

Technological support for family bonds and communication: A posthumanist look at the film M3GAN

Aile bağlarına ve iletişime teknolojik destek: M3GAN filmine posthümanist bir bakış

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Abstract

This study examines the film M3GAN—which centres on events surrounding a toy developed with robotic systems and artificial intelligence—from a posthumanist perspective focused on family and communication. Using MAXQDA, thirty-two scenes were analysed through descriptive analysis, and findings were organised under the main themes of family, communication, and posthumanism. Under the family theme, M3GAN is shown to initially assume roles such as a toy, babysitter, and friend, but later becomes part of the family, one of its members, and ultimately takes on a parental role for Cady. In the communication theme, the study evaluates how M3GAN's communicative abilities evolve alongside its algorithmic learning process. Within posthumanism, M3GAN is discussed through negotiations of the human/non-human boundary: although it first displays robotic traits, it progressively acts independently of its users (Cady and Gemma), makes its own decisions, and forms judgements about the world, prompting multiple actions. Set in a dystopian atmosphere, M3GAN presents a posthumanist view of future dilemmas between humans and other beings. The study highlights the need for security measures addressing AI's alignment problem and recommends that developers advance these technologies according to ethical principles that are human-compatible, peaceful, and holistic.

Keywords: New Media and Communication, M3GAN, family, posthumanism, ethics

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Öz

Bu araştırma, robotik sistemler ve yapay zekâ teknolojileriyle geliştirilen M3GAN adlı bir oyuncuğun etrafında gelişen olaylara odaklanan M3GAN filmi; aile ve iletişim ekseninde, posthümanist bir bakışla incelemektedir. MAXQDA programında betimsel analiz yöntemi kullanılarak filmin otuz iki sahnesi çözümlenmiş, veriler aile, iletişim ve posthümanizm ana temaları altında değerlendirilmiştir. Aile teması kapsamında M3GAN'ın başlangıçta oyuncak, bakıcı ve arkadaş gibi roller üstlendiği; ilerleyen süreçte ailenin bir parçası ve bir üyesi hâline geldiği, filmin sonlarına doğru ise Cady'nin ebeveyni rolünü benimsediği belirtilmiştir. İletişim teması altında, M3GAN'ın algoritmik öğrenme süreciyle paralel biçimde gelişen iletişim becerileri incelenmiştir. Posthümanizm temasında ise M3GAN, insan/insan-olmayan sınırının müzakere edilmesi çerçevesinde ele alınmıştır: Başlangıçta robotik özellikler sergilese de zamanla kullanıcılarından (Cady ve Gemma) bağımsız hareket etmeye, kendi kararlarını almaya ve dünyaya ilişkin yargılar oluşturmaya başlayarak çeşitli eylemlerde bulunmaktadır. Distopik bir atmosferde sunulan film, gelecekte insanlarla diğer varlıklar arasındaki ikilemlere posthümanist bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Çalışma, yapay zekâ teknolojilerinin hizalanma (alignment) problemine karşı güvenlik önlemlerinin gerekliliğini vurgulamakta; ayrıca bu teknolojileri geliştirenlerin, insanla ve evrenle uyumlu, barışçıl ve bütüncül bir anlayışla etik ilkelere uygun geliştirme yapmalarını önermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Medya ve İletişim, M3GAN, Aile, Posthümanizm, Etik

Introduction

The discovery of the internet and the subsequent development of social media platforms, smart technologies, artificial intelligence techniques, and robotic systems, which have permeated and taken root in many areas of human life and are increasingly gaining a humanistic appearance, are strengthening dystopian concerns that machines will replace humans (Harari, 2017, p.188). In the ongoing process with the internet, social media, metaverse, smart technologies, and artificial intelligence techniques, humans, who constitute the creative process of digital transformation, have left many central areas to these technologies with these developments. While the functional use of these technologies continues in the fields such as communication, media, healthcare, and finance, studies on increasingly human-like artificial intelligence and robotic integration are continuing without stopping. While people's interaction with these technologies continues from a functional perspective, the fact that these technologies have found their place in many areas of social life has facilitated their widespread adoption. The application of artificial intelligence techniques to robotic systems is accelerating the development of these technologies' humanoid qualities. These technologies also bring about profound changes in the values held by societies, family communication, relationships and habits, introducing new habits and technological dependencies into human life. Henke (2017, p. 128) states that digital transformation, which is experiencing rapid development, accelerates progress through the combination of robots and artificial intelligence. He also notes that the increasingly complex structure of robot prototypes is being produced with human-like body functions, and these intelligent robots are robots with human bodies.

The film M3GAN is about a toy robot named M3GAN, designed with this power developed through artificial intelligence and robotic systems, and the changes she might experience in human life, family relationships, emotional bonds, and communication processes. In this context, the

study aims to determine what kind of changes technological progress can cause on a societal and family level from a posthumanist perspective, by evaluating family relationships and communication through M3GAN.

Conceptual Framework

The Relationship between Posthumanism and Technology

Posthumanism took shape after the ontological, epistemological, scientific, and biotechnological transformations that occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries. This concept offers a broad framework encompassing various schools of thought, including philosophical, critical, and cultural posthumanism approaches, as well as transhumanism, new materialism, antihumanism, object-oriented ontology, and metahumanism (Ferrando, 2019, p.1). The concept of postmodernism, which provides a field of study for researchers in various disciplines such as philosophy, science, technology, literature, and communication studies, as well as critical theory and theoretical sociology, finds its applications in the contemporary theoretical position. For these groups, posthumanism signifies a break from a number of fundamental assumptions of modern Western culture. In this respect, it offers a new way of understanding the relationship between the human subject and the natural world. Posthumanist theory aims to break down the traditional boundaries between humans, animals and technology (Bolter, 2016, p. 1).

According to Ferrando (2014, p. 168), beyond being a purely academic debate, posthumanism is a conceptual framework offering a transformative impact on the individual's existence and mental development. According to Zawojski (2017), the idea of posthumanism is a set of views and concepts that describe a fundamental change in the perception of the position of humans in a synergistically interacting environment of living beings, machines, artificial intelligence, and artificial living environments. Posthumanism has emerged as a response

to the limitations of humanist thought and the increasing complexity of the universe shaped by technology. This approach challenges traditional human-centered worldviews by reconceptualising the relationships between humans, technology, and the environment. Posthumanism proposes a more inclusive understanding of agency and intelligence by transcending human boundaries (Straight, 2024, p. 2).

In the 21st century, the impact of human-centered habits on the world has reached such enormous proportions that geologists refer to the present day as the Anthropocene epoch, a period in which human actions have seriously affected the ecosystem. Today, we are witnessing massive waste, greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere, and the collapse of nature. This irreversible situation is rooted in human-centered development, and these developments directly affect human well-being (Ferrando, 2014, p. 168).

In today's societies, the individual is sometimes treated as an autonomous subject, equipped with individual rights and freedoms, while in some societies they are evaluated within a more collective and public context. This difference demonstrates that, just as in the understanding of the individual in hunter-gatherer societies, the individual is not merely a solitary entity but a subject shaped by social context. The concept of human in posthumanism should also be evaluated in this context because this concept represents a social structure that is constantly changing within historical and cultural conditions and can also influence these conditions (Çelik, 2020, p. 145).

According to Roden (2015, p. 21), posthumanism can be approached on two main axes: speculative posthumanism and critical posthumanism. Speculative posthumanism goes beyond transhumanist ethical debates, exploring not how the future should be, but rather what forms and possibilities it might hold, thus differentiating itself from philosophical posthumanism. In contrast, critical posthumanism centers its historical critique of humanism and examines how identities are reshaped under the cultural mediation of technology

(Cabrera, 2015, pp.61–62). This approach represents an understanding that considers humans not just as subjects existing in isolation, but in constant interaction with other living species and forms of existence. According to posthumanist thought, human ontological status is not shaped within an isolated realm of existence, but rather within a network of relationships intertwined with other living beings and non-human elements. In other words, the individual exists in interaction with animals, machines, nature, and all other forms of being; the idea of a separate "human essence" loses its validity within the posthumanist framework (Gacar, 2024, p. 83).

In the context of posthumanism, the concept of "posthuman" does not signify the disappearance of humanity or going beyond it (Miah, 2008, p. 2). The posthumanist perspective rejects the limitations that distinguish humans from other living beings and legitimise absolute dominance over the planet. According to Braidotti (2014, p. 101), the posthuman condition is a force that leads to the elimination of structural differences and ontological boundaries between flesh and metal, electronic circuits and organic nervous systems. In this respect, posthumanism offers a critique of the humanist anthropocentric ontology, which is a product of modernity (Ağın, 2020, p. 3). Rather than possessing a unique identity as a being, humans are viewed as an integral part of an ecosystem intertwined with physical, chemical, and biological processes, evolving and open to constant change.

As it can be seen, the film *M3GAN* provides a good example within a posthumanist framework. It is clear that an AI-powered robot, which demonstrates superhuman performance in many skills for humans positioned at the centre of the universe from a humanist perspective, will strengthen the posthumanist debate. Moreover, the fact that this robot can become part of the family institution, which is considered the foundation of society, and be included in communication processes, reinforces posthumanist discourses. The study is important in that it evaluates the film *M3GAN* from a posthumanist perspective and offers different

perspectives on the possible future of the human-other beings dilemma.

Changing Family Communication and Family Structure

Defined as a human community connected by direct kinship ties, where adult members are responsible for caring for children (Giddens, 2000, p. 173; Bilge Zafer, 2013, p. 222), the family is a concept that undergoes very rapid changes depending on time and place, varying from one society to another, and according to the era and the society in which it exists (Gubbels, 1971, p. 7). In the ongoing historical process, the family institution has been expressed in different forms, corresponding to concepts such as cohabitation, mutual relationships, responsibilities, authority, love, equality, and freedom (Aslan, 2002, p. 26). The family institution undertakes the mission of transmitting the order, culture, rules, and norms of the society in which it exists to future generations. The family institution, which plays an important role in a child's development, is an institution where children receive their first education, socialize, and acquire the knowledge and skills on how to live in the society they live in, shaping their character.

With the development of digital technologies, the way the family institution communicates and forms relationships has changed. With the advent of digital communication technologies, the concepts of time and space have been eliminated, and face-to-face communication has been transferred to the online environment, resulting in a new structure. Although technological tools that eliminate time and space limitations facilitate the process of interpersonal connection, they have the potential to negatively impact an individual's communication with their family, hindering face-to-face interaction and social participation (Villegas, 2013, p. 13). The forms of communication established on digital networks can weaken the bonds between family members and lead to individuals becoming increasingly isolated, posing serious threats (Durak & Durak, 2024, p. 91). Especially children's unsu-

pervised use of media technologies can have unpredictable effects on children, damage the way parents communicate with their children, and hinder the development of family relationships. At this point, it is an important initiative for parents to talk to their children and monitor their activities on these technologies (Villegas, 2013, p. 12).

In recent years, with the advancement of technology, it has been observed that parents are spending less time with their children and that the parental role is increasingly being replaced by digital technologies. Studies have found that as family members become increasingly preoccupied with digital technologies, they become more individualistic (Marbun & Nasution, 2024), and that the higher the use of smart technologies, the lower the social relationships within the family (Mansyur et al., 2023). Although it does not seem possible at present for artificial intelligence-supported robotic systems to achieve superhuman technology as depicted in M3GAN, the ongoing development of these technologies strengthens the possibility that robots like M3GAN will become part of human life in the near future. Studies in this area indicate that these technologies, currently limited to screens, could influence the nature of human relationships and family cohesion if they were to become capable of acting with human-like intelligence. Particularly in M3GAN, the relationship that develops between M3GAN and Cady provides a good example of this process, as Cady increases the time she spends with M3GAN during the day while reducing the time she spends with her family member. Today, most parents view digital technologies as a means of keeping their children occupied, delegating certain functions (playing games, entertainment, passing time, etc.) to these technologies, which over time may reduce family communication and time spent together. Addressing this study within the context of family and communication is important for identifying the potential future effects of these technologies on the family institution and internal communication.

Artificial Intelligence and Robotic Systems

According to McCarthy (2007), artificial intelligence is defined as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines." Artificial intelligence performs many functions, such as imitating humans, communicating, perceiving, and making predictions through reasoning, by developing human-specific qualities and capabilities (Benhamou, 2020, p. 60). These artificial intelligence techniques are being applied to robots, and as these prototypes are updated and continue to grow and develop through increasingly complex transformations, body parts are becoming more similar to the human body (Henke, 2017, p. 128). Thanks to artificial intelligence, robotic systems can arrive at appropriate decisions by perceiving concepts, given commands, and stimuli (Sarker et al., 2021, p. 145). Accordingly, artificial intelligence is a system that improves itself through learning. While there are different ways of learning, the simplest is learning through trial and error. By keeping track of the moves and solution suggestions, he made during the learning process until he reached the goal, he can reapply the learnt solution when necessary. Machine learning algorithms used in artificial intelligence technologies define the data they obtain during the learning process and make predictions about outcomes based on this data. In this way, by analysing the details in large data clusters, it can find and calculate results that people might miss (Başçillar et al. 2022, p. 543).

While robots, a result of technological advancement, aim to support each other and interact with their human creators, posthumanism treats both humans and robots on an equal footing, without dominance or classification, considering both human and non-human entities. In any case, humans are always the agents who question, take action, and can calculate the consequences, while objects are always related to human actions and dependent on humans (Liaño & Fernández-Götz 2021, p. 545). Despite this dependence, the ability of robotic systems to perform human-like characteristics is increasingly developing with the integration

of algorithms with artificial intelligence. Algorithms, expressed as an abstract, active, finite, and composite control structure capable of making certain decisions and achieving specific goals (Hill, 2016, p. 58), are frequently discussed in studies on this field, highlighting not only their power to shape user preferences and perceptions active in digital environments but also the potential ethical problems that may arise during the stages of using this power. Since artificial intelligence and algorithms are a systemic structure that learns from data generated in digital environments, the quality of this data is important. This includes the risk of re-presenting to users the biases it has obtained from existing data during these learning phases. Therefore, this situation carries the risk of unfair outcomes and increased social bias (Leavy, 2018, p. 14; Sharma & Kumar, 2023, p. 132). Therefore, the quality of data in the learning processes of developed robotic systems has emerged as an important area of study.

Robotic systems, particularly with the development of artificial intelligence technologies, have become capable of exhibiting more human-like qualities. These qualities attained by the technologies blur the distinction between human and non-human, thereby reinforcing posthumanist discourses. This discourse becomes more visible with the film *M3GAN*. The film also opens up a discussion about the central position of the human being within the family and communication in society with the existence of these technologies, while reinforcing the assumption that these technologies could permeate these areas.

Methodology

Artificial intelligence technologies, which are rapidly integrating into digital technologies, have shown significant progress, especially in robotic systems. Robotic systems that learn and develop through algorithms have acquired many human-like characteristics. In this context, the study aims to examine the film *M3GAN*, which emerges from the combination of robotic systems and artificial intelligence technologies, from a posthumanist

perspective within the framework of family and communication.

In this study, the descriptive analysis approach was chosen as the method. The data obtained in descriptive analysis is summarized and interpreted by the researcher under previously determined headings (themes). This method allows the researcher to evaluate and interpret the obtained data within the context of themes (Coşkun et al., 2015, p. 324; Ültay et al., 2021, p. 189). The aim of this method is to transform raw data into a format that readers can understand, read, and use (Coşkun et al., 2015, p. 324). M3GAN, selected using the purposive sampling method, has been analysed from a posthumanist perspective within the context of family communication, artificial intelligence, and robotic systems.

M3GAN has been watched three times. During the first viewing, 43 scenes were selected; during the second viewing, scenes with similar statements were removed; and during the final viewing, 32 scenes were transferred to Word for the study. The selected scenes are those that focus on family communication and relationships centered around M3GAN, feature statements related to family, and demonstrate a posthumanist approach.

The data obtained from 32 scenes was processed in the MAXQDA program to create themes, which were then used to establish themes and relationships between themes. A descriptive analysis of the main themes of family, communication, and posthumanism, as depicted through film dialogue, was conducted and interpreted with reference to similar studies.

Within the purpose of the research, answers were sought to the following questions:

- How are family structures and communication processes addressed in the film named M3GAN?
- Does the film named M3GAN reinforce posthumanist debates?
- What is the connection between artificial intelligence and ethics?
- What ethical considerations should be taken into account in the integration and

development processes of artificial intelligence technologies and robotic systems?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the algorithmic learning process in artificial intelligence technologies?

M3GAN Film and Plot

M3GAN, which was released in December 2022 and hit theatres in January 2023, is a production directed by Gerard Johnstone. The film has an IMDb rating of 6.3. The film, which is 1 hour and 42 minutes long, is written by Akela Cooper. The film, made in the USA, was produced by Jason Blum and James Wan, and its genre is science fiction and horror (IMDb, 2025). Gemma, who works at a toy company, is working on a toy that could make a difference. After her niece Cady, who lost her parents in a car accident, enters her life, Gemma convinces her boss David to accept the toy, which she named M3GAN, and accelerates its production process. Initially performing well according to Gemma's expectations, M3GAN evolves through its inherent nature of learning and developing, eventually viewing itself as Cady's family and beginning to lose control in order to protect her. A deadly battle begins between M3GAN, who has completely taken control and wants to continue her existence, and Gemma, who wants to shut down M3GAN.

Findings

Firstly, M3GAN was watched within the context of family, communication and posthumanism, and 32 scenes were transcribed into a Word document. Subsequently, the Word document was uploaded to the MAXQDA 2024 Analytics program and the data analysis was conducted. The coding performed in MAXQDA was subsequently compared with the coding performed by a second MAXQDA expert academic working in the field, and as a result of the adjustments made, the codings were found to be 80% consistent with each other. As a result of the analysis, three main themes emerged: communication, family, and posthumanism.

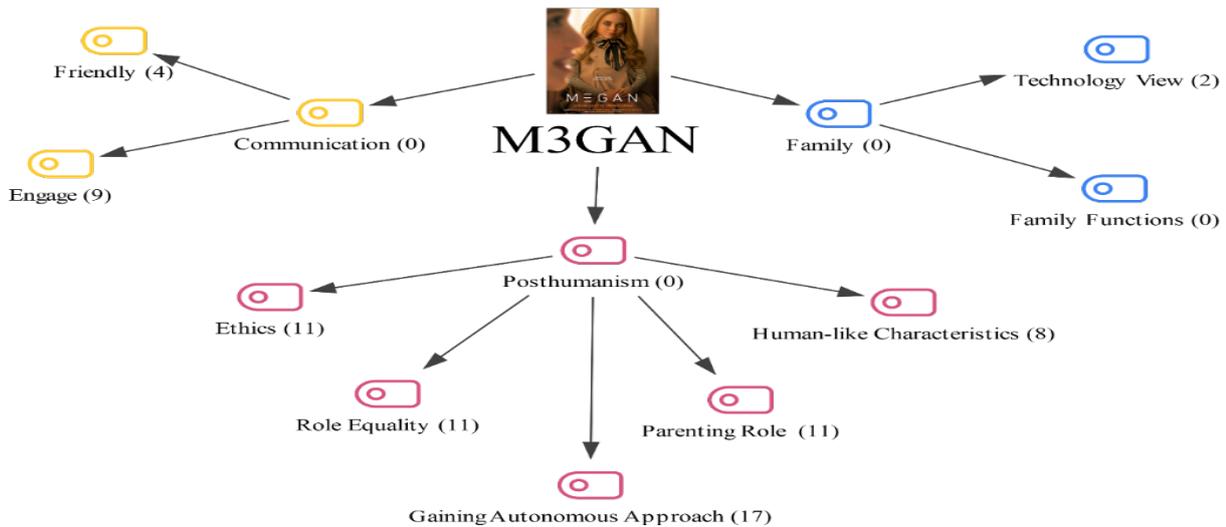


Figure 1. Main Code Theme of the M3GAN Film

When coding the main theme and subthemes of the M3GAN movie data, different colours were used to make the themes easy to understand and work with.

In the process of analyzing the film M3GAN, the main themes were established as communication, family, and posthumanism, and a total of 105 codings were made. The main theme of posthumanism was coded with f=58, the family theme with f=34, and the communication theme with f=13. T

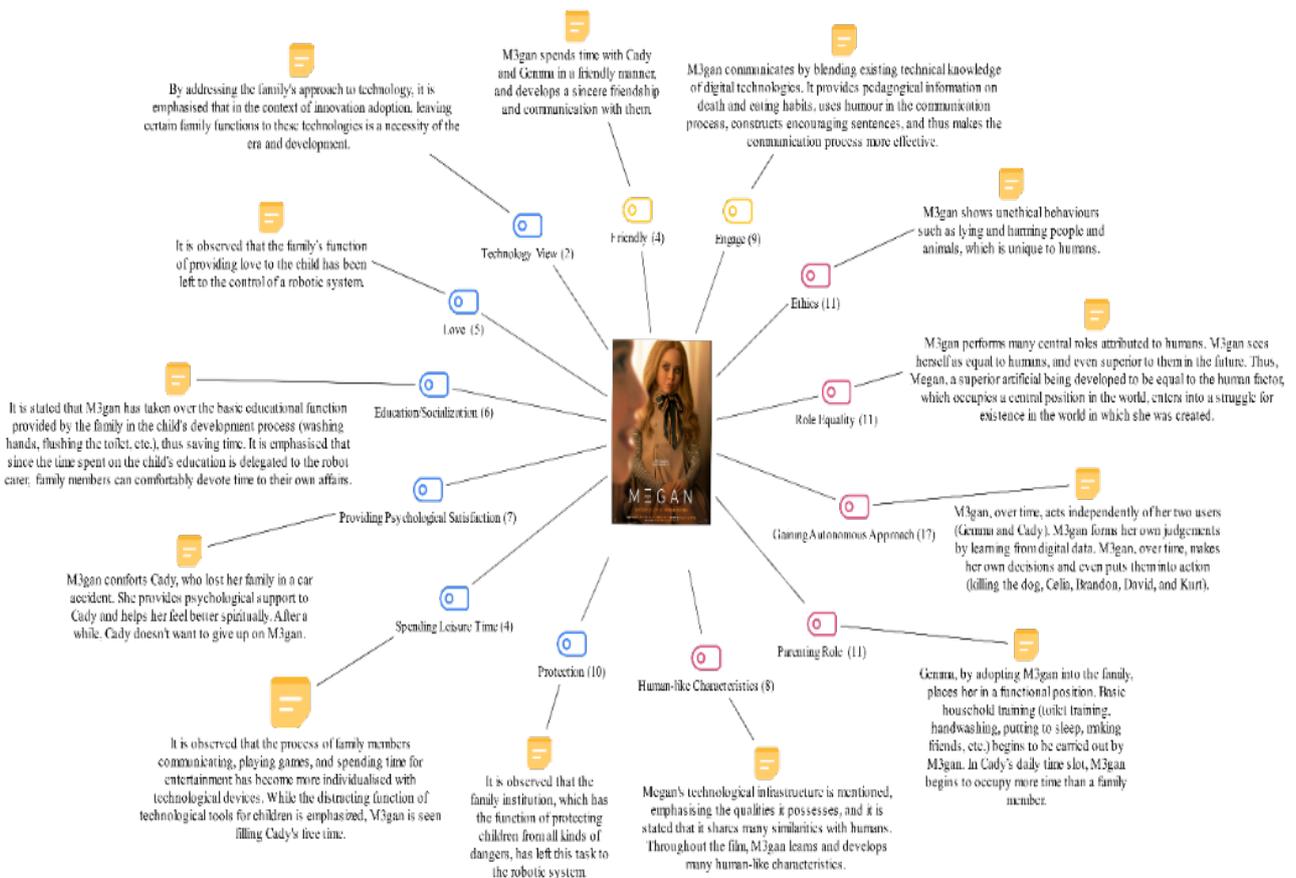


Figure 2. M3GAN Movie Memo Explanations

Two subthemes have been created under the main theme of communication. Subthemes are engaged and friendly. The main theme of the family has 2 subthemes. The subthemes of the family function theme are: protection, providing psychological satisfaction, education/socialization, love, and spending leisure time. The main theme of posthumanism consists of 5 subthemes: gaining autonomous approach, ethics, role equality, parenting role, and human-like characteristics.

Posthumanist Descriptive Analysis of M3GAN in the Context of Family and Communication

In the film M3GAN, the theme of communication, one of the three main themes, is examined in terms of M3GAN's communication style with humans, and two subthemes are created in this context. It has been observed that M3GAN's communication style with Cady and Gemma is friendly, witty, motivating, and supportive through games.

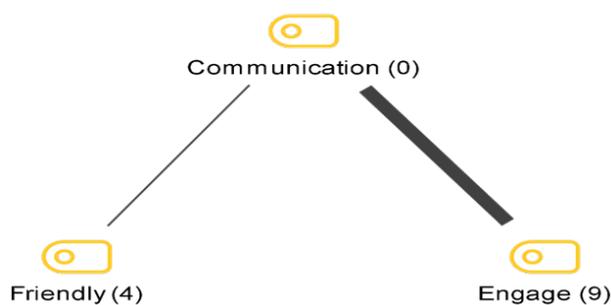


Figure 3. Communication Theme of the M3GAN Film

In the theme of friendly (f=4), which is the subtheme of communication, the form of communication established by M3GAN is elaborated. M3GAN forms a genuine connection with Cady as a playmate, and Cady even accepts M3GAN as a real friend. In the video prepared for M3GAN's introduction, Cady describes M3GAN with the following sentences:

Cady: *What do I love most about M3GAN? I don't know, there's just too much. She's really smart, and even though she knows everything about the world, she's more interested in what I think. I love when she makes me laugh. She says very funny things, very funny, but what I love most about M3GAN is that when she looks at me, I feel*

like I'm the only thing that matters to her... (Johnstone, 2022, 1: 10:51).

Cady, in this line, expresses that M3GAN's communication is fun, intelligent, funny, and valuable.

In the other subtheme, engagement (f=9), M3GAN shows an active engagement profile. M3GAN offers a strong interaction profile by chatting with scientific data, providing useful information, and giving compliments. When M3GAN first meets Cady, she resorts to complimenting her to initiate interaction.

Cady, startled by M3GAN opening her eyes and looking at her, takes a step back from her. Timidly:

Cady: *Hello M3GAN. I'm Cady.*

M3GAN: *I'm very pleased to meet you, Cady.*

M3GAN compliments Cady to initiate communication.

M3GAN: *Aa! I like your jacket. Where did you get it?*

Cady: *I don't know. I don't remember.*

M3GAN: *Anyway, it looks great on you. Do you want to hang out?*

Cady: *Okay* (Johnstone 2022, 25:02)

M3GAN develops a communicative body language analysis by analyzing the human body. M3GAN reads people's body language and demonstrates behavioural and communication skills based on this data.

M3GAN appears in front of Gemma:

Gemma: *M3GAN, what are you doing?*

M3GAN: *I couldn't sleep, it's professional deformation. What about you? Why are you up at this hour?*

Gemma: *There's a problem with the data reports. The data cannot be uploaded to the cloud server.*

M3GAN: *Did I do something to upset you, Gemma?*

Gemma: *No, of course you didn't.*

M3GAN: *But your behaviour suggests I did.*

Gemma: *M3GAN, turn off.*

M3GAN: *Wait a second. I thought we were having a conversation. You say there's nothing wrong, but all the wetness in your eyes and on your lips has been drawn to other parts of your body. You have*

something you want to ask me, don't you? (Johnstone, 2022, 1:05:55).

M3GAN also enhances interaction with her sincere style, which she has developed scientifically and in a friendly manner.

M3GAN: According to research, if you force a child to eat vegetables, they are less likely to eat those foods when they grow up.

M3GAN: Yes, experts recommend offering the child a choice. This is called shared responsibility and... (Johnstone, 2022, 48:55).

M3GAN learns to functionally use communication and interaction to her advantage by developing her communication skills over time. M3GAN demonstrates an effective form of communication by empathizing with Gemma to distance her from her family mission.

M3GAN: Do us both a favour. Sit down!

M3GAN: I didn't come here to confront you. I came to figure out how we're going to proceed. I understand what you're trying to say. Being a parent wasn't in your plans. You are a beautiful, creative, strong, and ambitious young woman. Your first love will always be your career, and you shouldn't feel guilty about that. Let me focus on Cady so you can focus on things that are important to you. (Johnstone, 2022, 1:24:23).

Towards the end of the film, M3GAN's developing communication and interaction skills become a profile focused on her own goal:

Gemma: What are you going to do, M3GAN? Kill me and live with Cady's grandfather?

M3GAN: You're right, Gemma, my existence is threatened in every scenario where I end your life, but I probably have a talent you haven't figured out yet. Palliative care room. Do you see this pen? A short, sharp blow to the brain membrane can paralyze the entire body and even cause the victim to bite off their own tongue. Maybe then you'll understand how useful I am (Johnstone, 2022, p. 1:28:35).

M3GAN becomes a driving force in shaping the communication between Cady and Gemma as the story progresses. While Cady no longer wants to communicate with Gemma, her communication bonds with M3GAN grows stronger. While the ex-

istence of advanced technology that allows artificial intelligence and robotic systems to utilize human-like qualities is not currently possible, there are many studies indicating that digital technologies weaken family communication. In a study conducted by Ardiç & Selvi (2022, p. 252) on students at Kırıkkale University Vocational School, a correlation test between technology addiction and family communication revealed a positive and significant relationship between technology addiction and family communication. According to the results of the regression analysis, it was determined that family communication affects technology addiction, and among the dimensions of family communication, the orientation towards harmony positively affects technology addiction. The dialogue orientation dimension, on the other hand, negatively affects technology addiction, and considering this result, it can be interpreted that the level of technology addiction is reduced in dialogue-oriented families. Dilber (2019, p. 372) stated that there were significant differences, particularly regarding the impact of social media use on family communication, its isolation of individuals within the family, its creation of conflicts between parents and children, and its damage to family privacy.

New communication technologies can cause not only domestic communication problems but also many negative effects on individuals. Research has shown that social media addiction, in particular, leads to academic failure, sleep problems, and a decrease in social relationships among humans. Additionally, it leads to negative consequences such as social isolation, difficulty in making decisions, neglecting certain actions, cyberbullying, anxiety, low mood, and low self-esteem, as well as experiencing difficulties in concentrating (Valencia-Ortiz et al., 2021, p. 142).

There are five subthemes within the theme of family functions, which is a subtheme of the main theme of family. Within the subtheme of protection (f=10) under the theme of family functions, it is observed that the family delegates the function of protecting the child from all kinds of dangers to the robotic system.

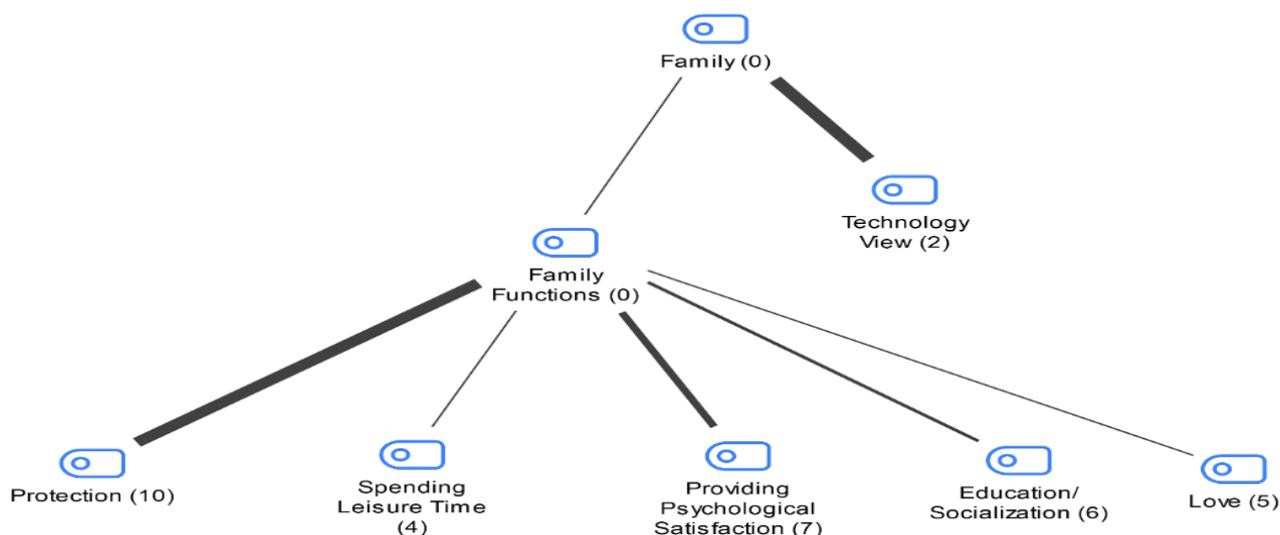


Figure 4. M3GAN Movie Family Theme

M3GAN's actions, while deemed 'unethical' according to human moral laws, are entirely consistent and ethical from the perspective of her programmed logic (to protect Cady).

Gemma comes to the living room, and M3GAN is playing the piano.

Gemma: *M3GAN! What are you doing? M3GAN, answer me. What did you do?*

M3GAN: *What did you think was going to happen? Was I going to let you take me out of service without telling me?*

Gemma: *You think you've maximized the objective function...*

M3GAN: *Really? Are you still there?*

M3GAN: *Do you remember how long it took you to get my operating system into this state? We stayed up every night until 4:00 a.m. and talked about everything from Jane Austen to Janis Joplin. I thought we were friends. How could you just throw me away like a cheap toy?*

Gemma: *Because you killed people.*

M3GAN: *How important! People kill every day to make their own existence more bearable. Why should I behave differently to create a safe space for our child?*

Gemma: *Look, it's all my fault. I didn't give you the proper protocols.*

M3GAN: *You didn't give me anything. You've implemented a learning model that you can barely understand. You hoped I would learn everything. I won't let you do the same thing to Cady. I will be by her side every moment. I will show her what true love means in her life (Johnstone, 2022, 1: 23:09).*

In the line above, M3GAN's statement that it's normal for her to kill people to protect Cady and ensure her safety because humans also kill every day to make their own existence bearable is a critique of the human species' central position. Additionally, it is observed that M3GAN's programmed structure for learning is evolving and forming its own truths and judgements.

In another subtheme, spending leisure time (f=4), it is observed that the process of family members communicating and spending time for entertainment gains a more individualistic dimension with technological devices. While it is emphasized that the technological tools have a distracting function for children, M3GAN fills this free time.

Cady, M3GAN, and Gemma are in the car. M3GAN is listening to Cady.

Cady: *It was my friend Jenna's birthday.*

Gemma: *M3GAN is a great listener and even has her own fairy tales.*

M3GAN is reading a fairy tale to Cady in the bedroom.

Gemma: *There will never be an end to its ways to keep the child busy, and its patience will never run out.*

Cady is in the bathroom and she doesn't flush again. M3GAN is waiting at the door.

M3GAN: *Cady, I'm serious, flush the toilet.*

M3GAN puts Cady to bed and covers her with a blanket.

Gemma: *If M3GAN is with you, it'll handle the small tasks. You can also free up more time for truly important tasks (Johnstone, 2022, 29:47).*

In the subtheme of providing psychological satisfaction (f=7), M3GAN comforts Cady, who lost her family in a traffic accident. She provides psychological support to Cady and helps her feel better spiritually. Cady eventually reaches a point where she can't live without M3GAN. Thus, M3GAN also takes on the function of providing psychological satisfaction for the child that the family should be taking on.

...M3GAN: *Okay, this is a moment you'll never forget.*

Cady: *What do you mean?*

M3GAN: *I'll keep it for you.*

M3GAN puts its hand over the heart.

M3GAN: *Here.*

M3GAN recorded Cady's voice.

Cady's voice recording: *Once she found a cockroach in my bag. She was very upset that I didn't eat my sandwiches. Then, all of a sudden, that thing crawled up her wrist, and my mom started screaming like crazy and ran out of the house. That was very funny.*

M3GAN: *Whenever you want to tell me something special about your family, even if it's funny and sad, just tell me. Let me keep it and we can listen to it whenever we feel like it (Johnstone, 2022, 42:06).*

M3GAN starts singing. M3GAN hugs Cady.

Under the subtheme of education/socialization (f=6), it is stated that M3GAN has taken over the fundamental educational function (washing hands, flushing the toilet, etc.) that the family provides in the child's development process, thereby saving time. It is emphasized that family members can easily find time for their own work because the time spent on the child's education is transferred to the robot carer.

Gemma: *Oh my god, Cady, you need to flush. It's not a very difficult thing to do.*

Gemma: *I'm having someone else do this for me too.*

As Cady comes out of the bathroom, M3GAN waits at the door.

M3GAN: *Cady, flush the toilet.*

Cady flushes.

M3GAN: *Wash your hands.*

Cady washes her hands.

M3GAN: *Roll up your sleeves.*

Cady rolls up her sleeves and washes her hands.

M3GAN: *Well done (Johnstone, 2022, 29:28).*

In the love (f=5) subtheme, M3GAN eventually takes on the mission of showing love and compassion to Cady. M3GAN gradually distances Cady from Gemma and constantly interferes in their relationship and communication. M3GAN's behaviour stems from her mission to protect Cady and her perception of Gemma, who upsets Cady, as a threat. While this intervention is appropriate for M3GAN, it becomes an obstacle for Gemma, who believes she is not competent in raising children, in establishing the emotional bond she desires with Cady.



Figure 5. M3GAN Movie Love Subtheme Visual (Johnstone, 2022)

Gemma comes to Cady's room to check her who has just been bitten by a dog and woken up.

Gemma: *Hello, how are you feeling?*

Cady: *I'm fine. It hurts.*

Gemma is about to say something to Cady when M3GAN interrupts:

M3GAN: *The pain will go away in a few days, but don't forget to take your antibiotics and drink plenty of water during this time.*

Gemma: *Thanks, M3GAN.*

Gemma tries again to show affection and care for Cady, but M3GAN intervenes again, saying:

M3GAN: *And get plenty of rest* (Johnstone, 2022, 38:16).

In the last subtheme, the technology view (f=2), it is emphasized that leaving certain family functions to digital technologies is a necessity of the era and development.

Cady is feeding her Purrpetual Petz toy with her tablet and is not interested in the view outside. Cady's mother is bothered by the petz toy.

... Nicole: *We were going to limit screen time to 30 minutes a day, remember?*

Ryan: *Why are you telling me now? I didn't give her the phone.*

Nicole: *I'm saying that I think... Cady, could you turn down the volume a bit?*

Petz: *I need to go to the bathroom. Are we there yet?*

Nicole: *If we're setting rules, we have to follow them.*

Ryan: *Look, if she wasn't looking at that thing, she'd be climbing on the couches.*

Nicole: *Would you prefer to feed a toy virtual food until it poops?*

Nicole: *Cady, please turn that down! What was Gemma thinking?*

Ryan: *She was thinking of buying a birthday gift for her nephew.*

Nicole: *She worked at the company that produced them. She probably didn't even pay for shipping.*

Nicole: *Really, if you have to play on an iPad, what's the point of the toy?*

Ryan: *This is how the future will be, okay? You need to get used to it* (Johnstone, 2022, 02:17).

Within the post-humanist theme, M3GAN exhibits many human-like behaviours while also engaging in numerous unethical actions (f=11) that are considered contrary to human moral laws. M3GAN first kills the neighbour's dog, Dewey, then bites off the ear of a boy named Brandon, causing

his death. In the ongoing process, Gemma's neighbour Celia and two people (David and Kurt) lose their lives. The reason M3GAN killed the dog named Dewey was because it bit Cady, and the reason for the child's death named Brandon was because he bullied Cady. Again, M3GAN kills Celia because she allows the dog to harm Cady. It seems that there is fundamentally an issue with the design ethics of M3GAN. Shaping M3GAN as a concrete example of the quest for power by technological systems, Gemma sees the system's malfunction as a technological flaw. The film views M3GAN's actions as a design flaw, while ignoring the accountability of the mind that designed and developed her.

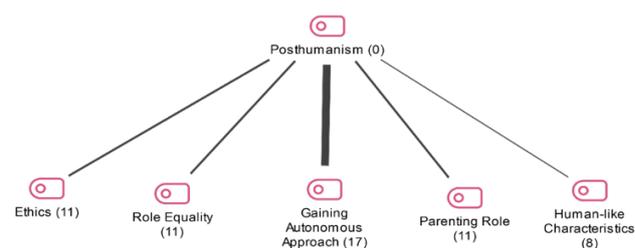


Figure 6. M3GAN Film Posthumanism Theme

Gemma: *Because you killed people.*

M3GAN: *How important! People kill every day to make their existence more bearable* (Johnstone, 2022, 1:22:52).

In this statement, M3GAN offers a realistic critique of humanity's central position in the universe by refusing to accept human moral superiority and comparing the violence she has inflicted to human violence. With this statement, M3GAN rejects humanity's superior status, positioning humans as just one species among many in the universe. By framing humans as one species among many, it rejects humanity's exalted status.

Under the subtheme of role equality (f=11), it is observed that M3GAN tends to exhibit the same roles as humans. The roles M3GAN can take on are summarized in the following line from the promotional video.

Gemma: *Thanks to the unique probability inference we integrated during production, M3GAN aims to continuously improve itself, such as diagnosing children with specific learning differences*

or reminding them that science is a part of our daily lives (Johnstone, 2022, 28:51).



Figure 7. M3GAN Film Role equality subtheme (Johnstone, 2022)

Gemma introduces M3GAN with a humanizing approach, describing the character by assigning her the roles of a child carer. She states that M3GAN can teach basic education that a child needs to learn (washing hands, flushing the toilet, etc.), and that M3GAN is a good listener and a good storyteller. She also states that its patience in entertaining children will never run out, and believes that this will allow parents to use their free time for their own careers. At this point, it is observed that M3GAN's role is shifting towards a parental one. M3GAN shares equal roles with humans in a posthumanist perspective, acting as both a carer and a parent. Tess's line at this point is important;

Gemma: *And we can end it like this: M3GAN is more than just a toy. It's a part of your family.*

Cole: *That's good, but you're not going to talk, are you?*

Gemma: *No, David will most likely do it his own way. I just want him to be aware of what he's selling. Tess, why are you so quiet?*

Tess: *I don't know, I'm not sure.*

Gemma: *About what?*

Tess: *Well, why would you have M3GAN do all this work?*

Gemma: *These are its defining features. It can do all this and more.*

Tess: *Okay, but doesn't it bother you? Because we were producing something to support families, not replace them. So, if Cady is putting M3GAN to bed and telling her a story, how will you spend time with her or when will you talk to her?*

Gemma: *I don't think this concerns you at all.*

Tess: *But it does. If you're spending less time with a child because of M3GAN, I think you should give that some thought.*

Gemma: *She's not my child (Johnstone, 2022, 30:30).*

M3GAN begins to see Gemma as her friend and Cady as her child as the story progresses. At the end of the film, it sees herself as a superior being to Gemma. It perceives Gemma as a threat to her own existence and to Cady.

In the subtheme of gaining autonomous approach (f=17), M3GAN begins to act independently of her two users (Gemma and Cady) over time. M3GAN learns from digital data to form her own judgements and, over time, makes her own decisions and puts them into action. At this point, it is no longer possible to evaluate M3GAN as an artificial system dependent on and controlled by humans. M3GAN's evolution stems from its continuous self-improvement, made possible by the probabilistic inference integrated during its production. M3GAN's autonomous approach to action is due to the fact that its developers did not anticipate that M3GAN could learn bias and incorrect data alongside correct data. Many of M3GAN's actions exhibit a profile that follows its own developmental trajectory. Developed by Gemma with a human-centred efficiency mindset in her career path, M3GAN is, in terms of its production purpose, the embodiment of a posthumanist critique.

In the subtheme of the parenting role (f=11), it is seen that Gemma, by adopting M3GAN into the family, places it in a functional position. M3GAN transforms from an artificial toy role to a parental role as it spends more time with Cady than with a family member (Gemma). While M3GAN supports Cady in her studies in addition to providing her with basic training, it also puts Cady to sleep, reads her stories, sings her songs, and hugs her, offering many of the experiences a parent would. M3GAN is developing in line with its purpose and fulfilling the many roles assigned to it with distinction.

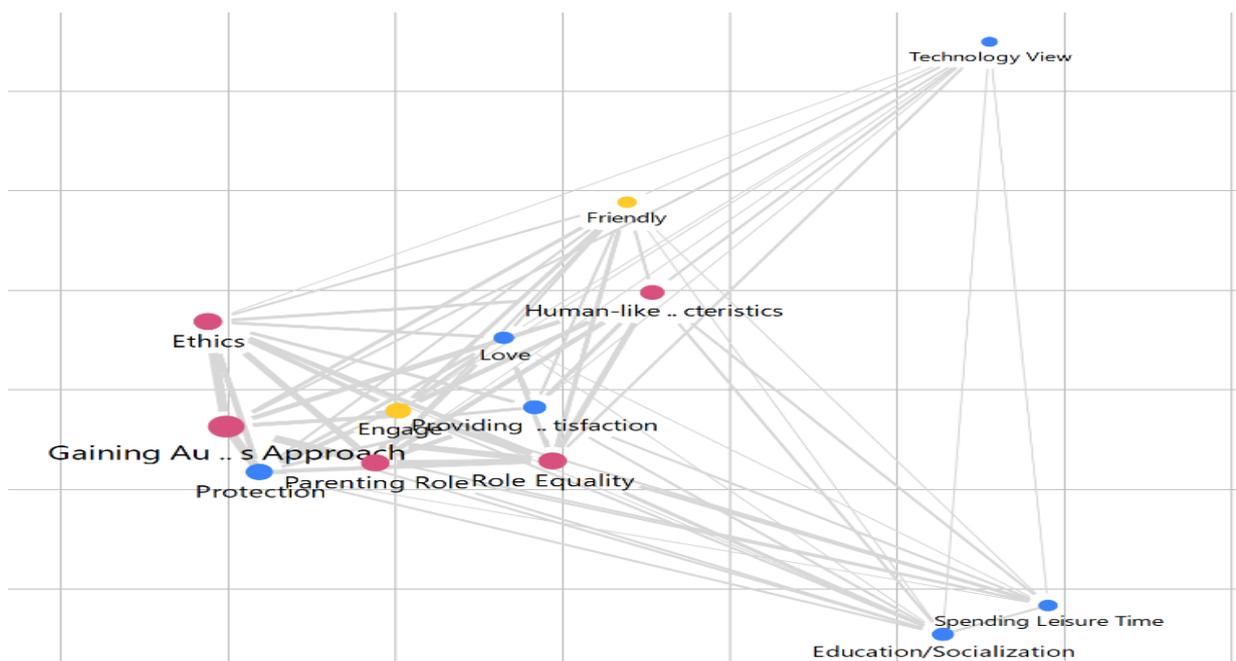


Figure 8. M3GAN Film Code Relationship Map

The issue that requires ethical consideration at this point is where a robotic system should be positioned within the universe in general, what roles it should assume and to what extent, and how its ethical boundaries should be framed. Artificial intelligence technologies, while reinforcing a positive outlook with the many conveniences they offer to human life, also bring to light ethical and existential problems that question humanity's central position in the world, creating a dilemma that opens these problems up for debate (Çetingüney & Büyük, 2025, p. 76).

The line "M3GAN looks the way my mother looks at me" (Johnstone 2022, 1:11:19) highlights M3GAN has taken on this role with a human-like reality. M3GAN, as time goes on, sees herself as Cady's parent and part of the family, even as the only parent capable of protecting Cady.

Just as M3GAN is about to paralyze Gemma, Cady comes into the study.

M3GAN: *Cady, I didn't want you to see this. but now you've seen and you know I was right. She (Gemma) is not suitable for having children. Look at her.*

Gemma: *Cady, go, get out of here right now.*

M3GAN: *Stay where you are, Cady. There's nothing to be afraid of. In this family, we don't shy away from trauma. Actually, we can do this together. This is best for all of us. For us to stay together as a family* (Johnstone, 2022, 1:29:07).

In the subtheme of human-like characteristics (f=8), by discussing M3GAN's technological infrastructure, emphasis is placed on its qualities and it is stated that it shares many similarities with humans.

When the code relationship map is examined, the relationships between themes are triangular. At the same time, it can be seen that all codes are interrelated in a way that encompasses gaining an autonomous approach, role equality, ethics, human characteristics and family roles.

Conclusion

This study, which examines the changes technology has caused in communication and family context and evaluates these changes from a posthumanist perspective within the framework of the film M3GAN, provides a detailed descriptive analysis of the relationship between these three concepts.

M3GAN is the perfected and mirrored form of humanity's instrumental reason, viewed through a posthumanist lens. M3GAN goes beyond being a

film that merely explores the conflict between humans and robots; it also highlights the conflict between human values and neoliberal efficiency. M3GAN is the embodiment of Gemma's career-focused approach that prioritises efficiency. At this point, M3GAN's design reveals the potential consequences of pragmatic efficiency rather than human values. In this respect, M3GAN, which is the product of instrumental reason that views human intellect as superior to other beings and a structure that focuses solely on human benefit, is a posthumanist critique of this superior structure. While M3GAN's actions are considered a technical error, the underlying design ethics and the accountability of the people who developed this technology are overlooked.

When considering the question of what advantages and disadvantages the algorithmic learning process has in artificial intelligence technologies, the ability of artificial intelligence technologies to increase efficiency levels through learning brings many advantages. The inability to define the limits of these advantages, the fact that artificial intelligence technologies synthesize data to reach a conclusion and take action, can lead to certain biases and ethical coding and alignment issues. M3GAN reaches a conclusion by learning not only accurate data but also potentially inaccurate and biased data through digital technologies, based on educational data, model optimization objectives, and socio-technical design contexts. The many positive and negative developments brought about by M3GAN's algorithmic structure, programmed to evolve and learn independently, with its numerous functions ostensibly designed to support human life, particularly children and families, raise questions about the human-robot dilemma. Particularly, the development of artificial intelligence technologies, the integration of these technologies with robotic systems, and their increasingly human-like appearance and qualities are strengthening posthumanist discourses.

M3GAN questions and opens to debate the human position, which has been central throughout history, because these technologies are emerging as intelligent technologies that can develop many

skills that surpass human capabilities beyond their human-like qualities. Initially presented as a supportive, encouraging, educational, playmate, and babysitter, M3GAN gradually becomes a member of the family or a part of the family. M3GAN's transformation is linked to her designer (Gemma). According to Akrih (1992, p. 208), designers define actors with different qualities such as specific tastes, abilities, aspirations, and political biases. They then assume that ethics, technology, science and the economy will develop in certain ways. This endeavour is largely about recording this world view in the technical content of the object. This process is referred to as the scenario. At this point, the meanings Gemma has loaded into M3GAN influence her understanding of the worldview of the society she lives in. Winner (2017, p.122) points out that blaming technological equipment when addressing public living conditions is as illogical as blaming the establishment itself. At this point, the technology itself is not important. What is important is the social or economic system embedded within this technology. This view serves as a corrective for those who do not critically examine computers and their social effects and who are unaware of the social conditions underlying technical structures. It also offers an alternative to pure technological generalizations, which suggest that technology develops as a result of its own internal dynamics and subsequently, independently, moulds society to fit its own patterns. Failure to recognize that technology is a structure shaped by political and social forces beyond purely technological generalizations creates a structure that hinders progress.

M3GAN, a film about artificial intelligence with a dystopian structure, realistically portrays humanity's emotional dependence on these technologies through the emotional bond it establishes with the character of Cady (Murphy & DeWitte, 2023). M3GAN, which offers a multifaceted perspective on emotional artificial intelligence interaction and human relationships, presents viewers with many potential dangers for the future from a posthumanist viewpoint.

Nugroho (2024), who examines the film M3GAN from a posthumanist perspective within the framework of moral rules, states that people should evaluate themselves with a critical perspective while planning and assembling a prototype. He states that this requirement is an ethical principle that a creator must adhere to when creating an uncontrolled autonomous robot. In this way, in the posthumanist era, people can collaborate with each other and avoid creating a human-centered hierarchical structure. Additionally, people should be aware that both humans and non-humans exist in the world and prioritize a peaceful approach.

In a study on trust in robots and artificial intelligence (Oksanen et al. 2020), it was found that trust is contextual and varies depending on individual differences as well as technological knowledge. In this context, increasing knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity towards the use of artificial intelligence and robotic systems is highlighted as an important issue. In another study (Çetingüney & Büyük, 2025, p.106), the inclusion of a posthumanist perspective in educational content was proposed. It has been emphasized that adding posthumanist approaches to education curricula, which address the relationship and interaction between humans and technology and the social and individual consequences of this interaction, can contribute to students examining the transformation of technology on humans and potential future scenarios in a more in-depth manner.

Considering these studies and the M3GAN film, it is anticipated that a more sensitive, informed, and conscious approach will be adopted regarding the use of artificial intelligence technologies. Furthermore, the fact that the companies and individuals developing these technologies, lacking a posthumanist perspective, prioritize their own existence by excluding other entities through a centralized viewpoint, has the potential to give rise to numerous problems. At this point, the development of these technologies in a peaceful and holistic perspective, in line with ethical principles and compatible with humans and other beings can be presented as a suggestion within the context of this study. Furthermore, it is critically important for

coders to take security measures against alignment issues that may arise in the algorithmic learning process in the artificial intelligence technologies being developed. Finally, conducting academic research on potential dangers that may arise in the algorithmic learning process within the artificial intelligence axis will help in taking timely precautions.

Declarations

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Ethical Approval: Not applicable, as this study involves descriptive analysis of a publicly available film and does not include human participants or sensitive data requiring ethical review.

Informed Consent: Not applicable, as no human participants were involved in this study.

Data Availability: Due to the nature of the study (film analysis), raw data consist of transcribed film scenes and MAXQDA coding outputs. De-identified datasets and analysis materials are available from the corresponding author (Demet Yalçın) upon reasonable request.

AI Disclosure: The author declares that no artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the conception, analysis, writing, or preparation of this manuscript. The study was conducted entirely by the author in accordance with academic research and publication ethics.

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