A Qualitative Study of Social Construction in *Boboiboy* and Its Implications for Elementary Education

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Article Info	Abstract
	Amidst the rapid currents of the postmodern era, children's media narratives no longer present a singular, black-and-white reality; rather, they are replete with fragmentation of meaning, moral ambiguity, and cultural hybridity. The animated series Boboiboy emerges as a popular culture artifact exercising strong dominance in constructing the imagination of children across the Nusantara region regarding the figure of the "hero." This study aims to deconstruct the concept of heroism depicted in Boboiboy and analyze its pedagogical implications for primary education. This research is a qualitative study grounded in the philosophy of science within the postpositivist paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth observation (thick description) of the audio-visual texts of the Boboiboy Galaxy series, and subsequently analyzed using hermeneutic approaches and critical discourse analysis. The research results reveal three fundamental findings Ontologically, Boboiboy deconstructs the singular subject into a fragmented subject (split subject) through the elemental split mechanism, reflecting a fluid and situational postmodern identity; Epistemologically, there is a shift in the validity of power from internal virtue (virtue ethics) toward technological determinism mediated by "power spheres."; Axiologically, the implications for primary education demand a transformation from a pedagogy of value transmission toward critical media literacy. Educators need to facilitate students in navigating the moral values behind technological simulacra, positioning popular culture as a space for critical dialectics within the classroom.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape of the twenty-first century is undergoing a fundamental tectonic shift. The walls of schools once regarded as the primary fortresses for the transmission of knowledge and moral values have become increasingly porous under the relentless influence of mass media and digital technology. This phenomenon aligns with recent research findings indicating that the digital ecosystem has evolved into a dominant informal learning environment, often surpassing the duration of students' engagement within formal classroom settings. Henry Giroux (2011), a critical education theorist, conceptualizes this phenomenon as *public pedagogy*. Giroux argues that popular culture films, music, and video games is not merely empty entertainment but functions as a continuous "educational machinery" that teaches children about identity, values, and social relations.

Within the cultural context of the Malay and Indonesian archipelago, the animated series *Boboiboy* has transcended its status as mere children's entertainment; it has become

a dominant "text" shaping the collective subconscious of children in Indonesia and Malaysia. Its popularity is corroborated by various studies identifying *Boboiboy* as one of the primary media for the internalization of character values among elementary school students, ranging from friendship to responsibility. However, the urgency of this study arises from an academic concern regarding how this "text" is read, interpreted, and critically internalized.

Over the past decade, scholarship on children's media and education has frequently remained confined within a simplistic positivistic dualism. Most prior studies have tended to focus either on content analysis categorizing moral messages by asking whether a film promotes "good" or "bad" behavior or on measuring the behavioristic effects of media consumption on children's imitative actions. While such approaches are methodologically valid, they often reduce the complexity of child–media interaction to a mere stimulus response relationship. Contemporary studies, however, emphasize the necessity of critical media literacy that actively involves parents and educators in mediating meaning, particularly given that children are no longer passive consumers of media.

Moreover, *Boboiboy* emerges and develops within a postmodern era, a historical condition described by Jean-François Lyotard (1984) as the collapse of grand narratives. In *Boboiboy*, we no longer encounter monolithic heroes akin to those found in traditional epics or prophetic narratives; instead, we observe a hybrid hero technologically dependent and characterized by fragmented identities. This shift has received little attention in existing character education literature, which often continues to treat media as a neutral conduit of values. The analytical focus of this article lies in the ontological and epistemological transformation of the concept of "heroism." Whereas in classical traditions heroism is achieved through ascetic discipline, in the narrative of *Boboiboy*, heroism is frequently mediated by technological devices (the Power Watch) and the intervention of foreign entities (Ochobot).

The meaning of "heroism" in *Boboiboy* is not a singular, static truth. Rather, it is a constructed meaning shaped by cultural contexts, the filmmakers' ideological orientations, and audience interpretations. This study is grounded in a postpositivist paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain that postpositivism emerged as a critique of naïve positivism, which assumes that researchers can be entirely detached from the objects of their inquiry. Postpositivism embraces *critical realism*, the view that while an objective reality exists, human understanding of that reality is inherently limited and imperfectly apprehensible. The task of the postpositivist researcher, therefore, is not to claim "absolute truth," but to construct interpretations that are both plausible and rigorous, grounded in textual evidence and robust theoretical frameworks.

Paul Ricoeur distinguishes between two forms of hermeneutics: the hermeneutics of meaning recovery and the hermeneutics of suspicion. This study primarily adopts the hermeneutics of suspicion, which seeks to uncover what lies beneath the surface of the text. Rather than simply accepting the narrative that "Boboiboy saves the Earth," this approach interrogates the underlying structures: What technologies enable this salvation? What ideologies are embedded and transmitted through those technologies? From a social constructivist perspective, knowledge and meaning are not discovered but constructed. Joe L. Kincheloe (2005), in his theory of Critical Constructivism, emphasizes that this process of meaning construction is never neutral with respect to power relations.

We inhabit a simulation in which representations appear more real than reality itself. For children, *Boboiboy* functions as a form of hyperreality; digital battles against alien forces on the screen often feel more immediate and emotionally compelling than the social realities of their everyday environments. Jean Baudrillard's (1994) theory of *Simulacra and Hyperreality* serves as a central analytical lens in this study, asserting that in the

postmodern era, signs have supplanted reality. In addition, the postmodern concept of the "decentered subject" (Hall, 1996) is employed to analyze the fragmentation of *Boboiboy*'s powers as a representation of fluid and unstable identity.

Does this signify a shift in virtue ethics toward technological pragmatism? This philosophical question remains largely unexplored in prior research, which has tended to adopt descriptive qualitative approaches. Accordingly, the objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to analyze how *Boboiboy*'s character identity is socially constructed within a postmodern framework; (2) to critically examine the hegemony of technology underpinning the film's structure of heroism; and (3) to formulate pedagogical implications for elementary education. Ultimately, this study aims to provide a philosophical foundation for educators and parents to move beyond viewing popular culture as an adversary, instead approaching it as a critical object of study to be collectively deconstructed with students.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs a qualitative approach with a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research design. Discourse analysis in this context does not merely examine linguistic structures, but also interrogates the social practices and power relations that surround and shape discourse. More specifically, this study is situated within the domain of the philosophy of education, utilizing a reflective–critical mode of inquiry to bridge media texts with pedagogical contexts.

The primary data sources consist of the first season of the animated series *Boboiboy Galaxy* and the feature-length film *Boboiboy Movie 2*. These materials were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on episodes that explicitly depict: (1) elemental transformation or power fragmentation; (2) dependence on the Power Sphere; and (3) moral conflicts whose resolution is mediated by technology. Secondary data sources include scholarly literature on the philosophy of technology, developmental psychology, and Indonesia's character education curriculum.

Data collection was conducted through systematic viewing and note-taking techniques, complemented by visual documentation. The researcher employed repeated observations and close reading of key scenes to ensure depth of analysis. Data analysis was subsequently carried out using a thematic analysis model, systematically integrated with the hermeneutic framework proposed by Paul Ricoeur. The interpretive process began with *distanciation*, whereby the researcher adopts an analytical distance from the text and approaches it as a social document rather than mere entertainment. This stage was followed by *appropriation*, in which the text is interpreted and recontextualized within contemporary conditions, particularly within the landscape of technoculture. In addition, the analytical process incorporated the dual concepts of *Explanation* (*Erklären*) and *Understanding* (*Verstehen*) to elucidate both the causal narrative structures and the deeper philosophical meanings embedded within them.

Overall, this analysis examines three principal philosophical domains: ontology, which addresses the nature of character and being; epistemology, which interrogates the sources of knowledge and power; and axiology, which focuses on the educational values articulated and transmitted through the narrative.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines the animated series *Boboiboy* not merely as an entertainment product, but as a cultural text laden with philosophical meanings that reflect broader civilizational shifts. Through the analytical lens of the postpositivist paradigm within the philosophy of science, the findings reveal that *Boboiboy* renegotiates the established concept of the "hero" embedded in the collective memory of the Nusantara society. The analysis is structured across three core philosophical domains: Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology.

a. Ontology of the Hero: Identity Negotiation and the Split Subject in the Digital Era

The fundamental ontological question posed in this analysis is: *What is the nature of the heroic subject as constructed within the narrative of* Boboiboy*?* In classical modernist traditions, the human subject is understood as a unified, autonomous entity possessing a single, coherent center of consciousness a *centered self*. Traditional heroes such as Gatotkaca or Gundala are portrayed as having linear and consistent identities. *Boboiboy*, however, destabilizes this ontological assumption through the mechanism of *Elemental Split* (*Pecah Kuasa*).

Visually, Boboiboy's ability to divide himself into three, five, or seven elemental forms (Lightning, Wind, Earth, Fire, Water, Leaf, and Light) appears, at first glance, to be merely a tactical combat strategy. Yet, through a critical hermeneutic reading, this phenomenon functions as a visual metaphor for the concept of the *split subject* or fragmented self. Stuart Hall (1996), within cultural studies, argues that identity in late modernity is no longer singular or fixed, but fluid, contradictory, and continuously in the process of becoming, shaped by surrounding discourses.

This interpretation is reinforced by contemporary developmental psychology research examining the influence of animated narratives on children's self-construction. A study by Jai et al. (2022) demonstrates that *Boboiboy* significantly affects early childhood social-emotional development, with children internalizing diverse emotional responses embodied by the fragmented characters. Each elemental form represents a distinct facet of human emotion: *Boboiboy Fire* symbolizes anger and impulsivity; *Boboiboy Water* embodies serenity and emotional regulation; while *Boboiboy Earth/Quake* represents wisdom and leadership.

From an ontological perspective, *Boboiboy* conveys the idea that the self is not a monolithic entity. The recurring conflicts between *Boboiboy Fire* (uncontrolled emotion) and *Boboiboy Water* (passivity), subsequently mediated by *Boboiboy Earth*, serve as allegories for the intrapsychic dynamics of modern individuals. This aligns with the lived realities of contemporary children often described as *digital natives* who inhabit multiple, layered identities across school, home, and digital environments such as gaming avatars. Pratiwi and Pritanova (2017) affirm that digital literacy significantly shapes children's psychological perceptions of increasingly hybrid selfhood.

More profoundly, this fragmentation marks a shift from an ontology of the "Strong Human" to that of the "Managerial Human." The hero is no longer defined by physical strength alone, but by the capacity for self-regulation the ability to manage competing emotional elements within oneself. Failure to exercise such regulation, as when *Boboiboy Lightning* or *Fire* dominates, results in destructiveness rather than heroism. Ontologically, this represents a critique of the singular ego, suggesting that human existence is better understood as a "council" of desires that must be governed rather than suppressed.

b. Epistemology of Power: Technological Determinism and the Hegemony of the Power Sphere

At the epistemological level, the analysis focuses on the sources and legitimacy of power. In traditional Nusantara mythology and folklore, the epistemology of power is internal and ascetic. Heroes acquire strength through *laku prihatin*, meditation, or severe physical trials (such as the *Kawah Candradimuka*), establishing a causal relationship between inner suffering and external power.

In contrast, *Boboiboy* presents a technocratic epistemology. Power does not originate from within the body, but from external technological artifacts: the Power Watch and the Power Sphere (*Ochobot*). This reflects what Neil Postman conceptualizes as *Technopoly* a cultural condition in which technology is revered as the primary source of authority.

The legitimacy of *Boboiboy*'s heroism is heavily dependent on technological devices. Without the Power Watch, Boboiboy is portrayed as an ordinary, vulnerable child devoid of agency. Studies on the impact of violent content in *Boboiboy* indicate that children are prone to imitative behavior due to their fascination with technologically mediated power visualizations. This fosters an epistemological understanding in which *agency* is perceived as something downloadable, upgradable, or wearable, rather than cultivated through discipline or moral development.

Critical discourse analysis reveals the operation of an ideology of *technological determinism*. The narrative consistently advances the premise that all problems alien invasions or natural resource theft can only be resolved through increasingly sophisticated technological interventions (Stage 2 power, Stage 3 power, elemental fusion). Alifah (2021) observes that despite *Boboiboy*'s perseverance, technological superiority remains the decisive variable in achieving victory.

The latent danger of this epistemology lies in the blurring of boundaries between moral virtue and technical competence. Children are encouraged to admire technological sophistication robots, watches, weapons potentially reducing heroism to mere ownership of technological capital. In science education contexts, Wahyuni and Fitria (2023) note that while digital media effectively enhance critical thinking, without value-based mediation they risk producing technical intelligence devoid of wisdom.

Furthermore, reliance on *Ochobot* a power-conferring robot implies a posthumanist message: that future humans are insufficient as purely biological beings and must ally with artificial intelligence to survive. This represents a radical epistemological shift from classical humanism, which centers human agency, toward posthumanism, where agency emerges from human–machine networks.

c. **Educational Axiology: Critical Literacy as the Implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile**

The ontological and epistemological findings converge at the axiological level, raising the question of which values should be foregrounded in elementary education. Character education in Indonesia is currently anchored in the *Pancasila Student Profile*, one of whose core dimensions is *Critical Reasoning*.

However, empirical realities reveal significant challenges. Research by Rensiyana and Khairuddin (2025) underscores the urgency of media literacy in the digital age to prevent individuals from becoming passive consumers. When students consume *Boboiboy* without critical literacy, they risk internalizing consumerist values (such as purchasing Power Watch merchandise) and endorsing instant, violence-based solutions.

This necessitates a pedagogical shift from *Transmission Pedagogy* where teachers merely deliver moral values to *Critical Pedagogy*, in which teachers and students collaboratively interrogate values. Drawing on Paulo Freire's concept of *"reading the world,"* elementary educators should transform popular culture texts like *Boboiboy* into learning materials for cultivating critical consciousness.

Integrating simplified philosophical discussions into classroom practice can effectively reinforce the values of the *Pancasila Student Profile* through content familiar to students. This may begin by stimulating the *Independent* and *Critical Reasoning* dimensions through character deconstruction inviting students to reflect on whether Boboiboy's heroism persists in the absence of his Power Watch. Such discussions train students to distinguish between essential virtues (courage, responsibility) and material accidents (superpowers), aligning with Rahayu et al. (2023), who emphasize character rooted in intrinsic values rather than external attributes.

Subsequently, learning activities can advance toward identity reflection to cultivate *Personal Morality*. Teachers may employ the *Elemental Split* metaphor as a tool for Social–Emotional Learning, encouraging students to identify moments when anger dominates them like *Boboiboy Fire*, and how a wiser aspect akin to *Boboiboy Earth* might regain control and restore balance.

Finally, classroom discourse can be expanded to the *Collaborative* dimension by analyzing antagonistic motivations. Examining Adudu's obsession with chocolate opens pathways to ecological education and anti-colonial discourse, helping students recognize that conflict and "evil" often originate from greed over natural resource control. This trains students to approach problems with deeper empathy and structural awareness.

An education system that allows popular culture to pass unexamined through the classroom risks alienation from students' lived worlds (*Lebenswelt*). As highlighted in the literature review by Fadiyah et al. (2024), digital media and animation possess immense potential to enhance critical thinking *if and only if* they are managed through appropriate pedagogical strategies.

Thus, *Boboiboy* need not be prohibited, but rather *re-signified*. Educators function as mediators who transform technological simulacra into spaces of moral dialectics. Without critical literacy, children risk becoming subjects of technopoly; with critical literacy, they may emerge as empowered agents who harness technology in service of humanity fully aligned with the adaptive yet principled vision of the *Pancasila Student*.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on an in-depth analysis employing a postpositivist philosophy of science framework, this study draws three principal conclusions as its intellectual contributions.

First, *Boboiboy* is not merely a neutral form of children's entertainment, but a complex postmodern text. It reconstructs the ontology of heroism from a singular, unified subject into a fragmented and fluid one, reflecting the psychological condition of individuals living in a digitally disruptive era.

Second, the narrative is dominated by a technocratic epistemology. The hero's power and moral authority are heavily dependent on technological mediation (the Power Sphere), implicitly embedding an ideology of technological determinism the notion that technology constitutes an absolute prerequisite for human agency.

Third, for the field of elementary education, these findings function both as a warning and an opportunity. Islamic and general education alike must move beyond normative moral pedagogy. What is required is the integration of Critical Media Literacy into the curriculum, in which teachers facilitate students' engagement in "micro-level hermeneutics": interpreting, questioning, and re-signifying the media they consume. The ultimate aim is to cultivate empowered learners who are capable of employing technology as a means of virtue, rather than becoming subservient to technological simulacra themselves.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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