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**Submission date:** 29-Apr-2021 06:52AM (UTC-0700)

**Submission ID:** 1573368683

**File name:** jamawego.edited.docx (24.73K)

**Word count:** 1781

**Character count:** 9304

**Film Review: Wizard of Lies Movie**

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### **Film Review: Wizard of Lies Movie**

Wizard of Lies is a movie based on a real-life story of Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme where he deceived and corruptly acquired money from unsuspecting people; the money he used to live love and keep everyone around him. As directed by Levinson (2017), De Niro played the role of Bernie, where he portrayed how his corrupt business dealings and deception tore his family apart, as seen when his children-Nivola and Nathan, turned him into the Feds as they cut the link with even their mother, Michelle. The latter stood with their father's lies. The corrupt business deals by De Niro in the movie evoked much suffering not only to the family, which got torn apart as a result but also to the rest of the society, which is one way or the other. Notably, the scandal negatively impacted their lives. Nivola got so depressed when he realized that the public hated him (Levinson, 2017). The consequences of business misdeed by De Niro put him in jail as his family members become miserable since there was no money to sustain the previously lavish lifestyle that they used to have. The hatred they face from society makes them isolated from the rest, making the De Niro's attempt suicide. Thus, the movie depicts precisely what happens in the society whereby big organizations scandalously mint money from the unsuspecting public, then give the peanuts in the name of social cooperate responsibility. Later the truth is revealed, something that puts the public in much suffering. This paper looks at the conflict and functionalism sociological theoretical perspectives concerning the wizard of the lies movie.

### **Conflict Theory Concerning the Wizard of Lies Movie**

Conflict theory looks at how the social and economic institutions are the providers of the competition among the social groups over scarce resources in the society. The wizard of Lies

movie portrays the conflict between various levels of groups in the pursuit of each group's control of the few available resources. De Niro, in the movie, wants to maintain his social status, and by so doing, he decides to engage in corrupt business dealings, which makes him rob the poor. He decides to do this without informing his children because he is aware that informing his children about the dark side of the company will create conflict with them. They may decide to spill the beans to look good in the public eye as he gets incriminated (Levinson, 2017). Later, when the children realized the bad dealings that their father had made, they got him into the Feds, which made them reject their mother Michelle's calls because she appeared to support the father (Levinson, 2017). There is conflict in the family because of the family's company, which offered a breeding ground for such societal problems. Hence, the parents and children all fight to control and maintain their names in the public's eye concerning the company's resources.

Conflict theory is a sociological perspective where people of various groups and interests all fight against each other to capitalistically manage and control masses (Hayes & Barnier, 2020). De Niro and Michelle are well aware that corrupt business dealings are dangerous and have dire consequences on the family's and their business wellbeing. Still, De Niro decides to sign free cheques to the public to cover up for his misdoings and maintain his name in society as a wealthy, generous man. On the other hand, the children decide to break up with the family after knowing the truth to look good in society and act as whistleblowers (Levinson, 2017). As a result, the two family groups become antagonists because of presence of the family business, and the conflict is all aimed at controlling the business' resources that have always been scarce. The conflict escalates when De Niro realizes that his children have refused to sign for his bail, which sinks his heart. The children want their father jailed by and by refusing to receive calls from Michelle. They want to remain the sole controllers of the business in being good characters for

they whistle-blow the business corruption deeds noted by Collins & Sanderson (2015). They believe that such conflict exists because every party wants to be at the top.

Another aspect of conflict in the movie is when the public turns against De Niro's family after unearthed scandal. The main reason people fight over scarce resources in society, according to Boulding (2018), is because of the social stratification created to maintain the social class where the poor will always have to look up to the rich who exploit them to maintain the gap. It is notable in the movie that there is always hatred between the poor and the rich that is not expressed publicly, and it only gets evident when a social issue happens between the two social classes. Previously De Niro, before being arrested for unsuspected corrupting citizens, used to be a darling of many who used to surround him as they party and merry. At the same time, there existed no form of social unrest and suspicion when he used to give donations to the public, but after his arrest, the society that used to look up to him turned against and socially isolated his family members (Levinson, 2017). This showed that the hatred between the poor and the rich exists, but until there exists a social issue between the two classes, they will live in harmony.

If either of them knowingly or unknowingly wrongs the other, then the conflict escalates to the extent that social unrest can be witnessed. In this case, the social isolation had a more significant impact on De Niro's family in that they got depressed and even attempted murder on themselves. The poor feel that their poverty is because of the continued oppression they experience from the rich, consequently making them hate the rich by default. On the other hand, the rich will do everything within their powers to control the poor even if giving them peanuts from the resources exploited from as witnessed in the movie the wizard of lies. The conflict on who to control the social institution's resources is not healthy because every party will be

working towards bringing down the other. Instead of working towards prosperity of social and economic institutions, they are mandated by the society to protect towards prosperity.

### **Functionalism Theory Concerning the Wizard of Lies Movie**

The functionalist theory argues that a strong society through stable social institutions is necessary for social stability to be maintained and achieved. Any social change that threatens the smooth running of society must slowly be effected to avoid imposing many adverse effects on society. Concerning the wizard of the lies movie, this perspective is witnessed when everything was moving quite well. The scandal of the De Niro- a social problem, went unnoticed until the children decided to set up their father to the Feds. For that reason, Nivola got so depressed when he realized that the public hated him so much (Levinson, 2017). Nivola and Nathan set their father up inspired by maintaining their good in society, not knowing that the sudden action could lead to their isolation and, consequently, make them depressed.

Notably, to avoid the depression and family disconnect that the De Niro family experienced, after realizing that their father had been scandalous in his business, they would have taken all the necessary positive remedies to prevent such from happening. At the same time, make ways of overtime compensating those affected while looking at the possible ways of handling their father to the Feds to answer his corruption charges. As suggested by functionalist theory, this could easily prevent their company from getting bankrupted and cushion the families that were probably benefiting from the business and probably reduce the hatred they experienced from society. University of Minnesota (2010) clarifies that to maintain social stability then the social challenges must gradually be remedied instead of the sudden solutions, which will make the desired change be reached with minor adverse effects in the society. The social and economic

institutions and, in this case, De Niro's family business play a significant role in the social structure maintenance. Therefore, any threat to their existence must cause havoc and suffering in society. That is why the functionalism theorist believes that changes to the institutions' functioning must be employed gradually to prevent dire consequences in society.

Functionalism theoretical perspective looks at the social institutions as the fabric of societal sustenance and therefore, society members who are in the leadership of such institutions have the responsibility of protecting them. In this case, De Nairo's family had to face depression occasioned by their greed by overlooking the broader picture of protecting their business, a source of their livelihood (Levinson, 2017). The functions of the social and economic institutions in the society should be protected through slow introduction of any change that might injure the functionality of such institutions (University of Minnesota, 2010). Additionally, the collapse of such institutions must be prevented to enhance steady flow of resources in the society, something that lacked in <sup>1</sup> [The Wizard of Lies](#) Movie.

Conclusively, [the movie the wizard of lies](#) properly brings [the](#) real society into perspective by showing how greed and the urge to maintain social class can bring suffering to the family, which is the foundation of a society. Such bad decisions to be corrupt can make society isolated in society, making them view as evil, immoral, and lack societal values that embrace handwork, truthfulness, and honesty as critical pillars towards success. De Niro puts his family into conflict and family separation. The children and parents see each other as antagonists against the fulfillment of each side's desires and interests. The conflict theorists describe their situation as each antagonistic party having a strong desire to control the business resources work towards the downfall of each other and most evident when the children set their father to the Feds. In an attempt to look at the best way to have achieved the solution for De Niro's corruption

business problem, functionalists believe that the change would have caused minor adverse effects if the family would have chosen to gradually cooperate the changes they so desired to make for social sustainability of the business.

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