

Ecological Exploitation and Psychological Alienation in Dr. Seuss' "The Lorax" (2012): A Third-Wave Ecocritical and Ecopsychological Study

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Abstract

This study examines representation of ecopsychology in the relationship between humans and nature as portrayed in film of *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012) adapted from the novel. Employing qualitative descriptive method grounded in third-wave ecocriticism, the research focuses on ecopsychological perspectives to explore emotional and psychological responses to environmental degradation. The data, consisting of dialogues and scenes related to environmental issues, were analyzed through coding. The findings reveal that the commercialization of nature, driven by industrial and business interests, contributes significantly to human alienation from the environment. This alienation generates emotional responses such as awareness, concern, guilt, and regret toward ecological destruction. Moreover, the study demonstrates how denial and disconnection from nature further intensify the exploitation of natural resources and reinforce environmentally destructive behavior. The film portrays ecosystem restoration efforts as an expression of ecological awareness emerging from emotional encounters with environmental loss and damage. Through its narrative, *The Lorax* not only critiques the destructive consequences of environmental exploitation but also highlights the importance of emotional and psychological connections between humans and nature in developing ecological consciousness. The study concludes that ecopsychology provides an important framework for understanding how emotional engagement with environmental issues can encourage ecological responsibility and strengthen people's awareness of sustainability and environmental preservation.

Kata kunci:

*Eksplorasi Ekologis,
Alienasi,
Ekokritis,
Ekopsikologis,
Lorax (2012).*

Abstrak

Studi ini meneliti representasi ekopsikologi dalam hubungan antara manusia dan alam sebagaimana digambarkan dalam film *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax (2012)* yang diadaptasi dari novel. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang berlandaskan pada ekokritisisme gelombang ketiga, penelitian ini berfokus pada perspektif ekopsikologi untuk mengeksplorasi respons emosional dan psikologis terhadap degradasi lingkungan. Data, yang terdiri dari dialog dan adegan yang berkaitan dengan isu-isu lingkungan, dianalisis melalui pengodean. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa komersialisasi alam, yang didorong oleh kepentingan industri dan bisnis, berkontribusi secara signifikan terhadap keterasingan manusia dari lingkungan. Keterasingan ini memicu respons emosional seperti kesadaran, kepedulian, rasa bersalah, dan penyesalan terhadap kerusakan ekologis. Selain itu, penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana penyangkalan dan pemutusan hubungan dengan alam semakin memperparah eksploitasi sumber daya alam serta memperkuat perilaku yang merusak lingkungan. Film ini menggambarkan upaya pemulihan ekosistem sebagai wujud kesadaran ekologis yang muncul dari pengalaman emosional akibat kehilangan dan kerusakan lingkungan. Melalui narasinya, *The Lorax* tidak hanya mengkritik konsekuensi destruktif dari eksploitasi lingkungan, tetapi juga menyoroti pentingnya hubungan emosional dan psikologis antara manusia dan alam dalam membangun kesadaran ekologis. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa ekopsikologi menyediakan kerangka kerja yang penting untuk memahami bagaimana keterlibatan emosional dengan isu-isu lingkungan dapat mendorong tanggung jawab ekologis serta memperkuat kesadaran masyarakat terhadap keberlanjutan dan pelestarian lingkungan.

ملخص

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الاستغلال البيئي،
الاغتراب النفسي،
النقد البيئي،
علم النفس البيئي،
لوراكس (2012).

تبحث هذه الدراسة في تمثيل علم النفس البيئي (الإكوبستولوجيا) في العلاقة بين الإنسان والطبيعة كما تجسدها فيلم "الدكتور سوس: ذا لوراكس (Dr. Seuss' The Lorax)" المقتبس من الرواية. وباستخدام المنهج الوصفي النوعي المستند إلى النقد البيئي من الموجة الثالثة، تركز البحث على المنظورات الإكوبستولوجية لاستكشاف الاستجابات العاطفية والنفسية للتدهور البيئي. وقد جرى تحليل البيانات، المكونة من الحوارات والمشاهد المتعلقة بالقضايا البيئية، من خلال عملية الترميز. وتكشف النتائج أن تسليع الطبيعة، المدفوع بالمصالح الصناعية والتجارية، يسهم بشكل كبير في اغتراب الإنسان عن البيئة. ويولد هذا الاغتراب استجابات عاطفية مثل الوعي، والاهتمام، والشعور بالذنب، والندم تجاه الدمار البيئي. وعلاوة على ذلك، توضح الدراسة كيف أن الإنكار والانفصال عن الطبيعة يعززان بشكل أكبر استغلال الموارد الطبيعية ويدعمان السلوك المدمر للبيئة. يصور الفيلم جهود استعادة النظام البيئي باعتبارها تعبيراً عن الوعي البيئي الناشئ عن اللقاءات العاطفية مع الفقد والضرر البيئيين. ومن خلال سرديته، لا ينتقد فيلم "ذا لوراكس" النتائج المدمرة للاستغلال البيئي فحسب، بل يسلط الضوء أيضاً على أهمية الروابط العاطفية والنفسية بين الإنسان والطبيعة في تطوير الوعي البيئي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن علم النفس البيئي يوفر إطاراً هاماً لفهم كيف يمكن للانخراط العاطفي مع القضايا البيئية أن يحفز المسؤولية البيئية ويعزز وعي الأفراد بالاستدامة والحفاظ على البيئة.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing exploitation of natural resources has become one of the most pressing environmental challenges of the twenty-first century. Beyond its visible ecological consequences, such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change, environmental exploitation also reshapes the psychological relationship between humans and the natural world. As modern societies become increasingly urbanized and driven by consumerism, people are progressively detached from direct experiences with nature, resulting in feelings of alienation, emotional disconnection, and diminished ecological responsibility. This condition suggests that environmental crises should not be understood solely as ecological or economic problems but also as psychological and cultural phenomena. Therefore, investigating the relationship between natural exploitation and human alienation is essential for understanding how environmental degradation influences human consciousness and behavior, as well as how literature and film can promote ecological awareness by reconnecting individuals with the natural environment

Literary works are personal expressions of human experiences, thoughts, feelings, ideas, spirits, and beliefs, manifested in writing as captivating depictions of life. In order to write and enjoy literary works in depth and produce quality works, knowledge of literature is absolutely necessary. Without adequate literary understanding, appreciation of literary works will only be superficial, temporary, and fleeting due to a lack of proper understanding (Damono, 2006, Lafamane, 2020).

Literature and film play an important role not only as forms of entertainment but also as cultural media that represent social realities, values, and human experiences. (Wahyudi, 2018). Through narratives, visual imagery, and characterization, films are able to communicate complex environmental issues in ways that are emotionally engaging and accessible to broad audiences. In the context of environmental studies, films can shape ecological awareness by illustrating the consequences of environmental exploitation and inviting audiences to reflect on the relationship between humans and nature. Consequently, films provide valuable texts for examining how environmental crises are represented alongside the psychological experiences they evoke. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study, as Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* portrays not only ecological destruction caused by industrial exploitation but also the psychological alienation experienced by individuals who become disconnected from the natural world.

The growing recognition of environmental issues as cultural and social concerns has also influenced the development of psychological studies, giving rise to the interdisciplinary field of ecopsychology. At its core, ecopsychology seeks to understand the reciprocal relationship between human psychological well-being and the natural environment. One of the earliest and most influential contributions to this field is Roszak's *The Voice of the Earth*, which conceptualizes ecopsychology as an extension of humanity's spiritual and emotional

relationship with nature (Roszak, 1993). Building on this perspective, ecopsychology argues that environmental degradation affects not only ecological systems but also human emotions, identity, and psychological health (Hoelterhoff, 2010). Consequently, this approach provides an appropriate theoretical framework for examining literary and cinematic works that portray the interconnectedness between humans and nature, particularly narratives that explore environmental destruction alongside its psychological consequences.

Ecopsychology is the most commonly used term for the developing synthesis of psychology and ecology. In a broad sense, ecopsychology emerged from the environmental movement that began to develop in the 1960s, in response to growing awareness that modern industrial civilization had triggered an environmental crisis. According to Fox, "the birth of the environmental movement" is often associated with increased public attention following the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, which revealed the harmful effects of pesticides on the environment. This work played an important role in raising and strengthening public concern about various environmental issues (Hibbard, 2003)

The animated film *Dr. Seuss' The Lorax* (2012) provides a compelling narrative for examining the relationship between environmental exploitation and psychological alienation. The film portrays the consequences of industrial expansion through the large-scale destruction of the Truffula forest, illustrating how anthropocentric values and consumerism disrupt ecological balance. At the same time, it explores the psychological transformation of its central character, the Once-ler, whose pursuit of economic gain ultimately leads to guilt, regret, and ecological awareness. Meanwhile, the Lorax functions as the symbolic voice of nature, advocating for the intrinsic value of the environment and emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings. Through its symbolic narrative and visual storytelling, the film offers an appropriate context for investigating how environmental degradation is intertwined with human psychological experiences. Consequently, *The Lorax* serves not only as an environmental narrative but also as a valuable cultural text for exploring Ecopsychological perspectives on human–nature relationships and ecological consciousness.

Several studies have examined *The Lorax* and related psychological theories from different perspectives, demonstrating the film's significance as an environmental and cultural text. One study by Muhammad Ihsan Nur Hadi and Famala Eka Sanhadi Rahayu (2012) employed an ecolinguistic approach to investigate how language in *The Lorax* constructs environmental awareness. Their findings demonstrate that the film communicates ecological values not only through its narrative but also through linguistic patterns that shape audiences' perceptions of environmental conservation. By emphasizing the relationship between language and ecological discourse, the study illustrates how environmental messages can influence attitudes toward nature. However, its primary concern remains the linguistic construction of ecological meaning rather than the psychological consequences of environmental degradation.

Another relevant study by David McClough (McClough, 2022) explored the theme of alienation in *The Lorax*, arguing that the Once-ler becomes increasingly alienated from nature, society, and ultimately himself as a consequence of exploiting natural resources for economic gain. The study demonstrates that environmental exploitation produces not only ecological destruction but also profound social and psychological isolation. While this research successfully identifies alienation as a central consequence of environmental exploitation, it primarily interprets alienation as a literary and philosophical theme without examining the underlying psychological mechanisms that shape this transformation or the broader ecopsychological relationship between humans and nature.

Taken together, these previous studies confirm that *The Lorax* has been examined from linguistic, psychoanalytic, and literary perspectives. However, little attention has been paid to integrating ecological criticism with psychological analysis to explain how environmental exploitation simultaneously produces ecological destruction and psychological alienation. Existing studies either focus on environmental discourse, discuss psychoanalytic concepts in general, or examine alienation without situating it within an ecopsychological framework. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by integrating third-wave ecocriticism and ecopsychology to investigate how *The Lorax* represents the interconnected relationship between environmental exploitation, psychological alienation, and the reconstruction of ecological consciousness. Through this interdisciplinary perspective, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional and psychological dimensions of contemporary environmental crises.

THEORY AND METHOD

Ecocriticism

Environmental issues continue to be a growing global concern because of exploitative human behavior that threatens the balance of nature. Literature, as a representation of social reality, often raises environmental issues through discourse that can foster ecological awareness in readers (Rahman & Cindi, 2025). Ecocriticism as an academic discipline began to gain traction in the 1990s, although its roots date back to the 1970s. The term ecocriticism was first coined by William Rueckert (1978). In his writing, Rueckert revealed a reciprocal relationship between literature and the environment. In his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," he introduced the term ecocriticism, which at that time was still understood as nature writing. Then, as environmental issues began to attract global attention, the term ecocriticism became increasingly common (Garrard, 2012; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). Ecocriticism came to be understood specifically as the study of the relationship between literature and the environment, grounded in its commitment to preventing environmental destruction.

Ecocriticism interprets the concept of 'nature' more comprehensively, not limiting it to depictions of nature in literary works or to aesthetic elements such as flora and fauna alone

(Tajane et al., 2024). This concept refers to the totality of the physical environment, which includes interactions between humans and non-human entities. These interrelated relationships form the main foundation of ecocritical studies. The sustainability of a healthy ecosystem for humans and the planet depends on the harmony between living and non-living components in the environment.

Contemporary ecological awareness emphasizes the importance of maintaining this balance. Ideally, sustainable ecology is achieved when humans, plants, animals, and all living creatures coexist harmoniously without domination or excessive exploitation of nature (Frederiek in Mishra, 2016). Within the context of *The Lorax* (2012), this ecocritical perspective provides an analytical framework for examining how the film represents the disruption of ecological balance through industrial exploitation, consumerism, and anthropocentric values. Rather than merely portraying environmental degradation as a visual backdrop, the film constructs a critical narrative that reveals the interconnected relationships between humans and the natural world, making it an appropriate object for investigating ecological destruction and its psychological implications.

Third-Wave Ecocriticism

The development of ecocriticism has evolved through several theoretical phases that reflect changing perspectives on the relationship between humans and the environment. Scholars generally classify this development into three major waves. The first wave of ecocriticism primarily focused on representations of wilderness, nature writing, and the preservation of natural landscapes. During this phase, literary analysis emphasized the intrinsic value of nature and criticized anthropocentric attitudes that positioned humans as superior to the non-human world (Garrard, 2012; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). Although this perspective successfully established environmental concerns within literary studies, it often concentrated on rural landscapes and relatively untouched environments.

The second wave of ecocriticism expanded the scope of environmental criticism by examining the relationships between ecological issues and social structures (Buell, 2009). Scholars began to investigate how environmental degradation is closely connected with questions of race, gender, class, colonialism, and environmental justice. Rather than viewing ecological problems as isolated natural phenomena, second-wave ecocriticism emphasized that environmental crises are deeply embedded within political, cultural, and economic systems. This broader perspective encouraged interdisciplinary dialogue between literary studies and the social sciences, allowing environmental criticism to address issues of inequality, power, and access to natural resources (Garrard, 2012).

Building upon these developments, third-wave ecocriticism adopts a more global, interdisciplinary, and relational perspective. Instead of maintaining a strict distinction between humans and nature, third-wave ecocriticism understands both as mutually interconnected within complex ecological networks. This perspective recognizes that

environmental issues cannot be separated from globalization, technology, consumer culture, urbanization, and psychological experiences. Consequently, third-wave ecocriticism moves beyond simply describing environmental degradation and seeks to understand how ecological crises influence human identities, emotions, ethics, and cultural imagination.

One important characteristic of third-wave ecocriticism is its openness to interdisciplinary approaches, including psychology, sociology, media studies, and cultural studies (Marland, 2013). This interdisciplinary orientation enables researchers to investigate environmental problems not only as ecological phenomena but also as psychological and cultural experiences. Human relationships with nature are therefore understood as dynamic interactions in which environmental degradation simultaneously affects ecosystems and human emotional well-being. Such an approach is particularly relevant for contemporary literary and cinematic texts that portray ecological crises alongside the psychological consequences experienced by individuals and communities.

Within this framework, environmental exploitation is interpreted not merely as physical destruction of ecosystems but also as a process that reshapes human perceptions of nature. Consumerism, industrialization, and capitalist modes of production gradually transform nature into an economic commodity rather than a living system with intrinsic value. As this commodification becomes normalized, humans increasingly experience alienation from the natural environment, weakening ecological awareness and emotional attachment to nature. Third-wave ecocriticism therefore emphasizes that ecological sustainability requires restoring both environmental integrity and the psychological relationship between humans and the more-than-human world.

This perspective provides the primary theoretical foundation for the present study. The *Lorax* (2012) portrays environmental destruction through industrial expansion, commercialization of natural resources, and the replacement of authentic ecosystems with artificial environments. Beyond representing ecological degradation, the film also depicts psychological alienation, moral conflict, and the gradual reconstruction of ecological consciousness experienced by the Once-ler. Accordingly, third-wave ecocriticism enables this study to analyze how ecological exploitation and psychological transformation are interconnected, while ecopsychology complements this analysis by explaining the emotional and psychological dimensions of human–nature relationships. The integration of these two perspectives allows the study to examine *The Lorax* not only as an environmental narrative but also as a cultural text that critiques contemporary ecological crises and promotes ecological awareness.

Ecopsychology

In the context of literary studies, literary psychology is a field of analysis that utilizes psychological approaches to examine literary works. Authors and readers often draw on different psychological concepts and theories in creating and interpreting works. This study

focuses on the psychological aspects in literature, emphasizing that psychological elements are an integral part of literary works. Etymologically, the term "psychology" derives from the Greek words *psyche* (soul) and *logos* (science), meaning the science that studies the human soul (Khotim et al., 2024; Saleh, 2018). Thus, literary psychology serves as a bridge between psychological dynamics and creative expression in literature. (Adinda Dewi Lestari et al., 2024)

Then, in the Psychological Analysis of Literature research on the characters in the novel "Galaksi by Poppy Pertiwi", it is discussed that literary works essentially represent various phenomena or life situations presented through central characters in the storyline. Characterization in literature reflects human psychological dynamics, which are the subject of literary psychology. The portrayal of these characters often intersects with social reality, especially in the context of human psychological conditions, as they strive to fulfill their needs. The complexity of human needs often triggers a desire to meet them, while failure to meet them can cause internal conflict in characters or individuals. Thus, literary works not only reflect the inner struggles of characters but also mirror the psychological conflicts humans experience in real life due to unmet demands (Salsabila et al., 2013).

Ecopsychology emerged as an interdisciplinary field integrating psychology and ecology to explain the reciprocal relationship between human psychological well-being and the natural environment. Developed primarily through the work of Theodore Roszak (1993), ecopsychology challenges conventional psychological perspectives that view the human mind as separate from ecological systems. Instead, it argues that humans are inherently connected to nature and that this relationship is fundamental to psychological health. Consequently, environmental degradation is understood not merely as an ecological crisis but also as a psychological crisis that affects emotions, identity, values, and human behavior.

Central to ecopsychology is the assumption that modern industrial society has progressively weakened humanity's connection with nature. Processes such as urbanization, industrialization, technological dependence, and consumerism encourage people to experience nature as an external object rather than as an integral part of human existence. This separation produces what ecopsychologists describe as ecological alienation, a psychological condition characterized by emotional detachment from the natural world, diminished ecological awareness, and reduced empathy toward non-human life. As this alienation deepens, environmental exploitation becomes increasingly normalized because humans no longer perceive themselves as belonging to the ecosystems they transform.

From an ecopsychological perspective, environmental exploitation therefore extends beyond physical destruction of ecosystems (Katlan & Akçeşme, 2025). It simultaneously transforms human consciousness by weakening emotional attachment to nature and replacing ecological values with economic and utilitarian considerations (Adams, 2005). Consequently, ecological crises are accompanied by psychological consequences, including denial, guilt, anxiety, emotional isolation, and the loss of ecological identity. Conversely, reconnecting with nature

is regarded as an essential process of psychological healing, enabling individuals to reconstruct ecological awareness and develop more sustainable relationships with the environment.

Within literary studies, ecopsychology provides a framework for examining how literary and cinematic texts represent the psychological dimensions of environmental crises (Geal, 2021; Ingram, 2014). Rather than focusing solely on ecological destruction, ecopsychological criticism investigates how characters experience emotional conflict, alienation, moral transformation, and psychological recovery in response to changing relationships with nature. This perspective is particularly relevant for *The Lorax*, where environmental exploitation is portrayed alongside the psychological transformation of the Once-ler, illustrating how ecological destruction reshapes both the environment and human consciousness.

Although ecopsychology serves as the primary theoretical framework of this study, psychoanalytic theory is employed as a complementary analytical perspective to explain the psychological processes underlying ecological alienation. Whereas ecopsychology explains how the disruption of human–nature relationships affect psychological well-being, psychoanalysis provides conceptual tools for understanding the internal conflicts that shape individual behavior. In *The Lorax*, the Once-ler's relentless pursuit of economic success reflects the dominance of instinctual desires associated with the id, while his subsequent guilt and moral awakening illustrate the growing influence of the superego. The ego mediates these competing psychological forces throughout his transformation. By integrating ecopsychology and psychoanalysis, this study examines psychological alienation at two interconnected levels: ecopsychology explains the breakdown of the human–nature relationship, whereas psychoanalysis explains the internal psychological conflicts experienced by the character as a consequence of that breakdown.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the representation of environmental exploitation and psychological alienation in the animated film Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* (2012). The analysis was grounded in third-wave ecocriticism and ecopsychology. Third-wave ecocriticism was used to examine representations of environmental exploitation and human–nature relationships, while ecopsychology was employed to interpret the psychological consequences of ecological degradation experienced by the film's characters.

The primary data source was Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* (2012), directed by Chris Renaud and produced by Universal Pictures. The film was selected because it presents environmental exploitation, industrialization, consumerism, and ecological alienation as central themes. The data consisted of dialogues, character interactions, and narrative sequences representing environmental destruction, human–nature relationships, and psychological alienation. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly books and journal articles related to ecocriticism, ecopsychology, psychoanalysis, and environmental humanities.

Data were collected through document analysis by repeatedly watching the film, identifying relevant scenes and dialogues, and documenting narrative and visual elements associated with environmental exploitation and psychological alienation. The collected data were then analyzed using NVivo 12 through three stages of qualitative coding: open coding to identify initial concepts, axial coding to establish relationships among categories, and selective coding to determine the core themes of the study. Grounding analysis was subsequently employed to examine the prominence and frequency of the identified themes across the dataset. To enhance analytical reliability, coding consistency was assessed using NVivo's Coding Comparison Query based on Cohen's Kappa coefficient. The final interpretation integrated the coding results with the theoretical perspectives of third-wave ecocriticism and ecopsychology to explain how the film represents ecological destruction, psychological alienation, and the reconstruction of ecological consciousness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the animated film *The Lorax* (2012) offers a strong, consistent depiction of the relationship between environmental exploitation and psychological alienation. Through a qualitative coding process involving open, axial, and selective coding and grounding, several dominant themes emerge that explain how ecological destruction is closely linked to human psychological conditions. At the initial stage, the findings indicate that the Once-ler embodies an anthropocentric worldview, in which nature is perceived merely as an object for economic exploitation. This perspective is reflected in his decision to cut down Truffula trees for industrial production without considering ecological consequences. The Truffula forest, which initially symbolizes harmony and ecological balance, gradually transforms into a devastated landscape as exploitation continues. This shift visually and narratively represents environmental degradation caused by human greed.

In this study, testing was conducted using the Coding Comparison Query feature in NVivo 12 software by calculating Cohen's Kappa value and percentage agreement. The Kappa coefficient was used because it can measure the level of agreement by considering the possibility of agreement occurring by chance, thus providing a more accurate measure of reliability than percentage agreement.

Figure 1. Cohen Kappa Value

185	1.00	100	0	100	0
186	1.00	100	0	100	0
187	1.00	100	0	100	0
188	1.00	100	0	100	0
189	1.00	100	0	100	0
190	1.00	100	0	100	0
191	1.00	100	0	100	0
192	1.00	100	0	100	0
193	1.00	100	0	100	0
194	1.00	100	0	100	0
195	1.00	100	0	100	0
196	1.00	100	0	100	0
197	1.00	100	0	100	0
198	1.00	100	0	100	0
199	1.00	100	0	100	0
200	1.00	100	0	100	0
201	1.00	100	0	100	0
202	1.00	100	0	100	0
203	1.00	100	0	100	0
204	0.63	99.88			

The analysis results showed that the Cohen's Kappa value was 0.63, with a percentage agreement level of 99.88%. The Kappa value falls within the category of substantial agreement, indicating a strong level of agreement. The high percentage agreement demonstrates that nearly all data units were coded consistently across both coding processes. Meanwhile, the Kappa value confirms that the agreement did not occur merely by chance, but rather reflects systematic consistency in the analytical process.

The coding process was conducted separately, with the researcher acting as the primary human coder. The use of AI in this study functioned as an analytical companion to support reflective processes, check category consistency, and minimize potential inconsistencies in coding (Cameron, 2025; Mortelmans, 2024). Nevertheless, the final decisions regarding code determination, categorization, and interpretation of meaning remained under the authority of the researcher. Therefore, interpretive validity was maintained, while technical reliability was strengthened through the statistical reliability test.

The open coding process identifies several recurring themes, including environmental exploitation, industrial expansion, ecological destruction, and human dominance over nature. These themes are interconnected and reinforce the central idea that profit-driven human actions often disregard environmental sustainability.

The results of the open coding process showed that this study generated 74 initial codes (open codes). These codes reflect the complexity of environmental issues represented in the film, ranging from practices of natural resource exploitation and the impacts of environmental destruction to the emergence of emotional responses and awareness regarding the importance of ecosystem restoration. The large number of initial codes indicates that the film not only portrays environmental destruction in a physical sense but also illustrates the psychological, moral, and social dimensions accompanying such destruction. Furthermore, the diversity of the codes demonstrates the richness of the narrative in representing the interconnected relationship between humans, nature, and environmental crises.

The axial coding process in this study was conducted over approximately two weeks. During this period, the researcher re-examined all 74 open codes generated in the previous stage. These codes were then compared with one another by considering similarities in meaning, the context of their appearance within scenes, and the cause-and-effect relationships reflected in the film's narrative. In this process, the researcher considered not only the similarity of terms but also how each code emerged within particular situations and its role in constructing the narrative concerning the relationship between humans and nature.

The results of the axial coding process showed that the 74 open codes could be condensed into 8 axial codes. This condensation was carried out not to oversimplify the data, but rather to facilitate the identification of emerging patterns and the relationships among the environmental issues represented in the film. Each axial code encompassed several open codes that shared similar meanings and collectively represented an important aspect of the

environmental problems portrayed in the narrative.

The eight axial codes generated in this study are as follows:

1. Alienation from nature
2. Commercialization of nature through industry
3. Ecological damage and consequences
4. Emotional response to environmental loss
5. Environmental denial & disconnection
6. Exploitation of resources
7. Protecting business at the expense of nature
8. Rebuilding the natural ecosystem

The next stage in the data analysis process was selective coding. At this stage, the researcher integrated all of the axial codes that had been generated in order to identify a central theme capable of explaining the overall phenomenon under investigation. Based on the results of the data analysis and the mapping process through the project map, this study produced the following main selective code; (1) *Lorax As The Nature Building Campaign* and (2) *Alienation from Nature and The Ecopsychological Perspective*.

Grounding analysis was subsequently used to determine the relative prominence of each axial code based on the frequency and intensity of its occurrence across the dataset. The results indicate that Commercialization of Nature through Industry emerged as the most strongly grounded category, reflecting its central role in the film's narrative as the primary driver of environmental exploitation. This was followed by Ecological Damage and Consequences and Alienation from Nature, both of which appeared consistently throughout the film and formed the major consequences of industrial expansion. Categories such as Emotional Response to Environmental Loss and Environmental Denial and Disconnection demonstrated moderate grounding, illustrating the psychological processes accompanying ecological degradation. In contrast, Protecting Business at the Expense of Nature and Rebuilding the Natural Ecosystem showed comparatively lower grounding, as they appeared in more specific narrative contexts but remained conceptually important in explaining the transition from exploitation to ecological restoration. These grounding results indicate that the film primarily constructs a narrative centered on the commercialization of nature and its ecological and psychological consequences, while restoration functions as the concluding response to the environmental crisis.

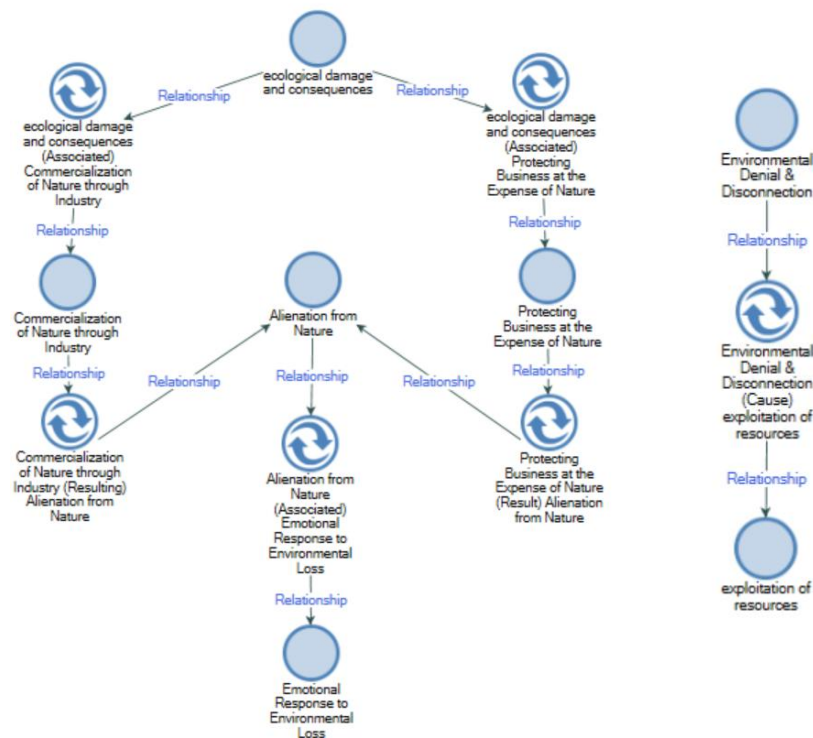
The findings indicate that continuous exploitation and environmental destruction deepen the distance between humans and nature. The normalization of these conditions causes humans to become increasingly disconnected from ecological realities. This alienation occurs not only physically but is also reflected in human perspectives and environmental awareness.

On the other hand, the analysis also reveals the emergence of emotional responses and

restoration efforts amid these conditions. Feelings of guilt, concern, and hope for environmental recovery indicate that the relationship between humans and nature has not been entirely severed.

Project Map Analysis

Figure 2. Project Map of Ecological Damage to Emotional Response and Environmental Denial to Exploitation of Resources



The visualization illustrates the mapping of relationships among categories formed from the data analysis results. Through this project map, it can be seen how the commercialization of nature is connected to ecological destruction, which then progresses toward human denial, the emergence of emotional responses, and eventually leads to ecosystem restoration efforts. This mapping demonstrates that each pattern is interconnected and forms a unified narrative in portraying the dynamics of the relationship between humans and nature in the film.

This study developed a project map to illustrate the relationships among categories in a more detailed and structural manner. Unlike a concept map, which mainly presents the grouping of major ideas, the project map demonstrates the direction of relationships, cause-and-effect patterns, and process dynamics that construct the overall meaning of the film.

Based on the visualization, it can be observed that Commercialization of Nature through Industry is directly connected to Ecological Damage and Consequences. This relationship indicates that the exploitation of nature through industrialization becomes the primary

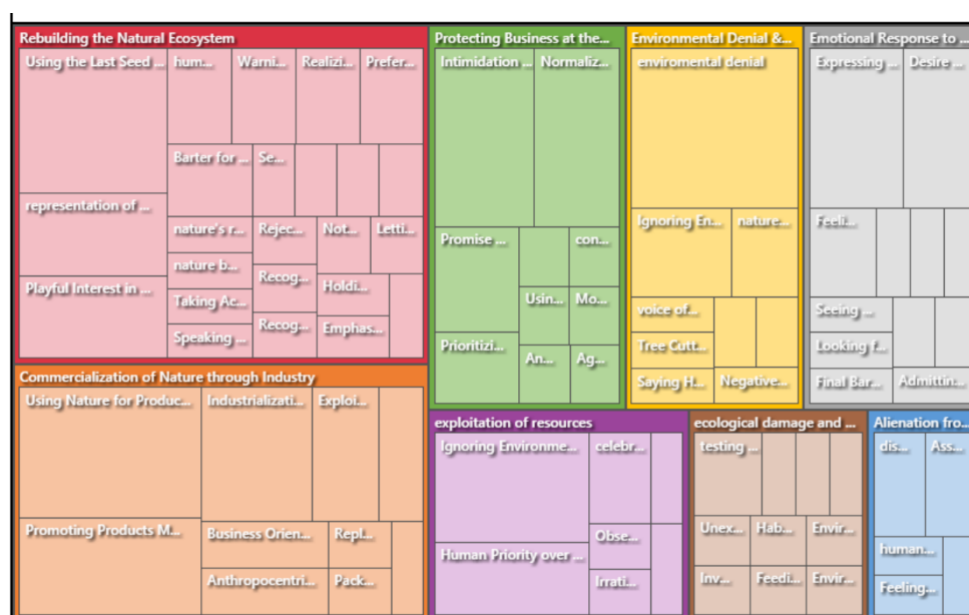
trigger of ecological destruction within the film's narrative. Nature is reduced to a commodity, causing its ecological functions to be displaced by the logic of production and consumption.

From this destruction, two forms of response emerge. On one side, Rebuilding the Natural Ecosystem appears as a form of awareness and restoration effort. On the other side, Emotional Response to Environmental Loss represents inner conflict, guilt, and sadness over the disappearance of authentic nature. These two patterns indicate that ecological destruction affects not only the physical environment but also generates psychological and ethical responses.

Meanwhile, Environmental Denial & Disconnection is positioned separately because it functions as the foundation that allows the cycle of exploitation to continue. Environmental destruction in the film does not emerge suddenly; rather, it begins with the denial of ecological realities. Denial causes humans to normalize environmental degradation and accept artificial conditions as something natural, thereby intensifying disconnection from nature. This separate positioning emphasizes that denial is not merely a consequence, but a root cause that sustains the commercialization of nature and ecological destruction.

From an Ecopsychological perspective, the relational patterns illustrated in this project map indicate that human alienation from nature occurs at both psychological and structural levels (Vogel, 1988). When nature is no longer perceived as part of the self, exploitation becomes easier to justify. However, the emergence of emotional responses and restoration efforts demonstrates that this interconnectedness has not been entirely lost. Thus, the project map reveals both the dynamics of alienation and the possibility of reconnection between humans and nature, which subsequently becomes the foundation for constructing the hierarchy of the research findings.

Figure 3. Hierarchy of Data Coding



Overall, the hierarchy of the research findings reveals two major tendencies, namely exploitation and restoration, which are connected through processes of denial and human emotional responses toward environmental destruction. Commercialization of Nature through Industry and Rebuilding the Natural Ecosystem occupy the most dominant positions because they represent these two central poles. Meanwhile, Environmental Denial & Disconnection and Emotional Response to Environmental Loss function as mechanisms that explain how human alienation from nature is formed, maintained, and eventually questioned.

This hierarchy reinforces the results of the selective coding process, which identified Alienation from Nature as the core category of the study. Human alienation from nature does not emerge suddenly; rather, it is constructed through processes of commercialization and exploitation, sustained through denial and disconnection, and gradually challenged through emotional responses and ecosystem restoration efforts. Therefore, the hierarchy of findings provides a clearer illustration of the dynamics of the relationship between humans and nature as represented in the film.

Ecological Alienation as a Result of Environmental Exploitation

The first grounded finding demonstrates that environmental exploitation leads to ecological alienation comes toward human. This concept refers to the disconnection between humans and the natural environment caused by exploitative, unsustainable practices. In *The Lorax*, this condition is clearly represented through the character of the Once-ler, whose actions reflect a broader critique of modern industrial society.

Beyond portraying the Once-ler's personal transformation from an anthropocentric to a more ecocentric perspective, *The Lorax* also positions its audience to experience this psychological shift. Through the gradual visual deterioration of the Truffula forest, the disappearance of wildlife, and the emotional consequences faced by the Once-ler, the film invites viewers to empathize with the ecological loss rather than merely observe it. This narrative strategy encourages audiences to recognize that environmental exploitation is not only an external ecological problem but also a source of psychological and moral disconnection from nature. As viewers witness the Once-ler's regret and eventual commitment to restoring the ecosystem, they are simultaneously encouraged to question consumerist values, reconsider their own relationship with the environment, and embrace a more ecocentric worldview. Consequently, *The Lorax* functions not only as a representation of ecological alienation but also as a persuasive cultural text that promotes ecological awareness and inspires audiences to participate in environmental responsibility.

From an Ecopsychological perspective, humans are inherently connected to nature, and this connection plays a crucial role in maintaining psychological well-being. However, when humans adopt an anthropocentric mindset that prioritizes economic growth over ecological balance, this connection is disrupted. The Once-ler's decision to exploit the Truffula forest illustrates this disruption, as he gradually distances himself from the natural world. Similarly,

Fisher (2013) explains that ecological disconnection results in a diminished sense of meaning, empathy, and environmental responsibility. In *The Lorax*, the Once-ler initially demonstrates curiosity and admiration toward the Truffula forest, suggesting the existence of an original harmonious relationship between humans and nature. However, this relationship gradually deteriorates as economic ambition begins to dominate his worldview.

The process of ecological alienation in the film occurs in several stages. Initially, the Once-ler interacts with nature in a relatively harmonious way, appreciating its beauty and abundance. However, as he becomes increasingly driven by profit, his perception of nature shifts from appreciation to exploitation. Trees are no longer seen as living entities but as raw materials for production. This shift in perception marks the beginning of ecological alienation. The Once-ler's actions not only destroy the physical environment but also sever his emotional and psychological connection to nature. The absence of natural elements in the film's later scenes symbolizes this disconnection, creating a sense of emptiness and imbalance. Moreover, ecological alienation is reinforced by the disappearance of other living beings, such as animals that depend on the Truffula forest. Their departure signifies the loss of ecological harmony and highlights the consequences of human actions on other forms of life. This aligns with Ecopsychological theory, which emphasizes that environmental destruction affects not only ecosystems but also human consciousness. In this context, Nature is no longer viewed as a living system deserving respect but rather as a commodity to be exploited for profit. This transformation reflects what Merchant (2020) describes as the mechanistic view of nature in industrial society, where the environment is reduced to an object of production and consumption.

The film also reflects real-world environmental issues, where industrialization and consumerism have led to widespread ecological degradation. The Once-ler's behavior mirrors the actions of modern industries that exploit natural resources without considering long-term consequences. This parallel suggests that ecological alienation is not only a fictional concept but also a reality experienced in contemporary society.

In this context, ecological alienation can be understood as both a cause and a consequence of environmental exploitation. On one hand, the lack of connection with nature enables humans to exploit it without guilt. On the other hand, the resulting environmental destruction further deepens this disconnection, creating a cycle of alienation. Therefore, the first grounded finding highlights the importance of restoring the human-nature relationship. Without this connection, environmental sustainability cannot be achieved, and psychological well-being will continue to deteriorate.

Psychological Transformation Through Guilt and Awareness

The second grounded finding focuses on the psychological transformation the Once-ler undergoes as a result of his actions. This transformation is driven by feelings of guilt, regret, and eventual awareness, all of which play a crucial role in shaping his character.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the Once-ler's internal conflict can be understood as a struggle between different aspects of the psyche. His initial actions are driven by desire and ambition, reflecting the influence of the id. However, as the consequences of his actions become apparent, the superego begins to emerge, generating feelings of guilt and moral responsibility.

From the perspective of third-wave ecocriticism, the Once-ler's psychological transformation represents more than an individual's moral awakening; it reflects the reconstruction of the interconnected relationship between humans, culture, and the environment. Third-wave ecocriticism emphasizes that contemporary environmental crises are inseparable from consumerism, industrial capitalism, and the cultural values that shape human behavior. In *The Lorax*, the Once-ler's transition from relentless industrial exploitation to ecological responsibility illustrates how environmental consciousness emerges through the recognition of these interconnected systems. His decision to preserve the last Truffula seed symbolizes not only personal redemption but also the possibility of restoring ecological relationships disrupted by anthropocentric values. Accordingly, the film aligns with the principles of third-wave ecocriticism by presenting environmental recovery as both an ecological and cultural transformation, encouraging audiences to reconsider their own position within the broader network of human and non-human life.

This internal conflict marks the beginning of psychological transformation. The Once-ler becomes increasingly aware of the damage he has caused, not only to the environment but also to himself. His isolation and loneliness reflect a state of self-alienation, where he is disconnected from his own values and identity. The role of guilt in this transformation is particularly significant. In many psychological theories, guilt is viewed as a negative emotion. However, in this context, guilt functions as a catalyst for change. It forces the Once-ler to confront his actions and recognize their consequences, leading to self-reflection. As the Once-ler reflects on his past behavior, he begins to develop ecological awareness. This awareness is characterized by a recognition of the interconnectedness between humans and nature. He realizes that his well-being is inseparable from the health of the environment, marking a shift from an anthropocentric to an Ecocentric perspective. The transformation is further symbolized by his decision to preserve the last Truffula seed. This act represents hope and the possibility of restoration. It suggests that despite past mistakes, change is possible if individuals are willing to take responsibility for their actions. From an Ecopsychological standpoint, this transformation highlights the potential for healing through reconnection with nature. When individuals become aware of their relationship with the environment, they are more likely to adopt sustainable behaviors and develop a sense of ecological responsibility.

This finding also has broader implications for environmental education. It suggests that raising awareness about the psychological impact of environmental destruction can encourage more responsible behavior. By understanding the emotional and psychological consequences of their actions, individuals may be more motivated to protect the environment.

Furthermore, the Once-ler's transformation illustrates that change is a gradual process. It requires not only awareness but also reflection and commitment. This process is often accompanied by discomfort, as individuals must confront their mistakes and challenge their beliefs. In conclusion, the second grounded finding emphasizes that psychological transformation is an essential component of environmental sustainability. Without changes in human attitudes and behaviors, efforts to address ecological problems will be limited.

COCNCLUSION

This study concludes that *The Lorax* (2012) offers a powerful Ecopsychological representation of the relationship between environmental exploitation and psychological alienation. The findings demonstrate that human actions driven by anthropocentric and profit-oriented perspectives not only cause ecological destruction but also lead to psychological consequences, including disconnection, isolation, and a loss of meaning. Through the character of the Once-ler, the film illustrates how excessive exploitation of nature results in ecological alienation, in which humans become detached from the natural environment, and in self-alienation, in which individuals lose connection with their own values and identity.

Furthermore, the study reveals that psychological transformation is possible through the emergence of guilt and awareness, which function as catalysts for change and the development of ecological responsibility.

Based on these conclusions, several suggestions are proposed. First, future researchers are encouraged to explore ecopsychology in other literary works and films to expand the scope of interdisciplinary research across psychology, literature, and environmental studies. Second, educators can use films such as *The Lorax* as teaching media to raise students' awareness of environmental issues and their psychological implications, particularly in fostering critical thinking and ecological consciousness. Third, for society as a whole, it is important to reconsider the relationship between humans and nature by adopting more sustainable, environmentally responsible behaviors.

Reconnecting with nature should not only be seen as an ecological necessity but also as a fundamental aspect of maintaining psychological well-being. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that solving environmental problems requires both external actions and internal awareness, as the health of the environment is deeply interconnected with the health of the human mind

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