comparison of the Patriotism Values of Indonesian and American Superhero Films

Examining patriotism values in Indonesian and American superhero films reveals similarities and distinctions. The similarities are as follows: Firstly, superheroes in both contexts consistently aid and rescue citizens, demonstrating their love for their respective countries. Secondly, bravery pervades each superhero's actions as they confront criminals and defend their nations from harm. Thirdly, despite their challenges, superheroes continue to uphold justice and protect their countries. Lastly, they willingly endure the dangers of combat, risking injury to safeguard their fellow citizens.

However, notable differences exist between Indonesian and American portrayals of patriotism values in superhero films. In Indonesian cinema, characters exhibit pride in their cultural heritage and traditions, reflecting the rich tapestry of Indonesian society. Traditional cultural practices are celebrated and woven into the fabric of everyday life, symbolising a deep-rooted connection to heritage. Conversely, American films often emphasise pride in national symbols, such as the flag, representing a collective identity rather than specific cultural traditions. Moreover, American superhero characters overtly articulate their commitment to defending their homeland, often expressing their patriotic sentiments verbally. Their determination to serve the country is explicitly stated and reaffirmed throughout the narrative, aligning with their actions. In contrast, Indonesian superhero figures convey their patriotism primarily through their deeds, protecting and safeguarding citizens without needing verbal declaration.

Another notable difference is portraying patriotism as an inherent trait in every citizen in American superhero films. Throughout these films, even the villains ultimately realise the destructive consequences of their actions on the nation. This aspect is not as prominently depicted in Indonesian superhero films. The emergence of patriotism among superhero characters in American cinema seems to stem from a collective desire to serve the country and combat pervasive crime. In contrast, in Indonesian superhero films, the patriotic spirit often arises as a response to seeking justice for criminal offences, leading to national pride.

Additionally, American superhero films also depict instances of false patriotism, where loyalty to the country is pursued at the expense of others, resulting in destructive outcomes. This theme is subtly woven into narratives, highlighting the complexities of patriotism and its potential negative consequences. In these films, while carrying out their duties, superheroes may inadvertently endanger innocent citizens, showcasing the darker side of blind allegiance to national interests. Conversely, false patriotism is not as explicitly explored in Indonesian superhero films, where the focus is primarily on upholding justice and defending the nation against external threats.

Conclusion

Based on the research, a comparison between Indonesian and American superhero films reveals distinct elements of patriotism. Indonesian superhero characters exhibit a sense of pride in culture and customs, while American counterparts demonstrate pride in national symbols. Moreover, Indonesian superheroes predominantly showcase patriotism through actions, whereas American superheroes express it through words and deeds. Additionally, American superhero films feature instances of false patriotism, which can potentially harm the country and its citizens.

However, it is important to acknowledge several limitations in this study. Firstly, the analysis only covers select aspects of patriotism, overlooking other potentially relevant elements. Secondly, the scope of films reviewed, particularly Indonesian superhero movies, could be expanded to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

For future research in this area, it is recommended that the analysis be broadened by incorporating additional elements and a wider range of films. Doing so can achieve a more nuanced understanding of patriotism in Indonesian and American superhero films. Furthermore, this study suggests two practical applications. Firstly, Indonesian and American superhero films serve as effective mediums for instilling patriotism due to their portrayal of patriotic values. Secondly, the film “Captain America: The First Avenger” is an exemplary tool for teaching patriotism, given its comprehensive depiction of patriotic elements and the protagonist’s profound love for the country.

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