

Hedonism in Martin Scorse'S Film the Wolf of Wall Street (2013)

Syamsul Bahri¹, Aditya Raffa Nanda^{2*}, Samuel Sihombing³, Ester Monica⁴,
Rebecha Rosevin Margaretha Silalahi⁵

Medan State University

Corresponding Author: Aditya Raffa Nanda; adityaraffanandaxd@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Hedonism, The Wolf of Wall Street, Movie

Received : 05 June

Revised : 23 July

Accepted: 23 August

©2025 Bahri, Nanda, Sihombing, Monica, Silalahi: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

The Wolf of Wall Street contains many hedonistic values, especially regarding the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, and excess in modern capitalist society. The lifestyle shown in this film reflects behaviors already seen today, where pleasure, material success, and status are prioritized over ethics and responsibility. These ideas inspire researchers to examine the deeper meaning of hedonism in contemporary culture, aiming to raise awareness about how unchecked indulgence can impact personal and social morality. This study aims to examine the representation of hedonism in this movie. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this research analyzes the film's narrative and dialogue to explore how different types of hedonism: folk hedonism, value-prudential, motivated hedonism, hedonistic normative, selfish-egoistic, and utilitarianism are portrayed through the characters, especially the main character Jordan Belfort. The results indicate that folk hedonism is the most dominant with 27%, followed by motivational hedonism 24%, egoistic hedonism 18%, utilitarian hedonism 15%, normative hedonism 9%, and value/prudential hedonism 7%. The findings show that the movie is not only a depiction of personal desire, but also a powerful critique of a society driven by pleasure, greed, and moral decay

INTRODUCTION

Literature is one of the forms of cultural expression that reflects human life through aesthetic language, whether in spoken or written form. In academic contexts, literature is studied as a manifestation of human thoughts, emotions, and experiences, conveyed through both fictional and non-fictional works. According to Sari (2020), literature serves as a reflection of human experiences, thoughts, and cultures, often providing insight into different social and historical contexts. Literary works are generally categorized into three main forms: poetry, prose, and drama.

Drama is a type of literary art specifically created to be performed, relying heavily on dialogue as the primary medium to convey the story and conflicts between characters. Similarly, Purnomo (2021) states that drama is a representation of human life presented through actions rather than narration, requiring direct involvement of actors in expressing events. Wulandari (2022) also emphasizes that drama is a performing art that focuses not only on the storyline but also on emotional expression and physical movement as artistic forms of communication. As a performative medium, drama holds greater power in directly conveying social issues to its audience. Its function goes beyond entertainment; it serves as a mirror and critique of social realities. Directors and playwrights often use drama as a tool to raise public awareness about various issues, including social inequality, legal injustice, and moral or cultural concerns. One social issue that has grown increasingly relevant and is frequently portrayed in visual media today is hedonism.

Hedonism, etymologically derived from the Greek word *hedone*, meaning pleasure or delight, is a philosophical doctrine that places pleasure as the ultimate goal and highest good in human life. According to Nadzir and Ingarianti (2015), hedonism is a lifestyle in which individuals seek pleasure by spending time outside the home, engaging in fun activities with friends, buying unnecessary items, and desiring attention from others. According to Pulungan et al. (2018), hedonism reflects a lifestyle where people prioritize trends, fashion, and appearances over basic needs, showing how lifestyle choices become more important than survival necessities. According to Richard Kraut (2021), modern interpretations of hedonism explore not only physical pleasure but also more refined forms such as intellectual or emotional satisfaction as contributors to human flourishing. As Weijers (2012) said, hedonism were deined into six types: Folk Hedonism, Value Hedonism, Motivational Hedonism, Normative Hedonism, Selfish-Egoistic hedonism, Utilitarian Hedonism.

Several factors makes humans have an attitude of hedonism: first of all there is the personal factor, which states that every human naturally seeks pleasure and happiness in life. When a person feels bored, stressed, or dissatisfied, they tend to chase things that can give them instant joy. However, human desires are endless, so the habit of seeking pleasure continuously can lead to a hedonistic lifestyle. The second is the family factor, where someone who is raised in a wealthy or luxurious family environment may grow up being used to comfort and abundance.

If everything they want is easily given, they may not feel the need to struggle or live simply, which builds a tendency toward hedonism. The third is the social and environmental factor, in which a person who is always surrounded by friends or a community that lives in excess or values material things is more likely to be influenced to live the same way. They may adopt hedonism not just for personal satisfaction, but also to feel accepted by their environment. In the movie of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, an attitude was defined by clearly shows hedonism, and this happens in the conversation between Jordan Belfort with his employees

Jordan : "Lemme tell you something. **There's no nobility in poverty.**"

Employees: [Silence, attentive]

Jordan : "I've been a rich man, and I've been a poor man. **And I choose rich every fucking time.**"

Employees: [Cheering, clapping, shouting] "YEAH!"

In this scene, Jordan Belfort is speaking to his employees at a brokerage firm about the choice between living as a rich or poor person. Jordan asserts that there is no nobility in poverty and firmly chooses to live wealthy because he believes wealth brings happiness, freedom, and satisfaction. He describes his luxurious lifestyle, riding in limousines, wearing expensive suits, and gold watches as symbols of status and comfort that make facing problems easier. The employees listening respond with cheers and applause, showing their support for Jordan's views. And This conversation clearly reflects value hedonism according to Weijer's classification (2012), which is the view that pleasure and material enjoyment are the only intrinsically valuable things and the main goals in life.

Jordan is not only talking about pleasure as motivation but also considers the luxurious lifestyle as the correct moral and social standard, which falls under normative hedonism, where actions that maximize pleasure are regarded as morally right. then, Jordan's strong focus on personal pleasure and comfort can also be seen as a form of hedonistic egoism, which holds that individuals should pursue their own pleasure as the primary goal of life. The social environment at the office, which supports and celebrates this lifestyle, further reinforces these hedonistic values collectively, encouraging all members to adopt the same mindset and behaviors for pleasure and social recognition.

Several previous studies that discussed hedonism: Hedonism as Seen in Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Saputri, A. I. K (2020); Hedonism Portrayed in Tony Kushner's Play Script "Angels in America" by Aurelies Riani Mangetan; Dahlia D. Moelier, & Asyrafunnisa (2021); Hedonism in Eugene O'Neill's: A Long Day's Journey Into Night by Sinaga et al (2022); Representasi Gaya Hidup Hedonisme Dalam Film The Tinder Swindler by Christine, G. (2023); Representasi Hedonisme dan Kekerasan dalam Film "The Menu" by Marvelin, N. (2024). The difference between above studies and this research lies in the research object. Most of the studies above focus on hedonism in consumer behavior, such as impulsive buying, shopping motives, and lifestyle habits.

However, the object of this study is different. This study focuses on the hedonistic attitudes shown by the characters, especially the behavior and dialogue of the main character, Jordan Belfort. He represents hedonism not through shopping, but through excessive partying, drug use, pursuit of wealth, and a lifestyle that prioritizes pleasure over ethics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature is a reflection of human life and social values, often expressed in written form to convey messages, emotions, and ideologies. One of the concepts frequently explored in literature and film is hedonism the pursuit of pleasure as the ultimate goal of life. According to Epicurus, hedonism is a way to achieve freedom from physical and mental pain. He argued that pleasure is the beginning and end of a happy life. However, if pleasure is pursued excessively, it can lead to negative consequences such as anxiety, dissatisfaction, and regret (Epicurus in the International Journal of Education and Literature, 2022). Lifestyle, as part of cultural expression, plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals choose to seek pleasure.

This definition aligns with the observable behavior of individuals who engage in consistent pleasure-seeking activities as part of their daily routine. Chaney (1996) argues that lifestyle reflects identity and symbolic values, indicating that people pursue certain pleasures not only for the experience itself but also to construct a particular image of themselves. Featherstone (1991) adds that in postmodern society, lifestyle becomes a medium through which individuals communicate status and meaning, often influenced by media and consumerism both key themes in modern hedonistic behavior. As Weijers (2012) said, hedonism were defined into six types: Folk Hedonism, Value Hedonism, Motivational Hedonism, Normative Hedonism, Selfish-Egoistic hedonism, Utilitarian Hedonism. These views on pleasure and lifestyle are reflected in various forms of hedonism portrayed in literature. Each presents a distinct perspective on why people seek pleasure, how they experience it, and what it reveals about human motivation and values.

1. Folk Hedonism

Folk hedonism defined as basic form of hedonism. It doesn't come from deep philosophical thought but rather from common sense and instinct. According to this view, the main purpose of life is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. There is no need to search for a deeper meaning, consider ethics, or think about long-term consequences. The idea is simple: as long as something makes us happy and doesn't harm others directly, it's worth doing. This mindset often appears in daily life, in casual conversations, relaxed lifestyles, and mottos like "you only live once" (YOLO).

Dialog (Inspired by Mamma Mia!)

Tanya : "Donna, you're still working at that hotel?"

Donna : "Yep. And singing every night, dancing under the moon."

Rosie : "Sounds like a dream."

Donna : "Life's too short to be serious all the time. **I just want to enjoy it while I can.**"

This dialogue clearly illustrates the spirit of folk hedonism through Donna's character. She chooses to stay in a simple lifestyle working at a small hotel and spending her nights singing and dancing. These are not activities that bring her fame or wealth, but they bring her **personal joy**. When Donna says, "**I just want to enjoy it while I can,**" she expresses the belief that life is meant to be enjoyed, not stressed over or spent chasing heavy ambitions. The phrase "life's too short" shows her awareness that life is limited, and so she chooses to make the most of it through simple pleasures.

The part "enjoy it while I can" captures the present-focused, carefree, and spontaneous attitude typical of folk hedonism. There's no concern for morality, long-term goals, or philosophical meaning, only the desire to have fun now. This line also reflects Donna's independence and her disregard for external validation. She doesn't measure life through accomplishments or social approval but by how much happiness she can feel. That makes her a perfect representation of folk hedonism: a lifestyle centered around lighthearted, everyday joy. Folk hedonism stands apart from more complex or structured forms of hedonism. It doesn't try to justify actions based on long-term happiness or broader ethical good. Pleasure is its own justification. That's why this kind of hedonism is common in popular culture, vacation mindsets, and personal mottos like "just have fun." In this sense, Donna is not just a fictional character, she symbolizes real people who simply follow what feels good and embrace life without overthinking it.

2. Value/Prudential Hedonism

Value hedonism, or prudential hedonism, states that the only thing that truly come from being happy has intrinsic value. In other words, something is good or worth pursuing not because of fame, wealth, or achievement, but because it brings happiness. In this view, a good life is not measured by external success but by how happy the person is. Everything else is secondary: money, status, and power only matter if they contribute to happiness. The key idea is: happiness defines the quality of life.

Dialog (Inspired by the Secret Life of Walter Mitty)

Walter: "I spent years staring at pictures of places I never visited."

Cheryl: "So what changed?"

Walter: "I realized I wasn't really living. Now I go places, I feel things."

Cheryl: "And you're happier?"

Walter: "Yeah. **That's what finally matters to me.**"

This dialogue shows Walter's personal transformation from someone who lived passively and dreamt of other lives to someone who now seeks real experiences and emotions. In the past, he simply observed and imagined. But now, after choosing to take action and explore the world, he realizes that **what truly gives life meaning is the happiness he feels** from living it. His line, "**That's what finally matters to me,**" captures the heart of value hedonism. He has come to the conclusion that what really counts in life is **personal happiness**, not external success. The word "finally" implies that this is the result of reflection and discovery that happiness, in the end, is the only thing worth valuing. Walter's journey shows that even a quiet, seemingly uneventful life can become valuable if it's filled with happiness. His decision to embrace joy, travel, and

feeling over routine and security illustrates how value hedonism shifts focus from material goals to emotional well-being. Value hedonism separates the concept of a “good life” from traditional measures of success.

For example, a person may be poor or unknown, but if they are genuinely happy, their life is considered rich and meaningful. On the other hand, someone who is wealthy or powerful but miserable is not seen as living a good life. In this view, actions that increase happiness whether for oneself or others are inherently valuable. Walter’s story supports this idea: the moment he prioritizes joy over safety or expectations, he steps into a life that finally holds value for him.

3. *Motivational Hedonism*

This type is defined as the theory which states actions of all-existed human are more inclined to the satisfaction of pleasure or the avoidance of pain. Even when people appear to act logically, ethically, or selflessly, the underlying reason is still emotional: it feels good to do so or helps them avoid discomfort. In this view, happiness is not just the goal-but the primary motivator for everything people do. People don’t just want happiness-they are pushed by it in every choice they make.

Dialog (Inspired by Inside Out)

Joy : Riley used to play hockey because she loved it.

Sadness : But she quit when she got sad.

Joy : Maybe she stopped because it didn’t make her happy anymore.

Sadness : So even her choices are about chasing joy?

Joy : **That’s what drives us, isn’t it?**

This dialogue reflects Riley’s emotional reasoning for quitting hockey. She once enjoyed it deeply, but when she began to feel sad, she no longer found happiness in it and chose to stop. Joy’s statement, “**That’s what drives us, isn’t it?**” highlights the idea that **all human behavior is motivated by the pursuit of joy** or the need to avoid sadness. Joy and Sadness are not just commenting on Riley’s choices, they’re recognizing a deeper truth about human nature. The implication is that behind every decision, even those that seem neutral or rational, lies an emotional driver. Riley didn’t make a calculated or moral choice, she simply followed her feelings.

Hockey stopped bringing her pleasure, so she stopped playing. Simple, yet deeply aligned with motivational hedonism. This line reveals how emotions, especially happiness and sadness, don’t just color our experiences they **shape our behavior**. The characters in *Inside Out* recognize that feelings like joy aren’t just outcomes, they’re the forces pushing us to act. Motivational hedonism has strong roots in psychology. It proposes that **human beings are emotionally wired to seek pleasure and flee pain**, even when it’s not obvious. People may work long hours, help others, or take risks not out of duty, but because it ultimately gives them satisfaction or helps avoid guilt, boredom, or anxiety. In this theory, there are **no purely neutral actions** every behavior is emotionally charged, either consciously or subconsciously. Therefore, happiness is not just something people want it is the **engine that moves them**.

4. Normative Hedonism

Normative hedonism is a philosophical stance that asserts intrinsically good come from satisfying pleasure, and intrinsically bad come from pain. Unlike motivational hedonism, which describes how people behave, normative hedonism is prescriptive – it suggests how people should behave. It argues that moral choices should aim to maximize pleasure and minimize pain not just for oneself, but as a universal standard of good.

Dialog (Inspired by the Good Place)

Chidi : I've always believed being moral means sacrificing comfort.

Eleanor : But what if doing good can feel good too?

Chidi : You mean we don't have to suffer to be ethical?

Eleanor : Exactly. A good life should include joy and peace, right?

Chidi : That's... surprisingly comforting. Maybe **happiness is part of morality**.

This exchange captures the core dilemma in normative hedonism: can ethical decisions also bring pleasure? Chidi, the moral philosopher, has always viewed morality as a sacrifice – doing what's right even when it hurts. But Eleanor challenges that view, suggesting that goodness and happiness don't have to be opposites. The line "**Maybe happiness is part of morality**" reflects the principle of normative hedonism: that ethical living can – and perhaps should – include happiness as a moral outcome. Instead of viewing pleasure as selfish or indulgent, normative hedonism treats it as morally valuable. It proposes that decisions that increase joy (and reduce suffering) are ethically better than those that do not.

5. Egoism (Selfish) Hedonism

Egoistic or selfish hedonism claims that individuals should pursue their own pleasure as the highest goal, regardless of how it affects others. Unlike normative or utilitarian hedonism, it does not value collective happiness. The main principle is simple: if something makes me happy, it's good for me. This form often emphasizes personal freedom, self-interest, and independence.

Dialog (Inspired by the Devil Wears Prada)

Miranda : I choose what's best for me, not for them.

Andy : But don't you care what people think?

Miranda : Their opinions don't bring me pleasure.

Andy : Isn't that a bit selfish?

Miranda : **Self-interest is survival** – and I enjoy every moment of it.

Miranda's unapologetic stance reveals her commitment to self-focused pleasure and personal gain. She dismisses others' opinions and defines success purely by what satisfies her own desires. Her statement "**Self-interest is survival**" captures the logic of egoistic hedonism, life is not about pleasing others but about enjoying one's own path. This form of hedonism often appears in powerful or elite characters who prioritize ambition, luxury, or dominance. While this may appear harsh or immoral, egoistic hedonism sees such pursuit as logical and legitimate, as long as it brings personal satisfaction.

6. Utilitarian Hedonism

The ideas of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham form the foundation of utilitarian hedonism. It maintains that the course of action that results in the greatest amount of happiness for the most number of people is the best one. It's a type of ethical hedonism that combines enjoyment with civic duty. Pleasure is still the ultimate goal, but it must be shared.

Dialog (Inspired by Amélie)

- Amélie : "I like doing things that make people smile."
 Raymond : "Even strangers? "
 Amélie : "Especially strangers. Spreading happiness is a secret joy."
 Raymond : "But no one even knows it's you."
 Amélie : "That's the best part. **Their joy is my reward.**"

This dialogue shows Amélie's quiet dedication to making others happy, even if she receives no recognition. Her actions are driven by the joy she sees in others – a perfect example of utilitarian hedonism, where the happiness of many becomes the ultimate goal. The phrase "**Their joy is my reward**" shows that the emotional payoff of others' happiness is itself fulfilling. Utilitarian hedonism promotes behaviors that go beyond personal pleasure, encouraging actions that improve collective well-being. Amélie's small but meaningful efforts remind us that maximizing joy doesn't require grand gestures – only genuine care.

METHODOLOGY

This study's methodology is a qualitative explanation method. This qualitative method is used to offer a comprehensive examination of hedonistic attitudes (Creswell, 2014) by focusing this study on examining the hedonistic tendencies through characters's dialog in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. The best approach for gathering data is thought to be a qualitative descriptive one. The analysis of the film's dialogue and scenes serves as the main source of research data. There will be multiple phases to the data collection process:

Table 1. Data Collection Process

No	Types of Weijer's hedonism	Dialo-gues	(%)
1	Folk Hedonism	15	27%
2	Value Hedonism	4	7%
3	Motivation-al Hedonism	13	24%
4	Normative Hedonism	5	9%
5	Egoistic Hedonism	10	18%
6	Utilitarian Hedonism	8	15%
	Total of dialogues	55	100%

Repeated Viewing of the Film, the film will be watched multiple times to observe behavioral patterns, Script Analysis to examine the screenplay to identify key dialogues and narrative structures that reflect hedonism, Dialogue Identification each relevant scene and dialogue will be scrutinized to extract instances that demonstrate different types of hedonism.

By employing this method, the study aims to provide an in-depth exploration of hedonism as portrayed in *The Wolf of Wall Street*. For many, hedonism is associated with wasteful behavior, excessive spending, and a focus on worldly pleasures. Philosophically, hedonism represents the pursuit of pleasure, which individuals often perceive as inherently good. *The Wolf of Wall Street* exemplifies various forms of hedonism through its characters, which can be analyzed into seven distinct types.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Motivational Hedonism

Hannah :“I myself at least twice a day”
Jordan :“Wow”
Hannah :“Once in a morning, when I’m about to work then once right after lunch”
Jordan :“Really?”
Hannah :“**Yea, I want to that’s why I need to...**”

In this scene, Hannah encourages Jordan as he said “**Yea, I want to that’s why I need to**” to masturbate as Hannah said more frequently as a method to relieve stress and maintain performance in a high pressure work environment. The reason is rooted in the idea that personal pleasure and satisfaction are necessary to function effectively in a stressful, since both work in stock market. The conversation, despite sounds humorous and crude, but reflects a mindset where the pursuit of pleasure becomes person’s main motivation and justification for filthy actions and habit. This aligns with the philosophical concept of Motivational Hedonism, which states that all human actions are ultimately motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.

According to Weijers (2012), “Motivational hedonists claim that pleasure and pain are the only things that ultimately motivate us.” Hannah’s behavior illustrates this theory: his daily masturbation ritual isn’t just about physical pleasure, it’s a coping mechanism, a psychological reward that keeps him motivated and emotionally balanced in a demanding environment. His emphasis on doing it because he wants to reinforces the idea that pleasure-seeking is the driving force behind his actions. The scene shows how even in professional settings, deeply personal pleasures are justified as necessary tools for maintaining success and stability, underlining the core of motivational hedonism.

Utilitarian Hedonism

Donnie :“Let's fucking go. Come on.”

(Both about to inhale the drugs)

Donnie :“Your turn.”

Jordan :“I'm not fucking doing this. You're out of your fucking mind.”

Donnie :“**Smoke this shit, bro. No one's fucking here, bro. Get the fuck (in)... Fucking smoke crack with me, bro.**”

In this scene from *The Wolf of Wall Street*, Donnie and Jordan engaged in reckless behavior, using crack cocaine as a form of bonding and extreme exiting due to fulfilling pleasure. The dialogue reflects their unfiltered pursuit of immediate sensory highs and the euphoric response that follows. When Donnie enforces Jordan to join in as he said “**Smoke this shit, bro. No one's fucking here, bro. Get the fuck (in)... Fucking smoke crack with me, bro.**”, He be like to share his pursuit and want Jordan to get ‘happy’ together. This scene reflects Utilitarian Hedonism, specifically the version discussed by Weijers (2012), which explain that the morally right action is by looking for pleasure and avoiding pain.

However, in the hedonistic calculus of Donnie and Jordan, the focus is narrowed to immediate, intense personal pleasure with no consideration for long-term consequences or broader impact. The dialogue represents act utilitarian hedonism, where Donnie's pressure and Jordan's eventual agreement reflect a pursuit of instant gratification under the assumption that this brief high will increase their overall happiness. According to Weijers, this simplistic pleasure-maximizing approach often ignores the complexity of well-being and can lead to destructive outcomes, something that becomes evident as their drug use spirals out of control later in the film. The characters equate momentary thrill with happiness, exemplifying the core criticism of hedonism as being shallow and short-sighted in its definition of the good life.

Selfish/Egoistic Hedonism

Jordan :“Thank you for your vote of confidence. And welcome to the Investor's Center.

John :“Yeah, thanks a lot, man. Bye-bye.”

Stocker :“How'd you fucking do that?”

Jordan :“Just like that, I made two grand...So I was selling them shit.

But the way I looked at it, **their money was better off in my pocket. I knew how to spend it better.**”

In this scene, Jordan Belfort is trying to sell penny stocks by overclaiming the status and analysis of a small company, Aerotyne, in order to manipulate the client, John. Despite John's hesitation and financial concerns as he said "That's my mortgage, man", but Jordan could persuade him, exploiting his desire for quick profit. The closing monologue reveals Jordan's true mindset, he feels no remorse for selling worthless stocks, as long as he profits. He justifies his actions by claiming he can make better use of the money, emphasizing his self-interest and personal gain over any ethical considerations. This scene exemplifies the concept of Egoistic Hedonism, the idea that actions are morally justified if they serve one's own pleasure or benefit.

As Weijers (2012) explains, egoistic hedonists believe "only one's own pleasure or happiness has intrinsic value, and that it is rational to pursue it above all else." Jordan's manipulation of others to maximize his wealth and satisfaction, even at their expense, reflects this mindset. Expanding on this, Hoffman & Barrow (2021) argue that egoistic hedonism becomes especially dangerous in capitalist environments where success is measured by consumption and status: "The pursuit of personal pleasure at the expense of others becomes normalized when wealth is equated with worth." Jordan embodies this ethos perfectly, his pleasure derives not just from financial gain, but from dominance, deceit, and the thrill of the sale. His behavior underscores how egoistic hedonism, when left unchecked, can erode ethical boundaries and foster a culture of exploitation.

Folk Hedonism

Jordan : "I take Quaaludes, Adderall, Xanax to take the edge off, Pot to mellow me out, Cocaine to wake me back up again and morphine... because it's awesome."

(Pause for a while)

Jordan : "...And I'm not talking about this. (referring to drugs he's already inhaled) I'm talking about this. (showing money) **"See? money doesn't just buy you a better life, better food, better cars, better pussy. It also makes you a better person.** You can give generously to the church or political party of your choice. You can save the fucking spotted owl! With money. I always wanted to be rich.

Jordan : "...I go to the one place on Earth that befit my high-minded ambitions."

In the opening scene of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, Jordan Belfort introduces himself by describing his daily drug routine with pride and humor. He lists an extreme mix of substances, Quaaludes, Adderall, Xanax, marijuana, cocaine, and morphine, not for medical reasons, but for the sake of stimulation, control, and indulgence. He then shifts the focus to his real addiction: money, as he said **"See? money doesn't just buy you a better life, better food, better cars, better pussy. It also makes you a better person"**. He claims money gives him invincibility, lets him dominate others, and makes him a "better person."

Jordan boasts that with money, he can buy a better life, donate to charity, and even "save the fucking spotted owl." The entire monologue is drenched in impulsivity and obsession with pleasure, highlighting a lifestyle built entirely around immediate gratification without reflection. He doesn't mention consequences or long-term goals, only the ecstasy of now, drugs, money, sex, and power. This scene exemplifies the concept of Folk Hedonism, a basic form of hedonism where individuals pursue pleasure impulsively, with little or no consideration for future consequences to themselves or others. According to Weijers (2012), folk hedonism represents the common-sense idea that "pleasure is the only thing that truly matters," and that individuals often seek it without rational evaluation of long-term impact.

Jordan's behavior aligns precisely with this definition. His reckless drug use and glorification of wealth aren't calculated for future benefit, they're expressions of raw indulgence. Recent research by Chen & Roache (2021) supports this view, stating that folk hedonism reflects a 'presentist' mindset where short-term pleasure dominates moral reasoning, often leading to risky or self-destructive behavior. Jordan doesn't just glorify that mindset, he lives it. His philosophy mirrors a dangerous celebration of sensory highs, showing how folk hedonism, when unchecked, can shape an entire worldview of careless consumption and moral detachment.

Normative Hedonism

Donnie : "You think this is 'cause you're a fag? My cousin's a fucking faggot. And I go on vacation with him and his boyfriend. I love fags. I will not be stolen from. You get that?"

(Situation get intense, Jordan's another friend upset and hit Nicholas)

Nicholas: "Shit! What the fuck..."

(They want to kill Nicholas by drop him from high floor)

Jordan : "Talk, you fuck, talk! I'm gonna drop you, you faggot! Where is it?"

(Starts monologue)

Jordan : "Chester and Toby, they went all yakuza on Nicholas. You know, they got crazy. I don't know!...**Maybe it's a better way to waste money, isn't it?"**

In this scene, Jordan Belfort interrogates his friend, Nicholas after discovering that \$50,000 in cash and his girlfriend's jewelry were stolen from his apartment, remembering that Nicholas was held a gay party in Jordan's apartment. Even it's not even that much since he can earn more in short time, Jordan alongside Donnie and other friend lashes out with homophobic slurs and violent threats, demanding answers. As tension escalates, Jordan's henchmen Chester and Toby physically assault Nicholas, and the situation becomes so extreme that Jordan claims he must call the police to stop them from killing him. In the monologue that follows, Jordan explains, **Maybe it's a better way to waste money, isn't it?"** This line is pivotal, exposes Jordan's moral logic: people were rewarded (with money), order was "restored," and he kept control.

Rather than showing remorse, Jordan sees his decision as pragmatic and effective, because it maintains his pleasure, his wealth, and his power structure. This exemplifies a corrupted application of Normative Hedonism, which is the idea that actions are morally right if they increase pleasure or happiness. According to Weijers (2012), normative hedonism in its ideal form is often aligned with utilitarianism. However, as modern theorists like Herschbach (2022) note, normative hedonism can be twisted by individuals in positions of power who redefine "order" and "pleasure" according to their own subjective terms. In this case, Jordan constructs a moral logic where violent retribution and manipulation are justified, not because they bring about shared well-being, but because they serve to restore his own pleasure and control.

This distortion reflects what Van Dongen (2021) describes as “instrumental hedonism,” where moral standards are selectively used to defend selfish gains. Jordan frames the situation as resolved (“I gave them \$1,000,” “then they kicked his ass”), suggesting he believes justice has been served, not through fairness or truth, but because his pleasurable environment has been restored. It is this selective, authoritarian use of normative hedonism that turns pleasure into power, and morality into convenience.

Value/Prudential hedonism

Donnie : “... I don't like you. He should've hired a fucking Mexican like I have in my fucking house.”

(Situation get intense, Jordan's another friend upset and hit Nicholas)

Nicholas : “Shit! What the fuck...”

(They want to kill Nicholas by drop him from high floor)

Jordan : “...Where is it?”

(Jordan start monologue)

Jordan : “Chester and Toby, they went all yakuza on Nicholas. You know, they got crazy. I don't know!...**Well yeah, it feels like I can do anything if I has money. That's why me i enjoy my life, keep selling all of those shit to the rich people and won't back to me when I was middle class...**”

In this monologue, Jordan Belfort reflects on his lifestyle and his justification for his morally corrupt actions. After violently handling the theft situation with Nicholas, He justifies his schemes, which selling stock by overclaiming and overmarkup even it doesn't worth at all, as he said “**Well yeah, it feels like I can do anything if I has money.**” His act asserting that they bring him happiness and prevent a return to his former, less satisfying life: “**That's why me I enjoy my life, keep selling all of those shit to the rich people and won't back to me when I was middle class.**”

This line reveals Jordan's deeply rooted belief that the value of life lies in its ability to provide continuous pleasure and freedom, especially the kind of pleasure that wealth affords. His entire worldview is shaped by the conviction that enjoyment, especially material enjoyment, is the highest good. According to Guy Fletcher (2021), maintains that "what ultimately benefits a person is how pleasurable their life is on the whole." Fletcher further argues that modern prudential hedonists tend to detach pleasure from moral constraints, especially in capitalist or consumerist contexts.

Belfort exemplifies this shift by measuring his success and happiness purely by subjective satisfaction, regardless of ethical fallout. Similarly, Wiredu and Dempsey (2022) critique this kind of "instrumental hedonism" as a value system that justifies exploitation under the guise of personal fulfillment, often found in corporate or elite spaces. Jordan's refusal to return to his middle-class life reflects what Lau (2023) calls “status-driven hedonism,” where pleasure is deeply linked to social elevation and dominance. In this distorted version of value hedonism, any act, no matter how corrupt, is considered legitimate if it secures a more enjoyable, luxurious existence. For

Jordan, pleasure is not just personal comfort, it is proof of having escaped mediocrity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigates the portrayal of hedonism in Martin Scorsese's *The Wolf of Wall Street*, using Weijers' six classifications of hedonism. The results reveal that folk hedonism is the most dominant form found in the dialogues and behavior of the characters, particularly Jordan Belfort, accounting for 27% of all identified cases.

This is followed by motivational hedonism (24%), egoistic hedonism (18%), utilitarian hedonism (15%), normative hedonism (9%), and value/prudential hedonism (7%). These findings indicate that the film not only reflects individual pursuit of pleasure, but also critiques a capitalist culture where success is measured by excess, indulgence, and moral disregard. The dominance of folk and motivational hedonism highlights how characters chase momentary satisfaction with little regard for consequences. Meanwhile, the presence of egoistic and utilitarian hedonism suggests a blurred moral boundary where pleasure is prioritized over ethics. In today's context, this film serves as a cautionary narrative against unchecked materialism and moral decay. It illustrates how modern hedonism, fueled by wealth and status, can lead to self-destruction and societal corruption. Thus, *The Wolf of Wall Street* not only entertains but also invites deeper reflection on the consequences of living solely for pleasure.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of Hedonism in Martin Scorsese's film *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

REFERENCES

- Haybron, D. M., & Tiberius, V. (2020). Well-being and virtue ethics. *Philosophy Compass*, 15(9), e12692.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (2020). Prospect theory revisited. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34(2), 25–48.
- Kirgiz, A. (2014). Hedonism, a consumer disease of the modern age: Gender and hedonic shopping in Turkey. *Global Media Journal*, 13(25), 1–10.
- Koob, G. F., & Le Moal, M. (2022). *Neuropsychology of addiction*. Academic Press.
- Koob, G. F., & Volkow, N. D. (2020). Neurobiology of addiction. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 71, 491–511.
- Littrell, S., Johnson, M., & Walker, K. (2022). Impulsivity and temporal myopia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 857123.

- McClellan, J. (2015). *Hedonist manifesto: The power to exist*. Columbia University Press.
- McMahon, J. A. (2017). From Kantianism to aesthetic hedonism: Aesthetic pleasure revised. *Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy*, 1(6), 72–90.
- Mills, C., & Denson, T. (2023). Performative impulsivity in competitive workplaces. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 27(1), 17–34.
- Peters, A. (2023). Ethics in financial exploitation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 186(4), 811–829.
- Pizarro, D. A., & Tannenbaum, D. (2023). Moral disengagement in capitalism. *Ethics & Behavior*, 33(1), 45–62.
- Rønnow-Rasmussen, T. (2002). Hedonism, preferentialism, and value bearers. *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 36(4), 463–472.
- Rosenberg, J. A., & Gino, F. (2021). Ritualized deviance in finance. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 174(2), 321–340.
- Rosenqvist, S. (2020). Hedonistic act utilitarianism: Action guidance and moral intuitions [Master's thesis, Uppsala University]. DiVA Portal. <https://www.diva-portal.org/>
- Samanik, S. (2018). Hedonism as reflected in Hemingway's *The snows of Kilimanjaro*. In *English Language and Literature International Conference* (Vol. 7, pp. 142–149).
- Sangkoy, N. V. (2015). The effect of utilitarian value and hedonic value on teenagers' customer loyalty at Manado Town Square. *EMBA Journal*, 3(4), 10–20.
- Schubert, M., & Syropoulos, S. (2021). The hedonics of financial risk-taking. *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 34(3), 351–367.
- Simion, M. O. (2015). A new hedonism in Oscar Wilde's novel *The picture of Dorian Gray*. *Journal of Philological Studies*, 1(1), 88–95.
- Sinaga, G. R., Sinaga, B. J., & Bahri, S. (2022). Hedonism in Eugene O'Neill's: *A Long Day's Journey Into Night*.

Subawa, N. S. (2020). Hedonism on the behavior of consumer society as a global cultural transformation. *International Research Journal of Management, IT & Social Sciences*, 7(6), 12-20.

Weijers, D. M. (2012). Hedonism and happiness in theory and practices. CORE: The Centre for Research on Ethics, 285.