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PSYCHOLOGICAL FIELDS AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN THREE ANIMATED FILMS: LEWIN'S THEORY

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ABSTRAK

Film animasi merepresentasikan perkembangan psikologis tokoh melalui interaksi antara karakter dan lingkungannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dan membandingkan perkembangan psikologis tiga tokoh protagonis perempuan dalam film animasi, yaitu Asha dalam *Wish* (2023), Asuna Watase dalam *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), dan Kokone Morikawa dalam *Napping Princess* (2017). Dengan analisis sastra bandingan kualitatif, penelitian ini menerapkan teori medan psikologis Kurt Lewin, khususnya prinsip bahwa perilaku merupakan fungsi dari pribadi dan lingkungan psikologis (B = f(P, E)). Data diperoleh melalui penayangan ulang ketiga film dan dianalisis dengan mengidentifikasi adegan yang merepresentasikan kebutuhan psikologis, tujuan, ruang hidup, valensi, ketegangan, hambatan, daya, lokomosi, konflik, dan ekuilibrium. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para tokoh mengalami transformasi psikologis melalui perubahan hubungan antara kebutuhan pribadi dan daya-daya lingkungan. Asha berkembang dari kepedulian individual terhadap harapan kakeknya menuju agensi sosial dan moral yang bersifat kolektif ketika ia menentang sistem yang menindas. Asuna bergerak dari keterikatan emosional dan kesulitan menerima kehilangan menuju kematangan emosional dan penerimaan. Sementara itu, Kokone berkembang dari ketidakpastian dan eksplorasi imajinatif menuju agensi kognitif, familial, dan personal yang lebih besar melalui integrasi dunia mimpi dan realitas. Meskipun menghadapi bentuk konflik yang berbeda, perkembangan psikologis ketiga tokoh mengikuti proses dinamis yang serupa: ruang hidup yang terganggu menimbulkan ketegangan, daya-daya yang saling bersaing memengaruhi gerak perilaku, dan reorganisasi medan psikologis menghasilkan ekuilibrium baru. Simpulan penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa teori psikologis Lewin merupakan kerangka yang bermanfaat untuk analisis komparatif perkembangan karakter dalam film animasi.

Kata Kunci: teori medan psikologis Kurt Lewin; perkembangan karakter; film animasi; tokoh protagonis perempuan; sastra bandingan

ABSTRACT

Animated films represent psychological development through the interaction between characters and their environments. This study examines and compares the psychological development of three female protagonists in animated films: Asha in *Wish* (2023), Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), and Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess* (2017). Employing a qualitative comparative literary analysis, the study applies Kurt Lewin's psychological field theory, particularly the principle that behavior is a function of the person and the psychological environment (B = f(P, E)). Data were obtained through repeated viewing of the three films and were analyzed by identifying scenes that represent psychological needs, goals, life space, valence, tension, barriers, forces, locomotion, conflict, and equilibrium. The

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findings demonstrate that the protagonists experience psychological transformation through changing relationships between personal needs and environmental forces. Asha develops from an individual concern for her grandfather's wish toward collective social and moral agency as she challenges an oppressive system. Asuna moves from emotional attachment and difficulty accepting loss toward emotional maturity and acceptance. Meanwhile, Kokone develops from uncertainty and imaginative exploration toward greater cognitive, familial, and personal agency through the integration of her dream world and reality. Although the three protagonists encounter different forms of conflict, their psychological development follows a comparable dynamic process in which disrupted life spaces generate tension, competing forces influence behavioral movement, and the reorganization of psychological fields leads to new equilibrium. The study demonstrates that Lewin's psychological theory provides a useful framework for comparative analysis of character development in animated films.
Keywords: Kurt Lewin; psychological field theory; character development; animated films; female protagonists; comparative literature

INTRODUCTION

Film is not only a medium of entertainment but also a cultural and literary form through which human experiences, emotions, conflicts, and psychological development can be represented (Bordwell et al., 2020; Eder, 2025; Stam, 2017; Storck, 2024). Animated films, in particular, can construct complex characters whose personal development is presented through symbolic worlds, interpersonal relationships, and conflicts between individual desires and environmental circumstances. Through characterization and narrative development, audiences are invited to observe how characters respond to loss, social pressure, family relationships, injustice, uncertainty, and personal challenges (Budiman & Dewi, 2025; Budiman & Ellyawati, 2025; Budiman, Hidayat, et al., 2026; Budiman, Prasetyo, et al., 2026; Listyarini et al., 2026). Consequently, film can be examined as a cultural text in which character behavior reflects the interaction between internal conditions and external environments (Budiman et al., 2025; Budiman, Wahyuni, et al., 2026; Ula et al., 2025). A psychological approach to film therefore provides an opportunity to investigate not only what characters do but also why they behave in particular ways and how their psychological development is constructed throughout a narrative.

Comparative literature provides a useful framework for examining similarities and differences among literary and cinematic works across cultural, national, and disciplinary boundaries (Bassnett, 1998). Comparative analysis does not necessarily require works to share identical plots or themes; rather, it enables researchers to explore how related human experiences are represented through different narrative structures, cultural settings, and character constructions. In animated cinema, this perspective is particularly relevant because animation can employ imaginative visual environments, dreamlike sequences, and symbolic imagery to represent psychological experiences and internal conflicts. Chang (2013) for example, demonstrates how dreamlike animation and cinematic techniques can communicate psychological states and character development. Accordingly, comparing animated films through a psychological perspective can help identify recurring patterns of human development while recognizing the cultural and narrative differences that shape their representation.

Psychological literary criticism provides a useful perspective for examining character development by investigating how characters' thoughts, emotions, motivations, conflicts, and behavioral responses are represented in literary narratives. Psychological approaches can help explain how readers infer character traits and interpret behavioral patterns from textual

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information (Culpeper, 1996). Among these approaches, Kurt Lewin's field theory offers a particularly relevant framework because it conceptualizes behavior as a function of the person and the psychological environment, expressed in the formulation B=f(P, E)B = f(P, E) (Lewin, 1935, 1936, 1938). From this perspective, behavior cannot be adequately understood by examining personal characteristics in isolation; instead, it must be considered in relation to the psychological situation in which the individual operates. Lewin's concepts of life space, valence, force, tension, and barriers provide analytical categories for examining how characters perceive goals, experience competing motivations, encounter obstacles, and respond to changing circumstances (Rezaei & Seyyedrezaei, 2013). Accordingly, field theory can be applied to analyze character development as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between personal needs, perceived possibilities, interpersonal relationships, and environmental conditions.

The relevance of Lewin's theory becomes particularly evident when examining female protagonists whose psychological development is closely connected to changing environments and personal goals. Asha in *Wish* (Buck & Veerasunthorn, 2023), Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (Shinkai, 2011), and Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess* (Kamiyama, 2017) represent three protagonists whose lives are disrupted by circumstances that require them to reconsider their goals and relationships with their environments. Although the three films differ in cultural context, narrative style, and central conflict, each protagonist experiences a significant transformation. Asha confronts an authoritarian system that controls the wishes of the people of Rosas; Asuna confronts loneliness, attachment, and the experience of loss through her journey into Agartha; and Kokone navigates the boundary between dreams and reality while confronting conflicts involving her family and technological environment. These differences provide a productive basis for comparative psychological analysis.

In *Wish*, Asha's psychological development begins with her positive perception of King Magnifico and her desire to help fulfill her grandfather's wish. Her discovery that Magnifico controls and withholds the wishes of the people changes the psychological meaning of her environment and generates tension between her personal values and the existing social system. Her subsequent resistance demonstrates a movement from individual concern toward collective responsibility. In *Children Who Chase Lost Voices*, Asuna's development is shaped more strongly by loneliness, emotional attachment, and grief. Her encounter with Shun creates a positive psychological connection, while his disappearance produces tension that motivates her journey toward Agartha. Her experiences gradually transform her goal from recovering someone she has lost to accepting the reality of loss. In *Napping Princess*, Kokone's psychological development is constructed through the interaction between her ordinary environment and the dream world of Heartland. Her dreams initially provide an imaginative space for exploration, but the arrest of her father and the connection between her dreams, family history, and technology transform this environment into a space of investigation and responsibility.

Previous studies have demonstrated the value of psychological approaches for examining characters' emotions, motivations, and responses to narrative situations. For example, Oatley (1995) explains how readers engage with fictional characters' goals, emotions, and actions, providing a useful basis for understanding psychological processes in narrative fiction. Building on this perspective, Lewin's (1935, 1936, 1938) field theory offers a dynamic framework for examining character development through the interaction between personal characteristics and psychological environmental forces. From this perspective, character behavior cannot be adequately understood in isolation from the social and situational conditions

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in which it occurs. Nevertheless, further comparative investigation is warranted to explore how different forms of psychological conflict, including social injustice, emotional loss, and family identity, shape the agency of female protagonists in animated films. Applying a common theoretical framework across multiple films may therefore extend individual character interpretations by identifying similarities and differences in the psychological processes through which female protagonists respond to environmental pressures, negotiate personal needs, and pursue their goals.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze and compare the psychological development of Asha, Asuna Watase, and Kokone Morikawa through Kurt Lewin's psychological theory. Specifically, the study investigates how the protagonists' life spaces, needs, goals, valences, tensions, barriers, forces, locomotion, conflicts, and psychological equilibria shape their behavior and transformation. The study addresses the following research question: How do the psychological environments and dynamic forces represented in *Wish* (2023), *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), and *Napping Princess* (2017) shape the psychological development of their main female protagonists? By answering this question, the study seeks to contribute to comparative film and literary studies by demonstrating how Lewin's field theory can be applied to understand character development as a dynamic process of interaction between the individual and the psychological environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative comparative literary analysis to examine the psychological development of the main female protagonists in three animated films: *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), *Napping Princess* (2017), and *Wish* (2023). The films were selected purposively because all three feature young female protagonists who experience significant psychological conflicts, environmental changes, and personal transformation. The study focused on Asha in *Wish*, Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices*, and Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess*. Rather than comparing the films based on their narrative similarities alone, the study examined how the protagonists' psychological conditions and behavioral changes are constructed through their interactions with their respective environments.

The analysis employed Kurt Lewin's psychological theory as the primary theoretical framework, particularly the principle B = f(P, E), which conceptualizes behavior as a function of the person and the psychological environment. The analysis focused on key concepts including life space, psychological environment, needs, goals, positive and negative valence, tension, barriers, forces, conflict, locomotion, and equilibrium. These concepts were used as analytical categories to identify and interpret significant scenes involving the protagonists. The study considered the protagonist's personal characteristics and psychological needs as the person component, while family relationships, social conditions, physical surroundings, interpersonal relationships, conflicts, and other situational factors were considered components of the environment.

Data were collected through repeated viewing of the three films and systematic identification of scenes relevant to the protagonists' psychological development. Each selected scene was recorded and organized according to three analytical components: (1) the relevant concept from Lewin's theory, (2) the scene demonstrating the psychological phenomenon, and (3) the interpretation of the protagonist's psychological condition and behavioral response. Particular attention was given to scenes that represented changes in the protagonists' goals, emotional conditions, relationships, perceptions of their environments, and responses to

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psychological barriers. Scenes that contributed to the protagonists' movement from their initial psychological state toward conflict, transformation, and resolution were prioritized.

The data were analyzed using a thematic and comparative interpretive procedure. First, significant scenes from each film were identified and coded according to the relevant concepts of Lewin's theory. Second, the coded scenes were interpreted to reconstruct the psychological life space of each protagonist and to identify the forces influencing her behavior. Third, the psychological trajectory of each protagonist was established by examining the relationship among needs, goals, tensions, barriers, and behavioral movement. Finally, the three protagonists were compared to identify both similarities and differences in their psychological development. The comparison focused particularly on the forms of psychological transformation represented by the characters: Asha's movement toward social and moral agency, Asuna's movement toward emotional acceptance, and Kokone's movement toward cognitive, familial, and personal agency. Through this procedure, the study sought to demonstrate how Kurt Lewin's psychological framework can be applied to comparative analysis of character development in contemporary animated films.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the comparative literary analysis are presented through the psychological characterization of the three main protagonists in *Wish* (2023), *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), and *Napping Princess* (2017). The analysis applies Kurt Lewin's psychological theory, particularly the concept of life space and the dynamic relationship between the person and the psychological environment. The analysis focuses on how each protagonist's behavior is shaped by psychological needs, goals, tensions, barriers, positive and negative valences, interpersonal relationships, and environmental forces. Particular attention is given to significant scenes that reveal changes in the protagonists' psychological conditions and behavioral responses. By examining these elements systematically, the results identify how the protagonists move from their initial psychological conditions through conflict and tension toward transformation and a new state of equilibrium, providing a basis for comparing psychological development across the three films. The analysis of each protagonist is summarized in Table 1 (Asha), Table 2 (Asuna), and Table 3 (Kokone) and is interpreted in the narrative that follows each table.

Table 1. Psychological Analysis of Asha in *Wish* (2023)

Kurt Lewin's Theory	Scene	Analysis
Life Space: Person + Psychological Environment	Asha introduces visitors to Rosas and enthusiastically explains the kingdom where people surrender their wishes to King Magnifico.	At the beginning of the film, Asha's life space is characterized by trust, optimism, and admiration for Magnifico. Her perception of Rosas is positive because she believes that Magnifico protects people's wishes. Her behavior is therefore shaped by the interaction between her idealistic personality and a social environment that presents Magnifico as a benevolent ruler.
Needs and Goals	Asha prepares for her interview to become Magnifico's apprentice because she wants to contribute to Rosas and hopes that her grandfather's wish will eventually be granted.	Asha's behavior is motivated by several psychological needs: belonging, achievement, family attachment, and the desire to help others. Her grandfather's 100th birthday creates a particularly strong goal. In Lewinian terms, this goal creates psychological tension that directs Asha toward Magnifico. D23 confirms that Asha's desire for her grandfather's wish to be granted becomes the source of her conflict with Magnifico.

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Kurt Lewin's Theory	Scene	Analysis
Valence (+)	Asha meets King Magnifico and initially admires him as the powerful ruler who protects the wishes of Rosas.	Magnifico initially has a positive valence in Asha's life space. She perceives him as attractive, powerful, benevolent, and capable of fulfilling people's dreams. This positive psychological value explains why Asha initially wants to become his apprentice rather than challenge him.
Barrier	During the apprenticeship interview, Asha discovers that Magnifico personally controls the wishes and has no intention of granting many of them.	Magnifico becomes a psychological barrier between Asha and her goal. Asha realizes that her grandfather's wish may never be fulfilled. The discrepancy between her goal and the environmental constraint produces psychological tension. Her perception of Magnifico changes from positive to negative.
Tension	Asha asks Magnifico to grant Sabino's wish for his 100th birthday, but Magnifico refuses.	The refusal intensifies Asha's psychological tension because an important personal goal becomes blocked. According to Lewin, an unmet need or blocked goal can produce tension that motivates behavior. Asha therefore moves from passive acceptance to active resistance.
Change of Life Space	After discovering the truth about the wishes, Asha leaves the castle and becomes emotionally distressed.	Asha's psychological environment changes dramatically. The same Rosas that previously represented safety and hope now represents control and injustice. Her life space is reorganized because her interpretation of the environment has changed. Consequently, her behavior also changes.
Force / Motive Force	Asha goes into the forest and wishes upon a star for help. Star subsequently appears.	Asha's unmet goal generates a strong motive force toward action. Instead of accepting Magnifico's decision, she actively seeks an alternative. Her wish represents a psychological movement from helplessness toward agency. Star becomes a new positive force within Asha's life space.
Approach Force	Asha works with Star and begins trying to restore the people's wishes.	Star and Asha's friends function as approach forces that support Asha's movement toward her goal. Her behavior becomes increasingly collective rather than individual. Her psychological field expands from concern for her grandfather to concern for the entire community.
Repelling Force	Magnifico discovers Asha's actions and attempts to stop her from returning the wishes to the people.	Magnifico represents a powerful repelling force. His authority, magical power, and control over Rosas create barriers to Asha's goal. The conflict can therefore be understood as a dynamic field containing opposing forces: Asha's desire for freedom versus Magnifico's desire for control.
Conflict of Forces	Asha and her friends attempt to protect the wishes while Magnifico uses his power to suppress them.	The central conflict is a dynamic psychological field. Asha is simultaneously influenced by forces that push her toward action and forces that create fear and resistance. Her continued resistance demonstrates that her need for justice and freedom becomes stronger than her fear of Magnifico.
Locomotion	Asha actively travels, persuades her friends, confronts Magnifico, and attempts to liberate the wishes.	Asha's physical actions represent locomotion within her life space. She does not merely experience psychological tension; she moves through the psychological field toward a desired región freedom for the people of Rosas. Lewin's theory conceptualizes behavior as movement within a dynamic life space.
Social Environment	Asha's friends initially hesitate but eventually	Asha's behavior is strongly influenced by her social environment. Her friends function as supportive forces that

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Kurt Lewin's Theory	Scene	Analysis
	support her and join her resistance against Magnifico.	strengthen her confidence. This demonstrates that her behavior cannot be explained solely through personality; her relationships and social circumstances also shape her actions.
Goal Region	Asha confronts Magnifico and continues fighting for the people's wishes.	The liberation of the wishes becomes the goal region in Asha's psychological field. Her original goal was relatively personal helping her grandfather but the goal expands into collective liberation. This indicates development in Asha's psychological orientation from individual concern to social responsibility.
Restoration of Psychological Equilibrium	After Magnifico is defeated and the wishes are returned to the people, Rosas begins to experience freedom.	The resolution reduces the tension that dominated Asha's life space. The conflict between Asha's needs and the environmental barriers is resolved. A new psychological equilibrium emerges in which the people are able to pursue their own wishes rather than depend entirely on Magnifico.
Transformation of Person–Environment Relationship	At the end of the film, Asha remains in Rosas and continues encouraging people to pursue their dreams.	Asha's transformation demonstrates Lewin's central principle that behavior emerges from the interaction between person and environment. She does not simply change because of an internal personality transformation; her changing perception of Rosas, Magnifico, her community, and her own agency reorganizes her life space and consequently changes her behavior.

The analysis of Asha in *Wish* (2023) demonstrates that her behavior can be understood through Kurt Lewin's psychological theory, particularly the concept of the life space and the dynamic interaction between the person and the psychological environment. At the beginning of the film, Asha's life space is dominated by positive perceptions of Rosas and King Magnifico. She views Magnifico as a benevolent ruler who protects the wishes of the people, while her personal goal is strongly connected to her grandfather Sabino's wish. This goal creates a psychological tension that directs her behavior toward becoming Magnifico's apprentice and requesting the fulfillment of her grandfather's wish. However, when Magnifico refuses and Asha discovers that he deliberately controls and withholds many wishes, her perception of the psychological environment changes. Magnifico consequently changes from a positive valence into a barrier and repelling force. This transformation illustrates Lewin's principle that behavior is not determined exclusively by personality but emerges from the interaction between the individual and the environment at a particular moment.

As the conflict develops, Asha's psychological field becomes increasingly characterized by opposing forces. Her desire to protect the wishes and help the people of Rosas functions as an approach force, whereas Magnifico's authority and attempts to suppress the wishes operate as repelling forces. The tension generated by these conflicting forces motivates Asha to move from passive acceptance toward active resistance. Her encounter with Star and the support of her friends further strengthen the positive forces that enable her to pursue her goal. Importantly, Asha's goal also develops from a personal concern for her grandfather into a collective concern for the freedom and aspirations of the people of Rosas. Her actions therefore represent locomotion within a changing life space, culminating in the confrontation with Magnifico and the restoration of the people's wishes. The resolution reduces the psychological tension and establishes a new equilibrium. Asha's transformation consequently illustrates Lewin's view of

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behavior as a dynamic process in which changes in needs, perceptions, environmental barriers, and social forces continuously reorganize the individual's life space.

Table 2. Psychological Analysis of Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011)

Kurt Lewin's Theory	**Scene**	**Analysis**
Life Space: Person + Psychological Environment	Asuna lives alone with her mother in a rural area after the death of her father. She spends much of her time alone and listens to mysterious music from a crystal radio.	Asuna's life space is initially characterized by loneliness, independence, and emotional vulnerability. The absence of her father and her mother's frequent absence create an environment in which Asuna develops a strong need for emotional connection. Her behavior is therefore shaped by the interaction between her personal emotional needs and her isolated environment.
Need	Asuna repeatedly visits a secluded place in the mountains and listens to the mysterious melody coming from her radio.	The mysterious music satisfies Asuna's psychological need for companionship, curiosity, and emotional connection. Her repeated return to the place indicates that the experience has acquired psychological significance within her life space.
Positive Valence	Asuna encounters a mysterious boy, Shun, who rescues her from a creature and later spends time with her.	Shun acquires a strong positive valence in Asuna's psychological field. He represents companionship, protection, and emotional connection. Her attraction toward him is intensified because he provides something that is missing from her everyday environment.
Goal	After Shun disappears, Asuna becomes determined to understand where he came from and what happened to him.	Shun's disappearance creates a new goal region in Asuna's life space. Her goal changes from simply experiencing the mysterious world to finding Shun and understanding the connection between his world and her own. This goal directs her subsequent behavior.
Barrier	Asuna discovers that Shun came from Agartha, a mysterious underground world, and that reaching this world is extremely dangerous.	Agartha and the dangers surrounding it function as psychological and environmental barriers. Although Asuna desires to enter this world, uncertainty, physical danger, and limited knowledge restrict her movement toward her goal.
Tension	After learning more about Shun and Agartha, Asuna continues to pursue the mystery despite the warnings and dangers surrounding her journey.	The gap between Asuna's desired goal and her current situation generates psychological tension. She cannot simply return to her previous life because Shun's disappearance has created an unresolved emotional need. The tension motivates her to continue searching for answers.
Force	Asuna follows the mysterious events that connect her world with Agartha and eventually becomes involved in the journey with Morisaki and Shin.	Several forces operate simultaneously within Asuna's life space. Her desire for connection and understanding functions as an approach force, while danger and uncertainty function as opposing forces. Her continued movement demonstrates that the approach forces become sufficiently strong to overcome the barriers.
Social Environment	Asuna meets Mr. Morisaki, a teacher who is also searching for a way to enter Agartha because of his desire to bring back his deceased wife.	Morisaki becomes an important component of Asuna's psychological environment. His own grief provides a parallel to Asuna's loneliness and loss. Their interaction expands Asuna's understanding of death and the emotional consequences of refusing to accept loss.

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Kurt Lewin's Theory	Scene	Analysis
Conflict	Asuna and Morisaki enter Agartha, where they encounter dangers while attempting to reach the Gate of Life and Death.	The journey represents a dynamic psychological conflict between the desire to overcome death and the necessity of accepting loss. Asuna initially approaches the journey through personal longing, whereas the experience gradually forces her to reconsider her understanding of separation, death, and emotional attachment.
Locomotion	Asuna travels from her ordinary world into Agartha and continues moving through the underground world in search of answers.	Asuna's physical journey represents locomotion within her psychological life space. Her movement from the familiar world into Agartha parallels her psychological movement from dependence on the past toward a deeper understanding of loss and acceptance.
Changing Valence	Asuna initially associates Agartha with Shun and the possibility of finding him, but later experiences fear, danger, and emotional pain there.	The valence of Agartha changes throughout the narrative. What initially appears attractive and mysterious gradually becomes associated with danger and painful emotional realities. This change contributes to Asuna's psychological development.
Need for Attachment	Asuna becomes emotionally attached to Shun and later develops a close relationship with Shin, who resembles Shun.	Asuna's attachment to Shun and Shin demonstrates the continuing influence of her need for emotional connection. However, the similarity between the two boys also reveals her difficulty in separating her memories of Shun from her present relationships.
Barrier and Loss	Asuna realizes that Shun cannot simply be brought back to her world and that the boundary between life and death cannot be ignored.	The impossibility of restoring Shun becomes a fundamental barrier in Asuna's psychological field. This barrier forces her to confront the limits of her original goal and gradually changes her understanding of what it means to lose someone.
Transformation of Goal	Asuna eventually understands that returning the dead to life is not a solution to grief and that she must return to her own world.	Asuna's original goal of recovering Shun is transformed into a broader psychological goal: accepting loss and continuing to live. Her psychological field is reorganized as she recognizes that emotional attachment to the past should not prevent movement toward the future.
Equilibrium	At the end of the film, Asuna returns to her ordinary world and continues her life while carrying her memories of Shun and her experiences in Agartha.	The resolution represents a new psychological equilibrium. Asuna does not erase her memories or deny her loss; instead, she integrates the experience into her developing identity. The tension created by her inability to accept Shun's disappearance is reduced through acceptance and emotional maturation.
Person–Environment Interaction	Asuna's experiences in her ordinary world, her encounters with Shun and Shin, and her journey through Agartha collectively shape her final decision.	Asuna's development illustrates Lewin's principle B = f(P, E): her behavior emerges from the interaction between her personal characteristics and psychological environment. Her loneliness, attachment, curiosity, and grief interact with the people, dangers, and possibilities presented by Agartha, producing progressive changes in her behavior and psychological orientation.

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The analysis of Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011) reveals a psychological development shaped by the interaction between her personal needs and psychological environment. At the beginning of the film, Asuna's life space is characterized by loneliness, independence, and the absence of meaningful emotional companionship. Her encounter with Shun introduces a strong positive valence into this life space because he provides companionship, protection, and a sense of emotional connection. When Shun disappears, however, the positive valence associated with him becomes a source of psychological tension. Asuna's desire to understand his disappearance and reconnect with him develops into a goal that directs her behavior. From Lewin's perspective, her actions are therefore not simply the result of curiosity; they emerge from the dynamic interaction between her emotional needs, her perception of Shun, and the environmental possibilities and barriers surrounding her. Her decision to enter Agartha represents locomotion toward a goal region created by this psychological tension.

As the narrative progresses, Asuna's psychological field becomes increasingly complicated by the experience of loss, danger, and the desire to overcome the boundary between life and death. Her relationship with Morisaki provides an important social force because his own grief and desire to revive his deceased wife mirror Asuna's attachment to Shun. Through their journey in Agartha, Asuna gradually recognizes that attempting to recover someone who has been lost cannot resolve the underlying experience of grief. Consequently, her original goal of finding or recovering Shun is transformed into a process of acceptance. In Lewinian terms, the barriers and opposing forces within her life space eventually lead to a reorganization of her psychological field. Her return to the ordinary world therefore represents a new psychological equilibrium: Asuna does not simply forget Shun, but learns to integrate the experience of loss while continuing to move forward. Her development illustrates Lewin's principle that behavior results from the dynamic relationship between the person and the psychological environment, with changes in perceived goals, needs, forces, and barriers producing corresponding changes in behavior.

Table 3. Psychological Analysis of Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess* (2017)

Kurt Lewin's Theory	**Scene**	**Analysis**
Life Space: Person + Psychological Environment	Kokone lives with her father in Okayama and spends much of her time sleeping and dreaming about the kingdom of Heartland.	Kokone's initial life space consists of her everyday family environment and her imaginative dream world. Her relationship with her father is emotionally important, while the dream world provides an alternative psychological environment in which she can explore experiences and relationships that are difficult to understand in reality.
Need	Kokone repeatedly falls asleep and enters the dream world, where she becomes Princess Ancien of Heartland.	The recurring dreams can be interpreted as reflecting Kokone's psychological need for understanding, identity, and emotional connection. The dream environment allows her to experience a world in which she possesses abilities and responsibilities that contrast with her ordinary life.
Positive Valence	In the dream world, Kokone experiences herself as Princess Ancien and interacts with characters who are connected to her family history.	The dream world initially has a strong positive valence because it offers Kokone excitement, agency, and opportunities to explore her identity. The positive psychological value of this world encourages her to repeatedly return to it.
Goal	Kokone begins to investigate the strange	Kokone develops a psychological goal of discovering the truth behind the mysterious events surrounding her family.

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Kurt Lewin's Theory	Scene	Analysis
	connection between her dreams, her father, the Heartland kingdom, and the family's history.	Her goal gradually shifts from simply enjoying her dreams to understanding the relationship between her dream experiences and reality.
Tension	Kokone discovers that her father has been arrested and becomes involved in a conflict involving the family business and the Tokyo 2020-related events.	The situation creates significant psychological tension because Kokone's ordinary life becomes unstable. Her desire to protect her father conflicts with forces that threaten her family. This tension motivates her to become increasingly active in solving the mystery.
Barrier	Kokone faces obstacles while trying to understand why her father has been arrested and why the Heartland story seems connected to real-world events.	The arrest of her father, the actions of the antagonistic forces, and the confusing boundary between dreams and reality function as barriers. These barriers prevent Kokone from immediately reaching her goal of protecting her father and discovering the truth.
Approach Force	Kokone decides to investigate the mystery rather than remain a passive observer of the events surrounding her father.	Her affection for her father and her desire to protect her family become strong approach forces. These forces move Kokone toward action and encourage her to confront increasingly complicated circumstances.
Repelling Force	Kokone encounters people and forces attempting to control the Heartland technology and interfere with her family.	The antagonistic forces function as repelling forces that oppose Kokone's goals. Their attempts to control technology and manipulate events create psychological and environmental pressure that Kokone must overcome.
Person Environment Interaction	Events in Kokone's real life increasingly correspond with events in her dreams.	The relationship between reality and dreams demonstrates Lewin's emphasis on the interaction between person and psychological environment. Kokone's interpretation of her environment changes as she discovers that what initially appears to be fantasy may contain meaningful connections to her family and reality.
Changing Valence	The dream world initially appears playful and exciting, but gradually becomes connected to conflict, danger, and family problems.	The psychological valence of the dream world changes. What initially provides escape and enjoyment becomes a source of information and responsibility. The change in valence reflects Kokone's psychological maturation and changing understanding of her circumstances.
Locomotion	Kokone moves between her ordinary world and the dream world while actively investigating the connection between the two.	Kokone's movement between the two worlds can be understood as locomotion within her life space. Psychologically, this movement represents her transition from uncertainty toward knowledge and from passivity toward agency.
Social Environment	Kokone interacts with her father, Morio, her grandfather's legacy, and other people involved in	Kokone's behavior is strongly influenced by her social environment. Her relationship with her father is particularly important because protecting him becomes one of the strongest motivations for her actions. Family relationships

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Kurt Lewin's Theory	Scene	Analysis
	the conflict surrounding Heartland.	therefore function as significant forces within her psychological field.
Need for Family Attachment	Kokone attempts to understand the circumstances surrounding her father and refuses to simply accept his arrest.	Her actions demonstrate a strong need for family attachment and protection. Her emotional bond with her father transforms the conflict from an abstract technological problem into a personally meaningful goal.
Conflict of Forces	Kokone and her allies attempt to protect the family's technology and uncover the truth while opposing forces attempt to control it.	Kokone's life space contains competing forces: her approach forces include love, curiosity, responsibility, and the desire to protect her father, whereas the opposing forces include fear, uncertainty, technological control, and external threats. Her continued action demonstrates the increasing strength of her approach forces.
Transformation of Goal	Kokone gradually understands that the mystery surrounding Heartland is connected to her family's past and her father's actions.	Kokone's goal develops from understanding her dreams into understanding her family identity and protecting those she loves. This transformation indicates a reorganization of her psychological field as previously disconnected experiences acquire new meaning.
Agency / Psychological Movement	Kokone increasingly takes initiative instead of relying entirely on adults to solve the problem.	Kokone demonstrates growing psychological agency. Her behavior changes from relatively passive participation in her dreams to active problem-solving in both the dream and real worlds. The change indicates that the psychological forces within her life space increasingly motivate independent action.
Resolution / New Equilibrium	The conflict is resolved, the truth concerning the family and Heartland becomes clearer, and Kokone is able to return to ordinary life with a deeper understanding of her identity and family.	The resolution produces a new psychological equilibrium. Kokone's previous uncertainty is reduced because she develops a clearer understanding of her family history and her own role. The dream world no longer functions merely as an escape but becomes part of her process of understanding herself and her environment.
B = f(P, E)	Kokone's final actions are shaped by her personality, family relationships, dreams, technological environment, and conflicts surrounding Heartland.	Kokone's development illustrates Lewin's principle B = f(P, E): behavior results from the interaction between the person and the environment. Her curiosity, affection for her father, developing agency, and desire for understanding interact with family circumstances, social relationships, technological forces, and the dream environment to shape her behavioral development.

The analysis of Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess* (2017) demonstrates that her psychological development is shaped by the dynamic interaction between her personal characteristics and psychological environment. At the beginning of the film, Kokone's life space consists of her ordinary family life and the imaginative dream world of Heartland, where she experiences herself as Princess Ancien. The dream world initially has a positive valence because it provides excitement, freedom, and opportunities for Kokone to explore aspects of herself that are less visible in her everyday life. However, the arrest of her father and the mysterious connection between her dreams, family history, and Heartland transform her psychological environment. These events create tension and establish a new goal:

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understanding the mystery and protecting her father. From Lewin's perspective, Kokone's behavior is therefore influenced not only by her curiosity but also by the changing psychological forces within her life space, particularly her emotional attachment to her father and the barriers created by external threats.

As the narrative progresses, Kokone moves increasingly between her dream and real worlds, representing both physical and psychological locomotion toward her goal. Her family relationships, technological environment, and encounters with opposing forces create a dynamic field in which approach and repelling forces operate simultaneously. Her affection for her father, desire for truth, and growing sense of responsibility function as approach forces, whereas uncertainty, danger, and attempts to control Heartland technology function as opposing forces. Through these conflicts, Kokone develops from a relatively passive dreamer into an active problem-solver who takes greater responsibility for confronting the circumstances surrounding her family. Her original interest in the dream world consequently develops into a deeper understanding of her identity, family history, and relationship with reality. The resolution produces a new psychological equilibrium in which Kokone is able to integrate her dream experiences with her understanding of the real world. Her development thus illustrates Lewin's principle of B = f(P, E), demonstrating how changes in the person–environment relationship reorganize the character's psychological life space and influence subsequent behavior.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the three protagonists Asha in *Wish* (Buck & Veerasunthorn, 2023), Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (Shinkai, 2011), and Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess* (Kamiyama, 2017) undergo psychological development through changing interactions between personal needs and their psychological environments. This interpretation is consistent with Lewin's (1935, 1936, 1938) field theory, which conceptualizes behavior as a function of the person and the environment, expressed as B = f(P, E). From this perspective, character development can be examined through the dynamic relationships among personal needs, goals, psychological forces, environmental barriers, and the perceived valences of different courses of action (Lewin, 1935, 1936, 1938). Although the protagonists encounter different narrative conflicts, their behavioral trajectories can be interpreted through a comparable process in which initial needs interact with environmental conditions and generate changes in goals and actions. Asha's concern for her grandfather's wish, Asuna's struggle to cope with loss, and Kokone's efforts to understand her dreams and protect her father illustrate distinct motivational starting points. As their circumstances change, these motivations are redirected through encounters with psychological and environmental barriers, suggesting that their development is better understood as a dynamic interaction between individuals and their surrounding worlds than as an isolated process of personal change.

Asha's psychological development is characterized primarily by a movement from personal aspiration toward collective responsibility. At the beginning of *Wish*, Asha perceives Rosas and Magnifico positively, regarding him as a potential source of opportunity and support. From the perspective of Lewin's field theory, an individual's behavior is shaped by the dynamic relationship between the person and the psychological environment, conceptualized as the life space (Lewin, 1935, 1936, 1938). Asha's desire to become Magnifico's apprentice and secure her grandfather's wish can therefore be interpreted as goal-directed behavior motivated by the positive psychological significance of these objectives. However, Magnifico's refusal and his

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control over the wishes reorganize Asha's perception of her environment. What she initially perceives as a supportive setting becomes an obstacle to the fulfillment of meaningful goals. This shift creates a new psychological situation that motivates her movement from acceptance to resistance. As the narrative progresses, Asha's objective expands beyond her grandfather's individual wish to encompass the freedom of the entire community. From a Lewinian perspective, this transformation illustrates how a changing psychological environment can alter the perceived significance of goals and the forces influencing behavior (Lewin, 1935, 1936, 1938). Asha's eventual confrontation with Magnifico can consequently be interpreted not merely as an external heroic action but as the behavioral expression of a transformed life space in which justice, freedom, and collective responsibility become more compelling than obedience to authority. This interpretation is consistent with the film's official synopsis, which presents Asha's struggle against Magnifico as an effort to save the community of Rosas (Buck & Veerasunthorn, 2023).

Asuna's psychological development in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (Shinkai, 2011) reflects a movement from emotional attachment and unresolved loss toward acceptance. From the perspective of Lewin's (1935, 1936, 1938) field theory, her attachment to Shun can be interpreted as a positively valenced psychological goal within her life space. His disappearance creates psychological tension that motivates her to pursue the mystery of Agartha. This journey represents not only physical locomotion but also an attempt to resolve an emotionally significant and initially unattainable goal. The film's exploration of death, separation, and the desire to reconnect with the dead further supports an interpretation of Asuna's journey as a confrontation with loss (Redrobe, 2014). As her experiences in Agartha challenge her initial desire to recover Shun, her psychological orientation gradually changes from reunion toward acceptance. Her development can therefore be interpreted as a reorganization of her psychological field, in which accepting separation becomes more significant than restoring the original relationship. Unlike Asha's resistance to external authority in *Wish* (Buck & Veerasunthorn, 2023), Asuna's transformation primarily concerns her changing emotional relationship with absence and loss.

Kokone in *Napping Princess* (Kamiyama, 2017) demonstrates a psychological trajectory characterized by identity exploration, family attachment, and increasing agency. From the perspective of Lewin's (1935, 1936, 1938) field theory, her life space encompasses the psychological environments represented by both the ordinary world and the dream world of Heartland. Initially, Heartland provides an imaginative space associated with freedom, excitement, and self-exploration. However, her father's arrest and the gradual revelation of the relationship between her dreams, family history, and technological conflict transform the significance of this environment (Kamiyama, 2017). The dream world consequently functions not merely as a realm of fantasy but also as a psychological space through which Kokone interprets reality and reconstructs her understanding of family identity. Her attachment to her father and determination to discover the truth operate as motivational forces, whereas uncertainty, danger, and opposition from powerful external actors create barriers to achieving her goals. As the narrative progresses, Kokone develops from a relatively passive dreamer into an active problem-solver who draws connections between apparently separate environments. Her development can therefore be interpreted through Lewin's dynamic conception of behavior as a function of the person and the psychological environment (Lewin, 1935, 1936, 1938). Unlike Asha's movement toward collective responsibility and Asuna's struggle to accept loss, Kokone's transformation centers on integrating dream experiences, personal agency, and family identity.

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A comparison of the three protagonists reveals that psychological tension is a central mechanism driving character development. From the perspective of Lewin's (1935, 1936, 1938) field theory, behavior is shaped by the dynamic relationship between the individual and the psychological environment, in which competing forces, barriers, and goal-directed movement influence behavioral change. Asha experiences tension when her initial belief in Magnifico conflicts with her discovery of his control over the wishes of Rosas (Buck & Veerasunthorn, 2023). Asuna's attachment to Shun and his subsequent disappearance can be interpreted as a disruption of her psychological life space, intensifying her pursuit of emotional understanding and acceptance (Shinkai, 2011). Meanwhile, Kokone's journey involves an increasingly complex relationship between dreams and reality, as the dream world becomes connected to the mystery surrounding her family (Kamiyama, 2017). Across the three narratives, these changing perceptions can be interpreted through Lewin's concepts of valence, barriers, and locomotion, whereby shifts in the psychological field redirect the protagonists' actions toward new goals (Lewin, 1935, 1936, 1938). Thus, character development can be understood not merely as a plot-driven transformation but as a dynamic process involving changing relationships between personal needs, environmental conditions, and goal-directed behavior.

The comparative findings also indicate three different forms of psychological transformation. Asha moves from individual concern to collective agency, Asuna from emotional attachment to acceptance, and Kokone from uncertainty to integrated identity and agency. These differences demonstrate the analytical usefulness of Lewin's field theory for examining character development across different cinematic narratives. Lewin (Kihlstrom, 2019; von Fircks, 2025) conceptualizes behavior as emerging from the dynamic relationship between the person and the psychological environment, emphasizing that behavior must be understood in relation to the configuration of the psychological field. Although the protagonists occupy different narrative worlds and encounter different conflicts, their behaviors can be interpreted through these shared psychological principles. Asha's behavior changes as Rosas and Magnifico acquire new meanings; Asuna's behavior changes as her relationships with Shun, Agartha, and death reshape her life space; and Kokone's behavior changes as the relationship between dreams, family, and reality becomes clearer. These interpretations are consistent with field-theoretical accounts in which changes in goals, perceived environmental conditions, and psychological forces influence behavioral movement (Kihlstrom, 2019; von Fircks, 2025). Thus, the three films offer distinct narrative representations of a comparable psychological process: disruption of an existing life space generates tension, competing forces influence behavioral movement, and the reorganization of the psychological field may lead to psychological transformation and a new equilibrium.

From a comparative literary perspective, these findings suggest that the three animated films construct female protagonists who respond actively to psychological and environmental pressures rather than remaining passive recipients of circumstances. Their journeys can be interpreted as different forms of agency: Asha exercises social and moral agency, Asuna develops emotional agency, and Kokone develops cognitive and familial agency. Such an interpretation is consistent with scholarship that conceptualizes female agency in film and television as a process shaped by narrative, social relations, and contextual circumstances (Sasse, 2026; Sezen et al., 2020). The films consequently portray psychological growth not as the elimination of conflict but as the protagonists' changing relationships with their psychological environments. This interpretation aligns with Lewin's (1935, 1936, 1938) field theory, which conceptualizes behavior as a function of the person and the psychological

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environment, emphasizing their interdependence within an individual's life space. Across the three films, transformation occurs as the protagonists reinterpret their environments, reassess their goals, respond to opposing forces, and establish new patterns of psychological organization.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study examined the psychological development of three female protagonists Asha in *Wish* (2023), Asuna Watase in *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), and Kokone Morikawa in *Napping Princess* (2017) through Kurt Lewin's psychological theory. The findings demonstrate that the protagonists' behaviors are shaped by the dynamic interaction between personal characteristics and their psychological environments, consistent with Lewin's principle of B = f(P, E). Across the three films, psychological needs, goals, positive and negative valences, barriers, tensions, and environmental forces continuously reorganize the protagonists' life spaces. Although the films present different narrative conflicts, all three protagonists experience a disruption of their initial psychological equilibrium that motivates behavioral movement and psychological transformation.

The comparison further reveals three distinctive patterns of character development. Asha moves from personal concern for her grandfather toward collective responsibility and social agency as she challenges Magnifico's control. Asuna moves from emotional attachment and an inability to accept loss toward emotional maturity and acceptance. Kokone moves from uncertainty and imaginative exploration toward greater agency and an integrated understanding of her family, identity, dreams, and reality. Thus, the three films represent different forms of psychological growth: social-moral agency, emotional acceptance, and cognitive-familial agency, respectively. Despite these differences, the protagonists ultimately achieve new psychological equilibria by reorganizing their relationships with their environments. The study therefore demonstrates that Lewin's psychological framework provides a useful analytical perspective for comparative literary and film studies because it enables character development to be understood as a dynamic process of interaction among the individual, psychological environment, goals, tensions, and forces. Rather than portraying transformation as a purely internal change, the three films suggest that female protagonists develop through continuous negotiation with the environments, relationships, conflicts, and circumstances that constitute their life spaces.

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