COURAGE AS SEEN IN WINSTON GROOM’S FORREST GROOM

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to reveal about courage as seen in Winston Groom’s Forrest Gump. The design of the study is qualitative research because the data of this research are in the form of words. The researchers use two kinds of data collection which are the primary source and secondary sources. The primary source is the novel itself and the secondary sources are the materials that the researchers took from books, internet, articles, journals, etc. The researchers use objective approach because the researcher analyzed the courage of the main character in the novel which is one of the internal elements. In analysing the data, researchers do a close reading of the novel and create a coding to help researchers easily find and arrange the research. Because this research uses objective theory, the researcher examines the internal elements of the novel, namely characters, plot, theme and setting. The researchers focus on the character by classifying each character in the novel into two parts, namely round character and flat character. The results of this study can be concluded that the courage of Forrest Gump is seen from two types of courage, namely moral courage and physical courage. First, by moral courage that he dared to face his shortcomings and dared to show his abilities. Second, Forrest also shows physical courage to protect himself and help others. From these results the researcher found that people who have courage can get through all the difficulties in their life.

Keywords: Courage, Moral courage, Physical courage.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human must have courage to live and accept reality, dare to be responsible, dare to take action, dare to dream and try to achieve that dream. The researchers analyse the courage of the main character in Winston Groom’s novel, Forrest Gump. Courage is an attitude to do something without worrying about the bad possibilities that could happen. It is a form of determination to do something without fear.

To have courage one must have self-confidence and a sense of caring. There is nothing wrong with having fear and anxiety, but we must open up and confront that fear. With courage we can put aside our fear of failure, rejection and various phobias. There are different types of courage that are found throughout the literature review: Moral
courage, physical courage, psychological courage, and civil courage. But the researchers just focus on moral courage and physical courage.

In this novel, the courage of Forrest Gump was first shown when he was a child, he had a low IQ near 70. His weaknesses made him different from the people around him and that make him see things with a different perspective. His life is simple because he did not think too much about what he should do, in contrast to other normal people who always overthink about their life problems.

The reason why researchers choose this novel because this novel provides many lessons that can be emulated. With the naiveness of a child with less mental capacities can became a useful and historical person. This novel can inspire readers and increase their passion to live life and achieve success. Also it gives lessons to always try new things with full courage because you may surprise yourself, stay positive and focus on what you do.

The researchers choose to analyse the topic of courage in Winston Groom’s Forrest Gump because he is a brave figure in living his life, making decisions, facing every challenges and situations, and dare to take actions that seem impossible to do. The researchers want to explain about courage, especially about moral and physical courage which are related to the character of Forrest Gump. His courageous can be taken as an example by those who lack of confidence and do not having the courage to move forward.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Courage

As Rorintulus stated: “Literature reflects human experiences and pictures a certain phenomenon in society” (Rorintulus, 139). One of the literary works is the novel Forrest Gump by Winston Groom. Forrest Gump is classified as popular literature genre because the novel consists adventure genre. As Maukar stated: “The classic literature genre consists of drama, poetry and prose of short stories whereas the popular literature genre consists of many different genres such as romance, detective, adventure, western, fantasy and many more” (Maukar, 808).

Courage is the ability of a person to do something and fight his fear it is something that everyone hopes they have, some people have the courage to do good things to make them worthy of respect. According to Rate: “courage is any form of admirable action that is willing to make self-sacrifice for something more important than self-interest” (Rate, 80).

But there is also those who act impulsively and do something without thinking about the risks that will be faced or carried out unconsciously, must remember that real courage requires wisdom. As Watuseke stated: “Wisdom simply means a person who able to make a good judgement and also able to use their experience, knowledge, insight and common sense optimally and positively for the sake of good and justice” (Watuseke, 37).

Being brave means having to be wise in your actions so you can distinguish between
what is right and what is not, as well as being able to decide what is appropriate and inappropriate to do. Courage is a willingness to face tough choices as well as overcoming the fear associated with them. When we are about to do something and we already know that it may result in disappointment, rejection, frustration and even failure, that is courage.

The word ‘courage’ means doing an action with a mindful thought, rather than impulsively rushing in. Courage comes from motivation, love, devotion, compassion and passion. To have courage, one must believe in himself accompanied by a strong desire. A person has courage because of the motivation to act and goes beyond the boundaries created by society or culture. Strong relationships with other people such as family, loved ones and friends are one of the reasons a person has courage. They may show courage in order to protect those under threat. (Kinsella. 2-4).

According to Miller, “Moral courage means the ability to overcome the fear of shame and humiliation to admit mistakes, denounce injustice, oppose unwise or immoral orders” (Miller, 254). The consequence of moral courage is rejection or loss of social status. A person who has moral courage must be ready to accept potential disapproval from society.

Moral courage requires us to overcome fear, hatred, dissent and social problems. Moral courage asks us to take responsibility and see the consequences of our own actions. Marthin Luther King jr, is an example of someone who has moral courage. He was made a role model for showing courage by not giving up. He was arrested 30 times for expressing aspirations for equality and civil rights for African-Americans in America from the mid-1950s until his death by assassination in 1968. He wants racism to end. He showed moral courage by not resorting to violence until he was shot to dead.

Physical courage depends on your physical strength to prepare yourself for all kinds of challenges. You should be healthy, strong and resilient. Physical courage is needed in times of danger to help others or ourselves.

According to Kugel, “physical courage is an act of courage in the face of physical threats. A person will act to take care of himself or others even though he has to face danger and even death.” (Kugel, 3).

People who have physical courage are able to help victims of fire, facing threats or social violence, drowning, war and other things. Examples of physical courage in small things that we often encounter everyday life are trying to stand up after falling from a high place or falling into a hole or deep place, trying physical activities such as sports or anything that involves physical strength we've never done before.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In this study, the researchers use Qualitative Research to examine the courage of the main character in the novel because the data in this research are in the
form of words. The data in qualitative research take the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. The data contains quotations said by informants to illustrate and substantiate the presenting findings (Bogdan and Biklen, 5).

**Data Collection**

The way the researchers collecting the data is by using two kinds of data collection. The primary source, which is from the novel Forrest Gump by Winston Groom. Researchers are doing an internal analysis of the elements of the novel, the researchers analyse the plot, themes, settings and characters in the novel. Secondary source, the researchers look for data from external sources such as journals, articles, internet, books, etc. to help compile this research with reliable data.

**Data Analysis**

The researchers use objective theory to conduct this research. The researchers examine the character of the main character in the novel which is one of the internal elements. According to Abrams, Objective theory regards the work of art in isolation from all external points of reference. It stands alone and focuses on the internal elements (Abrams, 26). This theory only focuses on the work itself or internal elements apart from external elements such as the source, artist or reader.

In analysing the data, researchers do a close reading of the novel and create a coding to help researcher easily find and arrange the research. Because this research uses objective theory, the researcher examines the internal elements of the novel, namely characters, plot, theme and setting. The researcher focuses on the character by classifying each character in the novel into two parts, namely Round Character and Flat Character.

According to Griffith, “Round characters or Complex characters have multiple personality traits, evolving characters that exhibit varied and sometimes conflicting traits” (Griffith, 61).

Forrest Gump is a mentally challenged young man, who courageously faces his fear because he is often bullied because of his disability. Forrest is a gentle and kind-hearted man. He really loves his mother and he always helps others even if he has to put himself in danger. He is able to perform several activities that require courage and confidence. So that things can help him be recognized by the people around him. He is the protagonist character in the novel.

The things that make Forrest Gump a round character because at first he was afraid to make friends with other children because he was often bullied, but thanks to his courage he managed to fight his fear of socializing with other people. Apart from being bullied, the problems experienced by Forrest were also when he was abandoned by his lover Jenny. However, after learning about Jenny's reasons for doing all that, Forrest just accepts the reality and he only wants the best for Jenny and their child.

“Flat or Simple characters have only one or two personality traits, different from the round characters that change, the flat characters remain the same and do not change” (Griffith, 61). The other flat
Characters are Mrs. Gump, Bubba, Coach Fellers. There are also other categories of character development, static and dynamic. Static characters are the same as flat characters who remain the same and dynamic characters are the same as round characters that change either experiencing the growth of an attitude or changes in conflict.

There are no important characters in Forrest Gump who are antagonists, all characters are related to the main character Forrest Gump. They have their respective roles in Forrest's life and are the reason Forrest to have passion in his life. In addition, it is these characters who have helped and witnessed the success of Forrest Gump. The only ones that could be classified as antagonists were the bullies. Researcher found that the characters’ traits in the novel Forrest Gump are courage, loving, kindness and devotion.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Courage in Forrest Gump

Forrest Gump is a novel by Winston Groom published in 1986 which tells about the adventures of an idiot who can become a football player, join the army and go to war in Vietnam, be able to participate and win several tournaments such as chess and ping-pong, until build a successful shrimp business.

Having courage means having the courage to take risks, dare to fight against limitations and dare to do the right thing. Forrest Gump is a man who has a low IQ. In the novel he is described as a mentally retarded child with an IQ of 70.

"I've been an idiot since I was born. My IQ is near 70, which qualifies me, so they say." (Groom, 1).

"People laugh, lose patience, treat you shabby. Now they says folks sposed to be kind to the afflicted, but let me tell you – it ain’t always that way. Even so, I got no complaint, cause I reckon I done live a pretty interestin life so to speak” (Groom, 1).

He was bullied, teased, and everyone who ever be with him always lost their temper, except for his mother. People always say to feel sorry for those who are suffering, but what they really meant is Forrest Gump himself. But he never complained because he was enjoying his life. When he was little, he had no friends, he was always with his mother even though many people felt sorry for him and even rejected him, he was able to live his life and all these things made him independent. As Arisudana stated, “Independent value shows the confidence attitude through a good work ethic in order to realize expectations and ideals with the energy and mind of a person without expecting the help of others” (Arisudana, 441).

Forrest enjoys his life without depending on others, he can prove that he is able to take care of himself. The thing that encourages someone to have courage is motivation, self-confidence, compassion, devotion, love, and passion. All of these things can be seen in the courageous actions of Forrest Gump, which is analyzed in two types of courage: Moral courage and Physical courage.
Moral Courage

In order to have moral courage, a person must have an attitude of paying attention to himself or taking risks even though he knows that he will be rejected or ostracized in a way that is unpleasant and painful (Miller, 255).

According to Ashton, “Moral courage involves acting with the expectation that others will disapprove and with no or rare direct rewards for the actor. It may be seen as requiring selflessness. There may be acts which appear to be brave but which are in fact only self-serving” (Ashton, 4).

Based on quotation above, moral courage is an action taken by someone in the hope that other people will not agree. Therefore moral courage is seen as requiring selflessness and eliminating our own fear of criticism or rejection. Although he has flaws and often underestimated by others, Forrest Gump can overcomes his handicap and explores the world in his own way.

Forrest Gump’s courage earned him recognition by people and earned him experiences and lessons in his life. Being brave does not mean Forrest does not have fear, but he is able to face it. A person who experiences a situation that frightens him but still chooses to do the right thing and counteracts his fear with firm confidence in the appropriate situation is a courageous person.

Those with self-confidence know who they are and what they have to do. The most important thing about having self-confidence is that a person is able to recognize his abilities, be confident in facing challenges, and be able to stand up against injustice.

Requiring Selflessness

Moral courage can be defined as requiring selflessness. It also means paying attention to other people by accepting constructive suggestions or critics that can be used as motivations. According to Wullur, “Motivation cannot be separated from human life. It is an important part of supporting their activity. It can be said that is the center and the source of the whole human activity” (Wullur, 24).

Without motivation, there will be no encouragement for someone to do something, because motivation is a driving force for humans to act or behave. However, motivation is often complex and people weigh factors before deciding whether to act or not. People can weigh the benefits and risks that might arise when they practice moral courage. We can say that action is moral courage if that action does not happen because of our personal interests but by respecting the opinions of others as long as it is in the right thing.

“At first, when I’s growin up, she’d let me go out an play with everybody, but then she foun out they’z teasing me an all, an one day a boy hit me in the back with a stick wile they was chasin me an it raised some fearsome welt” (Groom, 3).

The first time Forrest Gump shows courage in the novel is when his mother tells Forrest Gump to play outside the house and starts making friends with other children.
But he was bullied instead and they did not want to be friends with him. Not only accepting verbal bullying, Forrest was even hit with a stick by a boy so that it made him very scared.

“After that, she tol’ me not to play with the boys anymore I started tryin to play with the girls but that weren’t much better, cause they all run away from me’” (Groom, 3).

Forrest Gump had dared to get out of his comfort zone by doing what normal kids do, but he had to meet people who did not like him, they made fun of him, they acted rude to him and it made him really scared. His mother who knew about it then told him not to play with the boys anymore. Forrest Gump overcome his fears and tried to make friends with girls, but they were no different from boys either. The girls run away from him.

“Mama thought it would be good for me to go to public school cause maybe it would help me to be like everybody else, but after I been there a little while they come an told mama I ought’n to be in there with everybody else’” (Groom, 3).

After experiencing mistreatment from other children, his mother thought it would be better if Forrest Gump went to public school. Maybe it will help him to blend in with other people. Once again, Forrest Gump dared to do what his mother said, but the conditions at school were the same as in his neighbourhood. Forrest obeyed his mother to go to play with other children even though he had to fight his fear because of their treatment of not wanting to be friends with him. This is a picture of selflessness in moral courage.

Eliminating Fear

Feelings of anxiety or fear can arise under any circumstances. Forrest Gump proves he can fight his fear of being rejected by others even though he has to go through many hardships. He dared to show his ability in participating in activities such as tournaments in sports.

“An the other kids, they’d never play with me or nothin, cept to chase me or get me to start hollerin so’s they could laugh at me’” (Groom, 3).

The teacher told his mother that Forrest Gump should not be there, his teachers and friends are rejected him, other students chased him and made him scream and then they laughed at him. Even though Forrest knew that he would be rejected by people, he dared to fight his fear of going to a public school even though in the end he had to be transferred to an exceptional school for the same children as himself.

“We all sat down an he begun splainin things an axein me questions, an I just nodded my head, but what they wanted was for me to play football. That much I figgered out my own’” (Groom, 5).

Immediately his life changed when he met Coach Fellers who offered him to join
the Football team and Forrest began attending public high school.

“I just run as fast as I could toward the gym, across the practice football field an suddenly I seen coach Fellers, settin up in the bleachers watchin me. The guys who was chasin me stop and go away. . . that afternoon at the football practice . . . the quarterback give me the ball and I’m supposed to run outside the right end of the line to the goalpost” (Groom, 8).

Forrest began joining the High School Football team. At first he had difficulty understanding how to play football that taught by his coach, but they managed to find the right way to play for him when they saw him running because he was being chased by bullies. Forrest's job in the team is to run as fast as possible to the goalpost.

“Anyway, I become a lot more popular after that, an the other guys on the team started bein nicer to me. We had our first game an I was scared to death, but they gave me the ball and I run over the goal line two or three times and people never been kinder to me after that” (Groom, 9).

Forrest Gump's courage to join the football team is a boost from his self-confidence as confidence is one of the attributes of courage. As Rachman stated that "Courageous behavior is determined predominantly by the combination of competence and confidence and both of these qualities are strengthened by repeated and successful practice." (qtd in. Ashton, 5).

In addition to the combination of competence and self-confidence to have courage, it requires strong determination. However, gaining the courage to achieve something requires repeated and successful practice. After showing his courage and efforts, Forrest Gump began to be accepted by those around him, they started to be nice to him.

“It was the strangest thing. Jenny was singin “Blowing in the Wind” and when I begun to play, she stopped for a second and the banjo player, he stopped too, and they get this very surprised looks on they faces, and then Jenny give a big grin and she commence to pick up the song again, and the banjo player he stop and give me a chance to ride my harmonica for a while, and everybody in the crowd begun to clap and cheer when I was done” (Groom, 28).

Forrest also became reliable in playing the harmonica. He played it all the time until he did not know what song to play anymore. One time he watched Jenny's band play. Forrest enjoyed the performance of her band and without realizing it, he pulled out his harmonica and joined in. Everyone who heard him was shocked and cheered for Forrest.

“The next mornin is when the chess tournament is bein helt out at the Beverly Hills hotel . . . it took me about seven minutes to whup the first guy, who was a regional master . . . next was a kid about seventeen, and I wiped him put in less then half a hour” (Groom, 160)
Forrest Gump's courage made him appreciated by many people despite all his shortcomings. Starting from a child who is afraid to socialize in the end he dared to appear in front of many people, even though he was often humiliated because he was an idiot. This is the benefit of having courage. People who dare to take action or go beyond their limits can feel the changes brought about by their courage. Apart from joining the football team and band, Forrest entered chess tournaments and he easily beat professional chess players in less than half an hour.

**Physical Courage**

Physical courage is to perform an action that is directly related to physical danger. Forrest Gump shows physical courage several times in the novel.

“He got hissef a stick and start callin me things like “morrnon” and “stupo” . . . that feller take his stick and poke me in the stomach with it, and I says to myself, the hell with this, and I grapped a holt to his arm and with my other hand I knock him upside the head and that was the end of that, more or less” (Groom, 9).

When Forrest Gump was bullied at school a child poke his stomach with a stick and Forrest put up a fight because he wanted to protect himself.

“She tell me that since I am so huge now, I got to watch myself, cause I might hurt somebody. And I nodded and promised her I wouldn’t hurt nobody else. That night when I lyin in bed, I heard her cryin to herself in her room” (Groom, 9).

From this action, Forrest received threats from the boy's parents and his mother advised him not to hurt others. But Forrest heard his mother crying because of that incident.

Furthermore, physical courage is depicted from Forrest Gump joining in the Army. Being a soldier is an absolute example of physical courage, because going to war to carry out duties to protect the country requires physical courage. Through Forrest Gump Winston Groom tells how things are on the battlefield. Forrest Gump showed his courage by helping his friends who were injured and even killed, even though he had to risk his life who was also in danger.

“I call out to Doyle to come here, but they is no answer, I jerk the machine gun from po ole Bones’ fingers and squirm over to Doyle, but he and the two other guys layin there shot. They dead, but Doyle still breathin. So’s I grap him up and throw him over my shoulder like a flour sack and start runnin thru the brush towards Charlie Company” (Groom, 48).

Forrest saw three of his friends were shot, two people died and only Doyle was still breathing, as he saw him dying Forrest immediately carried Doyle and ran to a safe place to give Doyle help. Forrest helps his comrades because he has a caring nature for others, especially his close friends. As Sekeh stated that “social care or concern for
others is first addressed to the closest people” (Sekeh, 72).

Courage in the face of the dangers of battle involves mastering fear. We are called brave when we fight what hurts. But a person who is not afraid of things that should produce fear is a fool. Because someone who is reckless is not a brave person. Courage arises in feelings of fear and confidence, as well as in acknowledging excesses, deficiency, and self-reliance.

“Meantime, Bubba and me, we has got us plan for when we get outta the Army. We gonna go back home and get us a srimp boat and get in the srimpin bidness” (Groom, 50).

Not only Doyle, Forrest also helped Bubba. Bubba and Forrest have been close friends since they were in High School and they meet again in the Army. They had planned to build a shrimp business after leaving the Army.

“I leave the machine gun behind because it just be extra weight and start pumpin hard for where I last seen Bubba. But halfway out I nearly step on a feller from 2nd platoon who is mighty hurt, and he look up at me with his hand out...so I grap him up and run back with him fast as I can. Bullets and stuff be flyin all over” (Groom, 51).

After several days, their troops were attacked by the enemy and Bubba was shot. Everyone tried to save themselves as it was impossible to survive in the battle field, but Forrest showed courage and ran to find Bubba. While looking for Bubba, he found his comrade who was injured and took him.

Forrest's courageous actions returned to a dangerous place and risked his life all to save his friend. Forrest was afraid but he still chose to enter the battlefield. Because as Aristotle stated in Lengbeyer, “having a feeling of fear leads us to make choices whether to fight or run. A human being in the middle of war would be impossible if he did not experience fear. But war veterans face their main challenge by overcoming fear and doing their duties” (Lengbeyer, http://isme.tamu.ed/JSCOPE05/lengbeyer05.html#_ednref1).

Just before returning to Bubba he rescued several of his team and led them to safety. This action directly reflects the courageous act, which means Forrest Gump consciously makes choices to save his comrades in dangerous situations. Forrest remains calm in the face of danger as he is motivated by his duties and to find his best friend Bubba.

“There is Bubba, who is been hit twice in the chest, and I say, “Bubba, it gonna be okay, you hear, cause we gotta get that srimp boat and all.” And I carry him back to where we is set up and layed him on the ground” (Groom, 51).

Forrest returns to the battlefield and found Bubba that has been shot. He tries to calm Bubba by saying that everything will be fine while reminding him of their plan. Forrest managed to get Bubba to a safe place to get medical help, but Bubba did not
make it. On that time of sorrow Forrest lost his best friend.

Another example of physical courage performed by Forrest Gump is when he participates in a ping-pong tournament and he saves his opponent from drowning in a river.

"Chairman Mao at the age of eighty is gonna swim this river by hissef and they want us to watch him do it." (Groom, 72).

An eighty year-old man who wants to show his prowess is swimming at the river for everyone to watch.

"Bout a minute later, he wave again and everybody wave back. Not too long after that, Chairman Mao wave for the third time, and suddenly it begun to dawn on everybody that he is not waving, he is drownin!'" (Groom, 72).

The people were so excited watching Chairman Mao, the audience thought Chairman Mao was waving at them because he was enjoyed swimming, so they waved back at Chairman Mao. They did not realize that he was asking for help because he was going to drown.

"Cause I saw he went under, and I thowed off my shoes and into the river I went. I past all the Chinamen who was swimming out there and got to the place where Chairman Mao had gone under” (Groom, 72).

"I haul him up and some Chinamen grapped him and thowed him in the boat and took off. Din’ even bother to take me along, and so’s I have got to swim all the way back by myself" (Groom, 73).

After realizing what really happened that Chairman Mao was drowning, Forrest immediately acted to help him. He immediately swam to the place where he last saw Chairman Mao. Forrest was not the only one who acted to help, but Forrest found Chairman Mao. He swam past the other Chinamen, but when he found Chairman Mao, the Chinamen just lifted Chairman Mao on the boat and just left without paying any attention to Forrest. Forrest had to swim back to the riverbank.

The courage of all Forrest Gump's actions, in this case his physical courage, occurs because of a sense of care. The feeling of caring and feeling connected to someone or something leads to willingness to make sacrifices to protect what is loved and cared for. Caring is a crucial component of courage. Without caring, there is no need for courage. Without courage, caring does not last)

The quotation above explained that caring is the attribute of courage. Because, without caring someone will not have courage. Our caring for someone or something can make us make sacrifices to protect what we love and care about.

“Anyway, things has gotten real big-time. We got a fleet of refrigerator trucks and a fleet of shrimp, oyster and fishin boats. We got out own packing house,
Finally, Forrest Gump's courageous act was to keep his promise to Bubba of building a shrimp business. This is proof of Forrest's devotion to his best friend, according to Sabudu "loyalty is a virtue everyone is expected to be loyal in so many and various situation and conditions" (Sabudu, 26). Even though the situation had changed now, it was only Forrest himself who would continue their dream without Bubba with him, but he still made it happen.

Forrest built this business on his own, a major achievement that was proven initially only from a small pond to raise shrimp, until he was able to build a large company with all adequate facilities. The proceeds from the income from the business he shared with Bubba's family too.

5. CONCLUSION

As the results of the analysis, the researchers can conclude that courage is the ability to do something right and the ability for someone to face difficulties, dangers, pain etc. Having courage does not mean that someone does not have fear, but can overcome that fear. Although Forrest has a very low IQ and he is said to be an idiot he can prove himself to others with his courageous acts. Even though he is often bullied and rejected because of his mental capacity, he can change how others see him by becoming a football player, participating in tournaments, becoming a soldier, and build a successful shrimp business.

A person can get rid of his fear because he is able to face that fear and of course by having self-confidence. Moral courage is seen when Forrest obeys his mother's wishes by blending in with the people around him even though he knows they will reject him. To have moral courage one must be selflessness and able to eliminating their fear of rejection.

Physical courage is practiced to protect himself and protect his comrades, while moral courage when he is able to obey his mother's words to socialize with other people and show his ability and intelligence even though he knows he will be rejected. To have the courage, a person must change his mindset and not be selfish in the sense of accepting opinions from others to be used as motivation for oneself.

Besides of that, compassion, caring and devotion are also important things to be courageous because someone tends to be willing to sacrifice to protect or help others. All of these things must be accompanied by self-confidence, because confident is a driving force for someone to have a passion for courageous action.

6. REFERENCES


