

## **M's Self-Actualization Journey in 'How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies' (2024)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) is a Thai film that depicts a young man's journey toward self-actualization amid complex family conflicts. This study analyzes how M's self-actualization shows and the influence of other family members in this process. Applying Abraham Maslow's concept of self-actualization, adapted by Kaufman into the Characteristic of Self-Actualization Scale (CSAS), this study explores M's characteristic development through content analysis, utilizing dialogue and visual elements to reveal the family's influence on M's growth. Findings highlight the vital role of each character as a catalyst and barrier of family Influence factors (including financial and informational support, expectations, and values or beliefs) in triggering M's characteristics, such as acceptance, authenticity, purpose, humanitarianism, and efficient perception of reality. This study concludes that family influence significantly impacts an individual's self-actualization and emotional maturity journey.

**Keywords:** Barriers, Catalysts, Family Influence, Film Analysis, Self-Actualization

### **INTRODUCTION**

Self-actualization is the highest level of basic human needs in the hierarchy of needs proposed by Maslow (1943). Self-actualization has been broadly analyzed, especially regarding the fulfillment of individual needs. Its application in film analysis is often depicted as the main character's process of realizing their full potential. Self-actualized individuals will demonstrate characteristics as proposed by Kaufman (2023), such as Continued freshness of appreciation, Acceptance, Authenticity, Equanimity, Purpose, Efficient perception of reality, Humanitarianism, and Peak experiences.

Although this concept is often referred to as the process of individual development or realization, this process does not happen by itself without any triggers. Previous studies by Sasongko et al. (2024) has found a significant relationship between social support and self-actualization, which emphasizes the importance of those around in shaping an individual's development. Based on that finding, interpersonal relationships often play a crucial role in shaping or obstructing someone's process of self-actualization. One of the most important interpersonal relationships is family influence due to its interactions and culture that have been carried since childhood. In the study by Vautero et al. (2021), family influence includes family support (both financial and informational), family expectations, and family values and beliefs.

A film from Thailand that explores family themes such as family conflict, inheritance, and emotional growth, *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024), depicts the role of family as a catalyst or barrier in the main character's development towards self-actualization. Directed by Pat Boonnitipat, this film was released on April 4, 2024, in Thailand and due to its wide attention, was also released in several countries including Indonesia on May 15, 2024.

Through the interaction of the main character named M, the film highlights the role of family members as catalysts or barriers of family support (financial and informational), family values and beliefs, and family expectations, in triggering M to find his identity, purpose, emotional control, and maturity. This study proposes that M's self-actualization is not only an individual attempt but also significantly shaped by family interactions, past memories, values, and emotional struggles. By analyzing the film, this study attempts to reveal the complexity of relational influences on an individual's growth.

The film depicts M, a young Thai-Chinese man who experiences financial struggle after leaving school and choosing a career as a gamer. In the film, the pressure of family expectations, values, and beliefs pushes M to the edge in earning money to support his career. M, who is motivated by his cousin, Mui, to get the inheritance, finds an instant way by approaching and taking care of Amah. This decision leads him to interact with other characters such as Amah, Uncle Khiang, Uncle Soei, Mui, and Chew, which triggers his growth and discovery of his true purpose, which is more valuable than material things. Amah (his grandmother) provides both challenge and inspiration as her rejection and skepticism make M reconsider his true motivations, while her sincerity makes him understand the meaning of a genuine relationship. Uncle Khiang, Amah's eldest son, uses his wealth to win Amah's heart, which both prevents and motivates M in approaching Amah. M's persistence and empathy are tested when Uncle Soei disturbs Amah with his debts. Mui (M's cousin) motivates M to get close to Amah, which eventually triggers M's self-reflection. Chew (M's mother) becomes a catalyst and barrier for M due to her rejection and expectations.

The film increased its popularity due to its emotional narrative and cultural relevance, depicting complex family dynamics, especially in Asia. Despite gaining a lot of attention, the film has not been widely analyzed. One of the previous studies that discussed this film is a study by Setiawan et al. (2024), which discusses how economic pressure affects family dynamics using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Norman Fairclough's framework. The study found that economic pressures often lead to family conflicts and the fading of traditional values, while the discussion of self-actualization has not been found in this film. However, self-actualization in narrative films is discussed in another study by Abthaheer K and Arunachalam (2021), who explores the protagonist's self-actualization journey in *The Alchemist*, but only focuses on individual quests without considering the role of the characters. Furthermore, the study by Ali Alshwayyat et al. (2021) analyzed the role of other characters in the protagonist's self-actualization process by comparing the protagonist's self-actualization process between two different novels.

A review of previous studies on *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) revealed that, although relational relationships or family dynamics were discussed, there was no study on self-actualization in this film. Discussions related to self-actualization were found in studies in other films and novels, but there were no discussions related to supporting or inhibiting family influence in specific terms of catalysts or barriers. This gap highlights the lack of analysis on this film and on other literary works that integrate self-actualization with a relational perspective, specifically focusing on the role of other characters with the terms catalyst and barrier.

In this study, relational relationships are considered from family influence, as the main theme in the movie, which plays a vital role in shaping individual development. Vautero et al. (2021) categorize family influence into three important dimensions: family support (both financial and informational), family expectations, and family values and beliefs. Family support refers to the material and emotional resources provided by family, which make

individuals able to navigate through life's challenges and opportunities. Family expectations involve implicit or explicit pressure given to individuals to fulfill certain standards or achieve certain goals that are compatible with family principles. Meanwhile, family values and beliefs include the moral principles and cultural norms instilled in the family. These three aspects of family influence interactively shape an individual's worldview, motivation, and behaviour, especially in the quest for needs fulfillment and self-actualization.

Family influence has been widely explored in various studies that examine the important role of family influence in various contexts, particularly in decision-making processes and psychological well-being. Ziaian et al. (2021) investigated how family members such as parents, siblings, and distant relatives support and influence the educational and career decisions of young refugees. They found that, despite conflicts between family expectations and the young people's personal ambitions, families consistently encourage them to pursue their goals. Mejia et al. (2021) further explored how family expectations influence mental health and self-esteem across ethnic groups. They concluded that cultural contexts shape how family expectations influence individuals' mental health and self-concept, with some people experiencing these expectations as supportive and others as a source of pressure. Meanwhile, Koçak et al. (2021) examined the influence of family support and expectations, as well as academic satisfaction, on career decision-making effectiveness (CDSE) and overall happiness among college students. They found that family influence and academic satisfaction positively affect CDSE and well-being by fostering students' self-confidence and life satisfaction. These studies emphasize the importance of family as a source of motivation and conflict in individual personal and career development.

Previous studies have highlighted diverse forms of family influence from different perspectives. However, the first study did not emphasize how the role of the family shapes or hinders the process of self-actualization. The second study explored family expectations regarding mental health and self-esteem, but did not examine the role of family members in the process of self-actualization. Likewise, the third study discusses the positive influence of family support and academic satisfaction on career decision-making and happiness, but does not investigate how family influence acts as a catalyst or barrier in the development of self-actualization characteristics. This gap highlights the need for further investigation into the influence of family in supporting or obstructing the growth of an individual's self-actualization characteristics.

Based on the gaps, this study aims to describe how M's self-actualization is portrayed and reveal how other characters influence M's self-actualization process, particularly focusing on how family members serve as catalysts and barriers in developing the self-actualization characteristics of the main character in the film *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024). This analysis explores the influence of family factors such as family support, family expectations, and family values and beliefs through a relational perspective. This study addresses the gap by expanding the exploration of relational factors in personal growth. Specifically, this study examines how the protagonist's self-actualization characteristics, as conceptualized by Kaufman's modification of Maslow's theory, can be triggered by supportive and obstructive family factors.

## **METHOD**

The primary source of data for this study is the film released in 2024 titled *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* which is directed by Pat Boonitipat, with a focus on the

journey of M's self-actualization characteristic development influenced by his interactions with various characters, including Amah (M's grandmother), Uncle Khiang, Uncle Soi, Mui (M's distant cousin), and Chew (M's mother). The analysis extracts relevant data in the form of textual elements such as dialogues and visual elements according to Jing (2021), Lankhuizen et al. (2020), and Xue et al. (2013) such as facial expression, gestures, camera angle, lighting, color grading (saturation, hue, and luminance), and composition from selective viewing of the film to capture the characters' interactions in M's journey of self-actualization, and also identify scenes that show the characters' role as catalysts or barriers in his growth.

Furthermore, the analysis proceeds in three steps: first, applying self-actualization concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to interpret M's self-actualization characteristics; second, examining the interactions between M and the other characters to understand their roles towards his self-actualization journey; and third, integrating those insights in the form of TEEL analysis to understand the other characters' roles in shaping M's personal development. These steps provide a broad understanding of how interpersonal relationships contribute to M's journey toward self-actualization.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this part, M's journey toward self-actualization in *How to Make Millions Before Grandma Dies* (2024) is examined through the influence of his family. The film emphasizes how M's emotional maturity has grown and shifted from his initial materialistic goals to pursuing meaningful goals. The analysis applies the Characteristics of Self-Actualization Scale (CSAS) framework by Kaufman, adapted from Maslow's concept, focusing on how family influence (support, expectations, values, and beliefs) triggers the growth of M's five characteristics. This study emphasizes how relational dynamics in the family context act as catalysts and barriers that trigger M's development towards self-realization. In this session, since M only demonstrated the development of five characteristics, including acceptance, efficient perception of reality, authenticity, purpose, and humanitarianism, the TEEL technique analyzes M's path to self-actualization using just five traits from the 10 Characteristics of Self-Actualization Scale (CSAS).

### M's Acceptance

Accepting Amah and her life is one of M's acceptance characteristics, even though his initial goal was Amah's inheritance and financial stability. In one scene, M visits Amah at the nursing home and invites her to live with him.

Data 1 (01:42:45→01:42:57)

M: "How about you come home with me, Grandma?"

M: "I'll make you congee for breakfast."

M: "Let's go home."



Figure 1 M invites Amah to go home with him

The phrase *"Let's go home"* portrays home as a safe place where everybody can be who they are. The invitation indicates that he accepts Amah's and his situation without expecting a reward. He can develop his potential by accepting himself, which benefits him and others. M focuses more on enjoying his time and opportunities with Amah. This scene represents the quality of acceptance since he accepts Amah to live with him, although her house has been handed to Uncle Soei, and her health is declining. Despite making compromises and enduring disappointment, he has matured and learned to accept people for who they are.

The image's arrangement puts M in the middle of the frame, with a calm facial expression, a soft smile, and sorrowful eyes focused on Amah, emphasizing his sincerity. Natural and soft lighting provides a warm and intimate atmosphere, reflecting empathy. The light that seems to come from outside and illuminates M's face can represent that, despite the dim side (difficulty), M can find the bright side (solution) if he is willing to open the door of acceptance. Color grading with moderate color saturation creates a simple, natural, and realistic appearance. The dominant use of warm white and pastel (beige) hues produces an intimate, cozy, and emotional atmosphere. Medium brightness makes the room seem bright, warm, and clean, emphasizing emotional transparency and honesty. The eye-level camera angle lets the audience feel related in understanding M's emotions, strengthening the relationship, and portraying sincerity. The background of the daily items that appear crowded and cluttered behind M can also represent M's acceptance of Amah's simple lifestyle.

### **M's Efficient Perception of Reality**

M demonstrates an efficient perception of reality when confronted with complicated issues clearly and rationally, without being influenced by emotional state. One example is a scenario in which M offers his grandfather's silver belt to Uncle Soei, who is in debt and has just taken Amah's savings, under an agreement that Uncle Soei will not bother Amah financially and stay away to resolve all of his problems.

Data 2 (01:12:59→01:13:15)

*Uncle Soei: "You're a lifesaver."*

*M: "Disappear for a while until you're sorted out."*

*Uncle Soei: "You deserve better, M."*

*Uncle Soei: "You take good care of Ma for us, all right?"*



Figure 2 Uncle Soei hugged M in thanks



M's sentence, *"Disappear for a while until you're sorted out,"* is not intended to save his uncle because he is a relative or through bloodline connections. Instead, it provides a realistic, practical, and immediate solution, although not an ultimate purpose. M knows that the most effective approach is to deal with the basis of Uncle Soei's problem, which is debt; thus, he stops bothering Amah with his debt concerns. This analysis demonstrates M's efficient perception of reality as a self-actualized individual by showing how he can remain objective and make wise decisions despite being in a non-ideal environment.

M allowing Uncle Soei to hug him but not returning his hug proves that his decision is based on logic and reality rather than an emotional state. M's flat and exhausted face indicates he is trying to control his rage. The medium shot with an aligned angle behind Uncle Soei emphasizes the tension between them and attracts the audience's attention to M's expression against conflict. The slightly dim light where M and his uncle are standing under the tree does not necessarily imply peace and safety for the family. However, in this context, it portrays a sense of limitation or struggle in handling the obstacles. The low to medium saturation and faded hues portray a gloomy mood. The primary combination of warm greenish and dull brown tones in the surroundings indicates the struggle. The sunlight emphasizing the aged house represents M and Uncle Soei's harsh reality. The old house and the tire hanging from the tree emphasize their simple, messy, and stressful situation, indicating that they are not living comfortably, but M has learnt to accept reality and cope with it.

### **M's Authenticity**

M's authenticity involves honesty with himself, sincerity of goal, and courage to act on his values. In one scenario, Uncle Khiang convinces Amah to move in with him and sell her house, but he must oppose M, who refuses to allow Amah to move in. As a result, Uncle Khiang attempted to persuade M to release Amah by offering him money. On the other hand, M refuses the money Uncle Khiang offers as a reward for caring for Amah.

Data 3 (00:56:00□00:56:11)

*Uncle Khiang: "I wanted to give you a little something for taking care of Grandma for us."*

*M: "That's nice of you, Uncle."*

*M: "But I'm not in it for the money."*



Figure 3 M refuses Uncle Khiang's bribe

The phrase *"But I'm not in it for the money"* may represent M's attempts to maintain his self-esteem and integrity by refusing Uncle Khiang's strategies to buy his good intentions in caring for Amah. Although his goal is the same as Uncle Khiang's to inherit Amah's house, M wants to stick to his belief of healthy rivalry in order to bond with Amah without being manipulative to the family. According to the analysis, M's authenticity as a self-actualized individual is demonstrated by his ability to maintain his perspective and not be swayed by external factors. His rigid refusal indicates his real intentions and strong self-values or principles.

M's expression is calm, serious, and flat as he stares at Uncle Khiang, showing firmness and courage against confrontation. The medium shot and eye-level camera perspective that aligns with M and Uncle Khiang in one frame, standing face to face, symbolizes M's persistence in defending his values and beliefs. M and his uncle are separated by a door representing their opposing ideals and principles. M's reflection in the mirror beside him represents self-introspection of his value in the form of moral awareness and honesty with himself. It emphasizes that M's dialogue above depicts his journey to realize his value and being unconsciously honest with Uncle Khiang about his true purpose. The background of furniture and children's toys behind Uncle Khiang emphasizes M's decision to refuse to accept money since it represents Uncle Khiang's responsibility to his family, which prevents him from focusing on Amah. The bright light on the M side represents sincerity and the way to realizing his goals, while the dimmer Uncle Khiang area reveals his hidden intention. Color grading with medium to high saturation creates an alive impression that enhances the atmosphere of argument or conflict in the family. Pastel and natural hues (blue, white, beige, and brown) highlight Uncle Khiang's offer of a luxurious and joyful atmosphere to persuade Amah.

### **M's Purpose**

M's purpose is realizing his life's meaning, which is no longer focused on money gain but on fulfilling his moral and emotional commitments to his family. He realizes that his main goal is to bring happiness to others rather than just himself. In one scene, while escorting Amah's body to the burial plot, M states that he utilized the money he inherited from Amah to fulfill Amah's final wish of a large burial plot.

Data 4 (01:56:24–01:56:57)

M: *"Grandma?"*

M: *"We're almost at the big plot I bought you."*

M: *"Grandma?"*

M: *"You're my number one."*



Figure 4 M escorted Amah's body to the burial plot

The line *"You are number one to me"* indicates M's transition from materialistic to more meaningful goals, such as keeping Amah happy, as someone who has helped him throughout his life. The line indicates that his life priorities have shifted to his emotional connection with Amah. This is demonstrated by M dedicating a big burial plot to Amah using the inheritance Amah collected from M's youth to adulthood. M knocking on the coffin and telling Amah's body while passing by their memorable places on the way to the cemetery symbolizes purpose characteristic.

M's expression portrays him holding back tears and grief, revealing his sincerity and commitment to making Amah happy and becoming her number one priority. The camera perspective is a medium close-up from an eye-level perspective, allowing the audience to deeply understand M's feelings. The graphic composition places M at the middle of the screen, with Amah's coffin by his side, highlighting M's primary purpose and expressing the emotional bond M has formed with Amah. The vast panorama of hills, highways, and grass reflects M's final journey towards self-actualization. M's predominantly white clothes and the medium-to-low lighting's usage of soft natural light and a predominantly white sky create a serene and melancholy atmosphere. Illustrating M's sorrow and relief at accomplishing his goal and keeping his promise to Amah. Low-saturation color grading highlights the serene and calm atmosphere.

### **M's Humanitarianism**

M shows humanitarianism through his empathy and compassion for the well-being of others, including those who have disturbed him. Humanitarianism is represented in M by providing help and genuinely warning people not to impact themselves or their surroundings negatively. In one scene, M visits Amah at the nursing home and unintentionally meets Uncle Soei. As a reward for M's compassion, Uncle Soei offers him an amount of the profits from selling Amah's inherited house. However, M refuses since he is more concerned with his uncle's survival.

Data 5 (01:41:17□01:41:25)

*Uncle Soei: "I want you to have it."*

*M: "You can hold on to it."*

*Uncle Soei: "Come on. It's for you."*

*M: "No one's gonna rescue you when she's gone."*





Figure 5 M refused money from Uncle Soei

M's sentence, *"No one's gonna rescue you when she's gone,"* indicates that, although he had previously intended to inherit Amah's house, he had become more concerned with the fate of others, including Uncle Soei, who became his rival. M reminds him that if Amah dies, no one will be willing to help him. So, he should spend the leftovers from selling Amah's house wisely. M's statements also express his concern for Amah, who keeps getting involved in Uncle Soei's financial problems. He subtly satirizes Uncle Soei, who places Amah in a nursing home after selling her home, despite the fact that Amah has always supported him. M's empathy for Uncle Soei and Amah suggests that he has developed humanitarianism, representing a significant step towards self-actualization.

This is supported by M's facial expression, which appears serious, concerned, and dissatisfied. M is upset about Amah's placement in a nursing home, but also thinks about Uncle Soei's situation. The soft, naturally bright illumination from the sunlight, as well as the building's dominantly white color, portrays a sense of honesty, sincerity, and peace, indicating that there will be no more disputes. Color grading with medium saturation, where the colors appear natural and subtle, combined with high luminescence, highlights the daytime setting and creates a realistic, serene, and conflict-resolving atmosphere. The eye-level camera perspective emphasizes equality and human relationships, as both parties care about one another. The composition of Uncle Soei on the left and M on the right, slightly to the center of the frame, reveals that the emotional distance between them is gradually decreasing.

### **Characters' Role in M's Self-Actualization**

This section examines how the other characters, including Amah, Uncle Kiang, Uncle Soei, Mui, and Chew, act as catalysts or barriers in developing M's self-actualization characteristics, according to the CSAS.

#### **Amah (M's Grandmother) As Catalyst and Barrier**

Amah serves as both a catalyst and a barrier to M's self-actualization characteristics. Amah had been teaching M the principles of sincerity, responsibility, and love since he was a child, but as an adult, she questioned M's sincerity because of his materialistic interests. Amah is initially shown as a catalyst of family values and beliefs through her stern rejection and skepticism of M's assistance, which feels insincere because it is done recklessly, triggering the growth of M's authenticity and purpose.

Data 6 (00:18:45–00:18:52)

*Amah: "If you do things just to get them done, then don't do them at all."*

*M: "I'll come back tomorrow to boil the water right."*

*Amah: "Just go home."*



Figure 6 Amah kicked M out of her home

The sentence *"If you do things just to get them done,..."* reflects Amah's values and beliefs, which significantly impact M's moral and ethical standards. Amah's sentence refers to the characteristic of authenticity, which leads M to reflect on his actual goals. It also relates to purpose, as Amah questioned M's motivation for helping Amah because a person will take their job seriously if they have a clear purpose and sense of responsibility. Indirectly, Amah underlines that sincerity and intention in action are more essential than the final result. Amah's life values motivate him to focus on himself, recognizing that actions without sincerity, clear goals, and responsibility are worthless and ruin other people's principles and beliefs. This scene triggers the development of authenticity and purpose characteristics, revealing Amah's dual role as a catalyst and barrier.

M's looks at Amah through the fence prove that he has not yet revealed to Amah the truth about his plans. His hand touches the gate, representing his intention to establish an emotional bond with Amah. M's angry, downcast, and surrender expression shows his frustration with his failed attempt. The distance between them is represented by the camera aligning with M from the side facing Amah, with the fence, which symbolizes Amah's rejection or a barrier against dishonest intentions, is blocking him.

The contrast between Amah's home's dim interior and the natural sunshine shining in the alley behind M emphasizes the fact that M needs to learn about Amah's personality to fully understand her. Green (leaves, fence) and yellowish brown (wall and road) dominate the color hue, creating a warm, natural, simple impression that reflects Amah's traditional values and realistic circumstances. The realistic sense and solemn feelings of M's rejection and Amah's loneliness are supported by the low to medium saturation, which gives the appearance of natural and kind of muted colors.

#### **Uncle Khiang (M's Uncle) As Catalyst and Barrier**

Uncle Khiang is Amah's first child and the most economically and socially successful. He is characterized as materialistic, clever, greedy, and manipulative in his attempt to win

Amah's trust and secure the inherited fortune. In this study, Uncle Kiang catalyzes the family's financial expectations. This indicates that Uncle Kiang is primarily a barrier because he sets materialistic family expectations on M, but he is also indirectly a catalyst for the development of authenticity, efficient perception of reality, and purpose in M. In one scenario, Uncle Kiang attempts to impress Amah to move into their house by providing her with great facilities, to ensure Amah sells her home and gives her profits to Uncle Kiang.

Data 8 (00:54:45–00:54:54)

*Amah: "I still have a house and business to run."*

*Uncle Kiang: "Oh, Ma!"*

*Uncle Kiang: "Pinn and I want you to sell that house and move in with us."*

*Uncle Kiang: "Besides, there's salons, restaurants, a club."*



Figure 7 Uncle Kiang persuades Amah to move in with him

The sentence *"Besides, there's salons, restaurants, and a club"* depicts Uncle Kiang's manipulation by providing Amah with materials and conveniences to stay in his home, leading her to rely on him to manage her inheritance. This places M under additional pressure to meet Amah's material needs, comforts, and welfare. This pressure causes M to doubt the effectiveness of his genuine approach, preventing his authenticity. Uncle Kiang's barriers, on the other hand, unintentionally serve as a catalyst, pushing M to find his life purpose. According to the analysis, Uncle Kiang dominantly serves as a barrier to M's authenticity and efficient perception of reality. However, he indirectly boosts M's self-actualization by triggering M's purpose qualities. Uncle Kiang's insincerity makes M empathize with Amah.

M's expression was frustrated, with a slightly wrinkled brow and standing back while observing, signalling inner conflict and an influence on his efficient perception of reality. Meanwhile, Uncle Kiang's expression and Pinn's slightly bent gesture disguise their manipulative intentions. The medium shot and slight eye-level angle from behind Amah portrays Uncle Kiang and Pinn standing between Amah and M as a barrier that appears to control, while M is in the background, indicating that he still has a long way to go in winning Amah's heart.

Soft natural lighting with evenly bright illumination and no sharp shadows creates an atmosphere of normal life while also reflecting the comfort and warmth that Uncle Kiang provides to Amah. Moreover, the hue palette contains dominant warm tones such as beige and

light brown (wooden furniture), creating a sense of comfort while highlighting traditional family aspects. The natural and gentle medium saturation gives an impression of a family house with a realistic feel and warm atmosphere. The high brightness in Uncle Kiang and Pinn's area indicates that they are attempting to dominate the discussion.

#### **Uncle Soei (M's Uncle) As Catalyst and Barrier**

Uncle Soei, who is the most financially unstable due to his debts and irresponsible behaviour in taking Amah's money, serves as a barrier to family support by bothering Amah's financial stability. However, his negative actions serve as an indirect catalyst for the development of M's qualities of acceptance, authenticity, efficient perception of reality, and humanitarianism by placing him in a tough circumstance where he needs to make morally mature decisions. In one scenario, Amah finds out that her whole savings are vanished. M ultimately provides Amah with the CCTV recorders as evidence that Uncle Soei took her money.

Data 9 (01:10:54–01:11:08)

M: *"I'm not a thief, I swear."*

M: *"See?"*

M: *"He took the pork floss and stole all your money."*

M: *"That's why his phone's off, I guess."*

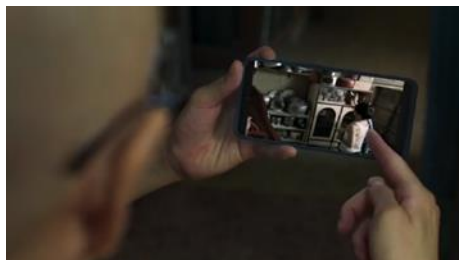


Figure 8 Uncle Soei took Amah's money

The sentence *"I'm not a thief, I swear"* illustrates M's need for Amah's acceptance and trust, as Uncle Soei's behavior led to suspicion that he was the only person living in Amah's house. The line *"That's why his phone's off"* demonstrates that M can rationally analyze the problem, implying that Uncle Soei ran away for fear of being caught by Amah. This indicates Uncle Soei's role as a catalyst by triggering M's ability to think logically and realistically, which reflects the characteristic of efficient perception of reality.

M appears worried about Amah's suspense as he points at Uncle Soei on the phone screen, *attempting* to reveal the objective truth and prove himself. The camera takes an over-the-shoulder shot from Amah's point of view to zoom in on the phone screen, building a first-person perspective that puts the audience in the position of discovering the truth, increasing empathy for Amah's situation and M's frustration. The lighting in the scene is natural and delicate, contributing to the solemn and disappointing feeling. The bright phone screen

becomes a source of lighting, reflecting the pursuit of the truth. In color grading, low saturation produces a somber, heavy tone that reinforces emotional strain and tension. Colors dominated by neutrals, such as a combination of earthy tones, grey-brown, beige, and soft blue, build a realistic atmosphere and emotionally tense situations as M and Amah must accept the truth that their own family is the culprit.

#### **Mui (M's Cousin) As Catalyst**

M's cousin, Mui, cared for their grandfather until his death and eventually inherited almost all his property. Mui catalyzes family informational support, leading M to find ways to establish an emotional connection with Amah by caring for her and proving his sincerity. Mui gives M tips and advice on creating an emotional connection that leads him to discover his true desire. In one moment, Mui and M accompany Amah to her chemotherapy treatment. Mui recommends that M stay with Amah inside the room during her treatment, which makes him more sympathetic and compassionate toward her.

Data 11 (00:41:29–00:41:35)

*Mui: "Next time, go in and keep her company."*

*Mui: "You'll get huge brownie points."*



Figure 9 Mui advised M to accompany Amah

The phrase *"You'll get huge brownie points"* refers to getting credit or appreciation, usually after something is done correctly. Although this relationship could appear transactional, it helps M understand Amah and build an emotional bond, enabling him to realize his desire. By advising M to accompany Amah inside the room during chemotherapy, Mui fosters the accepting characteristic, leading M to accept Amah without expecting a reward. Through Mui's guidance, M started spending more time with Amah and progressively gained empathy, emotional transparency, and acceptance of Amah's condition. This made M understand that a meaningful connection was his life's purpose.

The eye-level camera perspective presents a realistic and intimate impression aligned with M and Mui's positions. The glass door that separates Amah (inner space) from M and Mui (outside space) in the split-frame composition represents emotional distance and M's desire for Amah's acceptance. While the lower lighting on M's side creates a more somber and intense environment between M and Mui, the shining natural lighting on Amah's part portrays the warmth and comfort supplied throughout M's problems. White (hospital uniforms, walls, and

windows), pastel green (hospital curtains), and grey (M and Mui's clothing) dominate the color scheme, creating a calm yet emotionally empty atmosphere. The atmosphere is solemn and reflective because of the low saturation. Mui shows a sincere desire to help M but tries to dominate M to follow her advice with her calm but serious and stern facial expression with her arms folded.

#### **Chew (M's Mother) As Catalyst and Barrier**

In M's journey for self-actualization, Chew serves as both a barrier to financial support and a catalyst for family values and beliefs. Chew opposes M's gaming career and forces M to accept responsibility for his decisions. In one scenario, Chew confronts M for requesting a new computer after his bank card runs out to maintain his gaming career. Chew refuses to provide financial support as a lesson for M to learn how to be independent, responsible, and think realistically.

Data 12 (00:06:39–00:06:53)

*Chew: "You have your own card. Use that."*

*M: "It's maxed out. The bank threatened to freeze it."*

*Chew: "I hope they do that. Teach you a lesson."*

*Chew: "And if your internet gets cut off again, I won't pay for it."*



Figure 10 Chew was disappointed and scolded M

The phrase *"I hope they do that"* indicates Chew opposes M's job as a gamecaster since it demands significant capital, yet he has not succeeded. Chew believed M needed to learn from the consequences and take responsibility for his future and family, triggering his purpose characteristic. M was forced to confront reality and develop a realistic mindset, reflecting the trait of efficient perception of reality due to Chew's rejection. Although Chew's pressure frustrates M, she indirectly motivates him to accept the consequences of his choices, face reality more realistically, and then find his true purpose.

The over-the-shoulder perspective from behind M and focusing on Chew's face brings the audience's attention to her expressions of frustration, anger, and disappointment with M. Meanwhile, M's gesture, facing his mother and a slightly lowered shoulder, signalling that he is depressed, defensive, helpless, guilty, and forced to admit reality. Color grading with low saturation creates a gloomy and cold tone, emphasizing the tense atmosphere. Using bluish-green (cool tones) on the walls and surroundings raises the frigid atmosphere and emotional



tension. The slightly gloomy lighting highlights M's family's coldness, opposition, tension, and chaos. In addition, M's gaming device is highlighted with a brighter light, symbolizing M's motivation to obtain the inheritance. The background of goods shelves, household equipment, and gaming computers shows the reality of their simple and even struggling lives, emphasizing M's responsibility for his family.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals M's journey in building self-actualization characteristics, which are mostly built by his interactions with his family as catalysts and barriers. Family influences such as family support (financial and informational), family expectations, and family values and beliefs play an important role in triggering the five self-actualization characteristics in CSAS that stand out in M, including acceptance, authenticity, purpose, efficient perception of reality, and humanitarianism. His transformation was obtained through trial and tribulation, such as conflict, pressure, and relationships with his family that shaped his identity.

Amah serves as a catalyst and barrier in family values and beliefs and financial family support, which triggers authenticity, purpose, acceptance, and humanitarianism through her refusal of M's intention. Uncle Khiang was a barrier to family expectations through his materialistic pressure, which triggered authenticity, an efficient perception of reality, and purpose. Uncle Soei, as a barrier to financial family support, triggers the development of acceptance, authenticity, efficient perception of reality, and humanitarianism in M through his financial burden. Mui acts as a catalyst in informational family support, guiding M to bond emotionally with Amah and generate acceptance, authenticity, and purpose. Meanwhile, Chew became a barrier in family expectations and financial support, but her pressure led M to build purpose, acceptance, an efficient perception of reality, and humanitarianism.

This study explores the influence of other characters, specifically the family, in triggering the self-actualization characteristics of the main character in the film. However, this study does not explore the cultural context, even though the family influence is significantly affected. If the analysis is conducted on a film from another culture, the results may be different. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore the influence of family in building the character's self-actualization characteristics, especially in other cultural contexts. Maslow's approach can be combined with sociocultural theory to understand personal conflicts and social pressures in the character's journey toward self-actualization.

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