

**DEFINING FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE FILM *ALADDIN* (2019)**

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**Abstract**

As one of the important things in human life, friendship is an essential discussion because it is experienced by almost all people. Moreover, the portrait of friendship has been frequently shown in films. Therefore, this study aims to identify how friendship is depicted in the film *Aladdin* (2019) and to analyze the significance of friendship for people. It is expected that this study can contribute in the form of theory development in social and cultural studies and help people understand the value of friendship. The picture of friendship that appears in the film in the form of dialogs was used as the main data to be analyzed in this study. By applying representation theory as a semiotic approach, film dialogs were treated as symbols that could be interpreted. The result of analysis reveals that the representation of friendship in the *Aladdin* can be seen through the three main concepts – the sense of care, mutuality and solidarity which are considered significant in friendship. Furthermore, the result also reveals that everyone can interpret friendship based on their experience. This also affects the purpose of friendship.

Keywords: friendship, representation of friendship, care, mutuality, solidarity

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Film is certainly not something new in society. This entertainment media has become one of important human needs. Therefore, it is true to say that the role of films in society is essential. In fact films are created in accordance with the needs of society (Adi, 2011, p. 70). For this reason, the purpose of film is to entertain people. Even though it is one of the sources of entertainment, the presence of film has a significant role in society, particularly in education field.

There are many things that people can learn about film because it is a well-known media (Buckland, 2003, p. 1) and people are familiar with films. Besides its function as a source of entertainment, in fact, films can make people know and learn about things related to society, culture, human behavior, interactions, language, and so on (Cortés, 2000, p. 19). This means, films can display phenomena, trends, people's ways of thinking and issues in aspects of human life to attract the attention of the audience or simply convey messages and show certain situations in society.

Since today's society sees film as an influential medium to convey values, perspectives and beliefs (Cloete, 2017, p. 1), people who watch films will know that there are things in the films which can be explored or identified. One of the significant issues that can be examined from the film is friendship. The value of friendship is essential because humans are not only individual beings, but also social beings. Therefore, everyone must interact and make friends with other people. Even though, each person has a different way to describe what friend is, the friendship issue is still something that many people have been researching.

It is still difficult to define friend and those who are categorized as friends, might not be the real friends (Leib, 2007, p. 638). This has made friendship become something complicated (Hassan et al., 2011, p. 1). In other words, the concept of friendship that seems easy but difficult to understand needs to be discussed so that people can have a clearer view of friendship. There are indeed many ways can be done to understand the value of friendship, but if it is shown in a popular film, then this would become interesting to discuss. Therefore, this study discusses the depiction of friendship shown in the film so that the concept of friendship can be understood better.

The essence of this study is to identify how friendship is depicted in the film *Aladdin* and to analyze importance of friendship to people. The benefits of this research can be seen from sides. Theoretically, this study can contribute to the development of theories in field of humanities, especially those related to culture, literature and media studies.

In practice, this study is able to provide an understanding to people about the value of friendship shown in the film. Besides, this research can also be a reference for other researchers who are interested in studying films.

This study uses an American film entitled *Aladdin* to obtain the main data that will be analyzed to find answers to research questions. This American film was directed Guy Ritchie and produced by Walt Disney Picture in 2019. Three popular actors Will Smith, Mena Massoud, Naomi Scott played the main characters in the film. The duration of the film is 128 minutes. This film is based on the legendary story of “One Thousand and One Nights”. In 1992, Disney Company also produced an animation movie with the same title, *Aladdin*. The animated film *Aladdin* in 1992 received a good response from the public and has become one of the favorite animated films for children in many countries. Moreover, the character of genie in the movie is played by the famous American actor, Will Smith. Therefore, the presence of the new version of *Aladdin* in 2019 was a moment that the fans of *Aladdin* movie looked forward to. From the consideration above, it will be an interesting discussion if the issue of friendship is examined from this film.

There are terms used in this study need to be clarified to avoid misunderstanding. The term friendship used in this study refers to friendship in general, for example, friendship that exists at school, work place, neighbors, and others. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* showed that friendship means “a relationship between friends” and the second definition of friendship is “the feeling or relationship that friends have; the state of being friends” (Wehmeier, 2000, p. 516). From the definition above, it is common to say that friendship is created when two or more people who know each other, share thoughts and help each other. Regarding this, friendship is related to trusting (Kaye, 2005, p. 475).

Therefore, not everyone can be included as a friend, especially those who are strangers (Healy, 2011, p. 232). From the explanations above, the term ‘friendship’ used in this study is the term generally understood by everyone. However, behind the term ‘friendship’ which is commonly understood by people, there are various perceptions and views regarding the term of friendship that need to be explored to obtain a deeper and clearer concept of friendship.

Another term to clarify is ‘film’. The term ‘film’ in this study refer to the audio-visual entertainment media that people usually watch in cinema. Everyone must be familiar with the term ‘film’ used in this study. The terms ‘film’ and ‘movie’ will be used interchangeably in this study because they have the same meaning. The word ‘*Aladdin*’ in this study is a film title.

## CHAPTER II

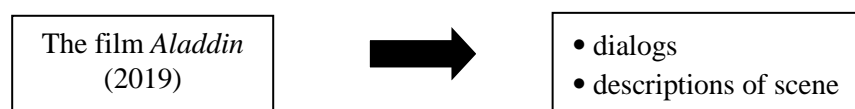
### RESEACRH METHOD

The first characteristic of this research is that it is known as a library research which involves collecting data from literature sources that are relevant to the problems discussed in this research. This kind of research requires data in the form of information for analysis. (Giarrusso et al., 1994, p. 84). Hasan explained that a researcher usually rely on literature sources such as books, journals, research reports, etc. in conducting library research (2002, p. 11). Library research is not the same as field research which requires the researcher to go to certain places to collect the primary data. Library research is often used by researchers in the field of literary and cultural studies, linguistics, or other fields in humanities because the objects of research can be in the forms of literary works, texts, languages, etc.

The second characteristic of this study is qualitative. Qualitative research method is usually used in literary studies and it has become important in social sciences (Adi, 2011, p. 239). The data collected for this study is qualitative data which consists of a set of statements rather than numbers (Hasan, 2002, p. 83). This type of research focuses on explaining trends, phenomena, and issues in society (Hancock et al., 2007, p. 7). Since this research examines the concept of friendship in a film, the data required is qualitative data.

As previously explained, this library research uses film as the object of study. The primary data is acquired through the American film *Aladdin* in 2019. This movie is directed by Guy Ritchie and produced by Walt Disney Picture. This film could attract a lot of people to watch because an animated version was made in 1992 and managed to give an unforgettable impression to audience around the world.

Thus, this film is the object under study to get the main data which will be interpreted in details as shown in the following diagram:



The data taken from the film entitled *Aladdin* is in the form of dialogs and the description of the scenes related to the elements and concepts of friendship.

After collecting the primary data (in the forms of dialogs and description of scenes), additional data (secondary data) is needed for analysis. The secondary data required for analysis comes from printed as well as electronic library sources such as books, journals, research reports, dictionary, and others obtained from libraries or the Internet.

Data in the form of dialog and description of the scene need to be analyzed to find out their meaning. Hall's representation theory is apt to be used to interpret dialogs and scenes. Hall (1997, p. 20) explained that the relationship between the concept and symbol is known as representation, thus it is used to construct a meaning. With a representation system, something can be made meaningful (Storey, 2003, p. x). The following diagram shows how the meaning is constructed through representation theory:

<p style="text-align: center;">dialog and film scenes → sign/symbol → meaning</p>
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Analyzing symbols means forming the meaning of the symbols. Even in semiotics, symbols or signs become significant to be interpreted because they can be used to substitute for something else (Berger, 2010, p. 11). From the statements above, the theory of representation is suitable to be applied in this study. Dialogs and images from the scenes in films are classified based on the research questions, namely the representation friendship in the film and the importance of friendship for people.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the data analysis carried out, there are two essential things that are considered as answers to the problems discussed in this study. The results of the data processing in the study show the representation of friendship in the film *Aladdin* (2019) and the importance of friendship for people.

#### 3.1. The Representation of Friendship

The element of friendship in *Aladdin* (2019) emphasizes the good relationship between the character Aladdin and the genie. The adventure of Aladdin and Genie in the film highlighted many essential aspects of friendship. The results of analysis show that through this film, friendship can be depicted clearly through several concepts as shown in the following table:

Representation of Friendship		
Care	mutuality	solidarity

In general, the film depicted three concepts – care, mutuality and solidarity which can represent friendship. These three concepts are also known as the basic elements contained in friendship. Each concept will be explained specifically as follows:

##### 3.1.1 The Concept of Care

Everyone must have a sense of care for others. Caring can grow from feeling to love and understand (Sapountzi-krepia et al., 2013, p. 398). In everyday life, people often show a sense of care to those who are close to them. This can be seen as an indication that they have a sense of care. It is often shown to people who have family relationships and those who are important in one's life, for instance, friends. A lot of people have tried to define what 'friend' is. However, getting the fixed definition of 'friend' does not seem to be easy.

For instance, American culture which is multicultural can interpret the word 'friendship' from various perspectives (Rudy, 2015, p. 74) This is because everyone must have different criteria and experience different circumstances. That is what influences the way they define 'friend'. In some conditions, the so-called 'friend' does not necessarily include all the people one knows (Healy, 2011, p. 232) In other words, only certain people can meet the criteria to be called friends.

A sense of friendship will not grow well if there is no sense of care between two friends. Caring can take many forms, for example, giving advice or support. This situation can also be found in the film *Aladdin* (2019):

Aladdin	: You don't get it, Genie. People like me don't get anything except by pretending.
Genie	: I think maybe you don't get it. The more you gain by pretending, the less you are actually gonna have. In 10,000 years, I have never once, ever called a master a friend. I broke the rules for you, I saved your life. And for what ? you are breaking my heart here, kid. You're breaking my heart.
Aladdin	: Genie, no! hey, come on!

(01:30:38 - 01:31:54)

The dialog above can symbolize a sense of care in friendship. Sense of care can somehow related to affection, which means the feeling of cherishing a friend (Adams & Ueno, 2007, p. 199). Thus, showing the sense of care to someone can be perceived as an indication that the person is considered a friend. Doing things that show are for a friend is important to the value of a friendship (Cureton, 2012, p. 704).

From the explanations above, it is true to say that a sense of care is an essential value that has a significant influence on morality (Noddings, 2005, p. 6). Aladdin and Genie as the main characters in the film show a sense of care for each other. The dialog reflects that the genie gives advice to Aladdin because he cares about Aladdin who has been considered his best friend. In general, a person shows has a sense of care for his friend because he believes that his friend can be trusted. One of the values that is considered essential in friendship is trust (Healy, 2011, p. 233; Kaye, 2005, p. 475).

Another example, in the film *Aladdin* (2019), the friendship between Aladdin and Genie makes their sense of care an essential value, for instance, supporting each other as seen in the following dialogs:

Genie	: Okay, there she is. This is your chance.
Aladdin	: You know what? There are a lot of people. I don't think I can do this.
Genie	: You'll be fine.
Aladdin	: Okay.
Genie	: This one's gonna be easy.

(01:03:55 - 01:04: 05)



Aladdin	: How am I supposed to compete with that ? Look at him. He's so princely.
Genie	: You have got to be more confident about what you have to offer.
(01:05:02 - 01:05:31)	
Aladdin	: I was pretty good. But nothing seems to impress her
Genie	: Yeah, it's crazy. Not gems or jams or jewels. If I can't impress her, I wonder who can.
Aladdin	: What's that supposed to mean?
Genie	: I'm just saying, try being yourself.
(01:09:22 – 01:09:44)	

The three dialogs above shows that the Genie character encourages Aladdin so that he can carry out what has been planned. Giving advice to a friend is the most common thing to do in everyday life to show the sense of care for friends. This condition is often encountered in the friendship between Aladdin and Genie. Therefore, the care shown to a friend will make him or her feel good. In other words, it is natural for someone to feel happy because there is someone who cares about him or her.

This is one of the unique characteristics of friendship (Demir et al., 2013, p. 1201). From conversation between Aladdin and Genie taken from the film, it is clear that caring portrayed in the movie is often in the form of giving advice and motivation to a friend. This can also be interpreted as a sign that can represent friendship. This point can be used as an indication that caring for someone known as a friend shows the value of friendship. In other words, people will not care about strangers or those who are not friends. For this reason in everyday life people may often think of caring as a measure of friendship.

### 3.1.2. The Concept of Mutuality

Besides the sense of care, the representation of friendship in *Aladdin* (2019) can be seen through the description of the mutual relationship between Aladdin and Genie. Mutual relationship seems to be an inseparable element of friendship. Not a few people who consider mutuality as a significant aspect that must exist in friendship. Mutuality can be perceived as a symbol that show a representation of friendship because it frequently appears in the film and it also influences friendship in reality.

First of all, the word 'mutual' needs to be understood well in order to link it into friendship. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines 'mutual' as "used to describe feelings

that two or more people have for each other equally or actions that affect two or more people equally.” (Wehmeier, 2000, p. 839). From the above definition, it is obvious that ‘equally’ is an essential key word in perceiving mutual relationship. It can simply be understood as a condition in which both parties must give and receive each other. This point emphasizes that friendship requires fair and equal treatment. In other words, someone must be able to show kindness and vice versa.

There are quite a number of scenes that pictured the mutual relationship between Aladdin and Genie as friends in the film, the following dialog, for instance:

Genie	: Kid, wake up, please. Probably could've done that the other direction. But, how you're doing?
Aladdin	: Thanks, genie.
Genie	: Hey, no problem, you know. I was in the neighborhood.
Aladdin	: I thought you said no favors. I thought you said friends.
Genie	: Right. Um.. it actually cost you a wish.
Aladdin	: Whatever it cost, you saved my life.
Genie	: Yeah, that's true.

(01:25:40 - 01:26:17)

Thus, it is said that the pattern of friendship is basically mutual (Adams & Ueno, 2007, p. 199). This means, there must be a reciprocal kindness is basic element in mutuality. It does not make sense if a person continues to provide assistance to his or her friend, while his or her friend never does the same to him or her. This kind of condition will only damage friendship. This is the reason people need to understand the essence of mutual relationships in society, especially in friendship. By this way friendship will grow stronger and better. Mutuality also plays an important role in creating effective communication (Adams & Ueno, 2007, p. 204). This context can prove that mutuality is a crucial element in friendship.

Other examples of dialog in the film which can symbolize mutuality to represent friendship is as follows:

Aladdin	: You need to get me over there.
Genie	: Is that an official wish?
Aladdin	: No, it's a favor for a friend
Genie	: Oh, yeah, see, genies don't really have friends.
Aladdin	: I thought you said you never had a friend like me.

(01:09:23 - 01:20:23)

Genie : So, what are you gonna wish?  
 Aladdin : Oh, I haven't thought about that.  
 Genie : Mm..., you really not that guy.  
 Aladdin : Okay. So what would you wish for?  
 Genie : Mm..., no one's ever ask that before...  
 Aladdin : At least now, I can use my third wish to set you free.

(01:49:05 - 01:50:50)

Mutual friendship is actually something that many people consider in determining whether that person deserves to be called a good friend. The dialog above reveals that Aladdin, who has considered Genie his friend, feels sure that Genie will help him. The second part of the dialog shows that Aladdin is willing to help Genie to be free because Genie has done a lot to him. This point can be perceived as an example that basically people think that those who are already considered friends will help and vice versa. This situation clearly indicates mutuality in friendship.

Thus, a mutual relationship pattern is suitable to be applied in friendship. This kind of pattern is acceptable because it can minimize various risks in a relationship (Drigotas et al., 1999, p. 406). Mutuality in friendship can also be shown in the form of an action of sacrifice for a friend. The emergence of an act of sacrifice that is done by someone for a friend is related to the thought that one day, that friend will also do the same thing for him or her. In the end, the act of sacrifice for a friend can actually strengthen the friendship (Van Lange et al., 1997, p. 1393). For example, there is a dialog by the characters Genie who showed sacrificial action for Aladdin whom he has considered his best friends:

Genie: ... In 10,000 years, I have never once, ever called a master a friend. I broke the rules for you, I saved your life.

(01:30:38 – 01:31:54)

Genie's dialog above reflects that there is a special treatment for a friend in the form of sacrifice to save his friend's life. Genie would have sacrificed if Aladdin did not save him.

In return for Genie's kindness, Aladdin decides to use the last wish to set Genie free as shown in the following dialog:

Genie : Please, like it never existed. All right, last wish, let's get it.

Aladdin	: okay, last wish, Genie?
Genie	: I'm ready, hold on. Here we go.
Aladdin	: I wish...
Genie	: Third and final wish
Aladdin	: I wish to set you free.
Genie	: What? Whoa... What? oh! Wait, wait, am I.? Wait, wait, wait... Umm... tell me to do something.
Aladdin	: Get me some jams.
genie	: Get it yourself? Get your own jams! Thank you, thank you.
Aladdin	: No. thank you, Genie. I owe you everything.
(01:55:07- 01:55:53)	

This context shows that the sacrifice someone makes for his or her friends can be understood as form of mutual relation in friendship. Genie looked surprised because of Aladdin's wish to set him free. This illustration can prove that Someone who is willing to sacrifice for his friend indicates that friendship based on mutuality can make the friendship strong and last long.

For this reason, mutual relationship is fundamental because it may influence the purpose and meaning of a person's life (Jordan, 1985, p. 1). By having good understanding of the importance of mutuality in friendship, people can easily figure out who deserves to be treated as friends. That way, they will not feel disappointed in friendship.

### 3.2.3. The Concept of Solidarity

The term 'solidarity' is certainly familiar to most people, especially those who are in associations or organizations. *Aladdin* (2019) also shows a picture of solidarity that can be seen from the friendship between Aladdin and Genie. The film illustrates that two friends, Aladdin and Genie show that they prioritize togetherness. This can signify the importance of solidarity in friendship. The concept of solidarity in friendship is connected to the idea that there is something that can be shared (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010, p. 309). Solidarity emerges because people are aware of the fact that the value of togetherness in social life can grow the will to be united (Derpmann, 2009, p. 305). People in a society, for instance, may show solidarity because they share the same things such as way of life, cultural principles, lifestyle and others. The same thing can also be found in friendship.

There are several scenes from the film picturing solidarity between Aladdin and Genie in the form of giving help as shown in the dialog below:

Genie	: So, what do you think?
Aladdin	: I like it.
Genie	: Of course you like it, boy! I made it!
Aladdin	: I think that's me.
Genie	: Strictly speaking it is me. I mean I did most of the work. You just standing there. But I hear you.
Aladdin	: But, won't people recognize me?
Genie	: Nobody will recognize you? That's how Genie magic works.

(01:53:30 - 01:53:45)

Aladdin	: What do I have to offer? Knowledge of how to steal food ? How to jump between buildings? Now, Prince Ali, he has jewels.
Genie	: no, stop, stop, stop! I made you look like a prince on the outside.

(01:05:02 – 01:05:31)

The closeness that exists between Aladdin and Genie makes them feel glad to help each other because both of them can understand each other. In general, the basic consideration of intimacy, especially in friendship is respect for a friend. Respecting others is an important moral value in society that everyone must have (Cureton, 2012, p. 694). Understanding and respect between two friends proves that friendship has a goal to create solidarity which can strengthen the bond of friendship.

In fact, there is an element of “fighting together” in the concept of solidarity (Schwarzenbarch, 2015, p. 4), . This can be interpreted that two or more friends who are bound in a friendship are able to struggle together because they have the same purpose for the sake of friendship. In the film, Aladdin decided to use his wish to set Genie free because there is a close bond of friendship that makes Aladdin do it for friendship as shown in the following dialog:

Aladdin	: Why don't you just set yourself free?
Genie	: Carpet, did you hear what this boy said? Why don't I set my self free? Only way a genie gets to be free if the owner of the lamp uses one of his wishes to set him free...
Aladdin	: I'll do it. I've got three, right?

(01:49:05 - 01:50:50)

He wants Genie to be free like him so that they both so that the two of them can work together to create a better friendship. From this point, it can be understood that every friendship has a purpose to develop and strive together which can be manifested in various actions in everyday life.

The element of solidarity in friendship can serve to unite and share feelings as well as values or morality in life (Coote & Angel, n.d., p. 6; Cureton, 2012, p. 691). From this point, it can be interpreted that two friends who respect and appreciate friendship will show a responsible attitude towards the friendship. It is true that most films which tell about friendship always display the element of solidarity. It seems to be an inseparable aspect of friendship.

Thus, the value of friendship in the film *Aladdin* (2019) is depicted through the dialogs and scenes that show a sense of care, mutuality, and solidarity. In essence, as individual and social beings, people build friendship with those who can care for them, respect mutual relationships and have solidarity. Many people who go through friendship have certainly experienced or felt the sense of care, mutuality, and solidarity. These three elements are also called by Aristotle as three of the five characteristics of friendship (Healy, 2011, p. 232). From this argument, these three elements are perceived as signs that can represent friendship.

### **3.2. The Significance of Friendship in Human's life**

Although the word "friendship" is quite difficult to define as discussed in the previous section, in reality, people experience all kinds of ups and downs when it comes to friendship. Many people may not understand well about friendship, even though it is something that everyone has experienced. The discussion in this section is important to find out about the important of friendship to people. In other words, many people often wonder whether friendship is really essential.

Everyone has friends. It cannot be denied that friendship is needed for everyone although it is perceived differently by everyone. As a simple example, adolescents with disabilities conceptualize friendship based on conditions where they can be involved in activities together with their friends (Matheson et al., 2007, p. 326). People with disabilities also have their own definition of friendship. On the other hand, many ordinary teenagers agree that good friends are those who can share ideas, stories or emotions (Berndt, 2002, p. 7). This can prove that each

person has different criteria for defining friendship. This explanation can tell how important friendship is to someone.

The concept of making friends in the present time has changed. This is certainly experienced by almost everyone, especially young people who are active in social media. In other words, the era of digital has influenced the way and the purpose of friendship. Nowadays, many people make friends not only based on personal relationships, but the purpose of making friends may be broader such as building connections or obtaining information (Rice, 2013, p. 189). It seems that the context of friendship that involves feelings of acceptance, sincerity and moral values is becoming increasingly complex in the present. Consequently, this complicates the definition of friendship.

Therefore, people may be curious to find out whether people who simply share information on social media can also be considered friends. This needs to be explored by looking at the characteristics of friendship. Healy (2011, p. 232) explained that not everyone could simply be considered a friend. This means friendship has a personal meaning for each person because people have different personal experience (Čermák, 2018, p. 75). It can be interpreted that there are many perceptions that people may use to define friendship. This matter will affect the essence of friendship for someone.

As a matter of fact, people's idea in choosing friends tends to be influenced by the criteria of friendship that has been culturally and socially set (Hassan et al., 2011, p. 10). However, having friends or being able to experience friendship is something that most people consider essential. This can be understood in simple terms, Basically, people need friends in everyday life because this cannot be separated from their needs as social beings who naturally want social interaction.

By interacting with people who are considered friends, can also contribute to the formation of one's identity (Adams & Ueno, 2007, p. 200). This understanding can help people see a clearer picture of the essence of being friends. Even though people have their own version of friendship, making friends is still an important thing in social life because the significance of being friends is to fulfill the needs of each individual. The arguments above underline friendship as something that almost all people desire. However, the goal that people set for friendship may be different based on many factors. Additionally, the development of era (such as digital era) can affect the way people think in setting goals for friendship.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**CONCLUSION**



Friendship is an issue that has an essential role in daily life. The depiction of friendship shown in the film can be explored further to obtain more specific meanings. That way, this study becomes interesting and important to conduct so that the discussion of friendship can be understood better. Although this research may seem simple, there are important things that everyone can learn, especially the issue of friendship. There are several essential points that serve as conclusions from the analysis discussed in the previous sections.

Firstly, the result of analysis suggests that the film *Aladdin* (2019) depicted friendship by emphasizing the relationship between Aladdin and Genie. The film showed a representation of friendship which is portrayed through the concepts of care, mutuality, and solidarity in the dialogs and film scenes. Furthermore, these three concepts are essential elements in building friendship. In other words, someone who is considered a friend should be able to show a sense of care to his or her friend; must apply a reciprocal relationship (mutual relationship); and show solidarity.

Secondly, Friendship is necessary and needed by almost everyone in social life although everyone has his or her own criteria in interpreting friendship. As a social being, social interaction becomes significant and it will create friendship. Even though friendship is important, people have different purposed in making friends because it can be influenced by various factors such as experience, environmental conditions, and others. Different eras also had an impact on the goals of friendship.

Finally, with a better understanding of the meaning of friendship and the elements contained in it as represented in the film *Aladdin* (2019), people can learn to value friendship and make it useful in everyday life. By this way, one can prevent problems coming from friendship.

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