

REPRESENTATION OF VERBAL AND VISUAL BULLYING IN INDONESIA MOVIE "KALIAN PANTAS MATI": BARTHES'S THEORY

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Abstract. Using Roland Barthes semiotic framework, this article examines how verbal and visual bullying are represented in the Indonesian film “*Kalian Pantas Mati*” (2022). The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach with a single case study design. The data consisted of 27 purposively selected scenes depicting verbal and visual bullying. Data were collected through documentation by repeatedly viewing the film, transcribing relevant dialogues, and selected scenes. The collected data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, and were subsequently interpreted through Barthes concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth. The analysis shows that verbal bullying is represented through insults, name calling, and threats, whereas multimodal bullying combines verbal abuse with intimidating gestures, social exclusion, and mocking expressions. At the connotative and mythical levels, these representations construct bullying as a form of symbolic domination that reinforces unequal power relations and normalizes violence within the school environment. These findings demonstrate how cinematic representation constructs ideological meanings that shape public understandings of bullying and social domination.

Keywords: *Verbal bullying, visual bullying, semiotics, representation, Roland Barthes*

Abstrak. Dengan menggunakan kerangka semiotik Roland Barthes, artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana perundungan verbal dan visual direpresentasikan dalam film Indonesia “*Kalian Pantas Mati*” (2022). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus tunggal. Data terdiri dari 27 adegan yang dipilih secara purposif yang menggambarkan perundungan verbal dan visual. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui dokumentasi dengan menonton film berulang kali, mentranskripsikan dialog-dialog yang relevan, serta adegan-adegan yang dipilih. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman mengenai reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi, kemudian diinterpretasikan melalui konsep-konsep Barthes mengenai denotasi, konotasi, dan mitos. Analisis menunjukkan bahwa perundungan verbal direpresentasikan melalui hinaan, ejekan, dan ancaman, sedangkan perundungan multimodal menggabungkan pelecehan verbal dengan gerak-gerik yang mengintimidasi, pengucilan sosial, dan ekspresi mengejek. Pada tingkat konotatif dan mitis, representasi-representasi ini membangun perundungan sebagai bentuk dominasi simbolis yang memperkuat hubungan kekuasaan yang tidak setara dan menormalisasi kekerasan di lingkungan sekolah. Temuan ini menunjukkan bagaimana representasi sinematik membangun makna-makna ideologis yang membentuk pemahaman publik tentang perundungan dan dominasi sosial.

Kata kunci: *Perundungan verbal, perundungan visual, semiotika, representasi, Roland Barthes*

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is not merely an act of aggression between individuals but a social and cultural practice through which power, identity, and social boundaries are constructed. Within institutional environments such as schools, bullying functions as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion by positioning certain individuals as dominant while marginalizing others. In media representations, particularly film, bullying is not only presented as a personal conflict among characters but also constructed as a meaningful social phenomenon that reflects broader cultural assumptions about authority, normality, and difference. Therefore, films can be understood as ideological texts that do not simply represent reality but participate in producing meanings about social relations. The Indonesian film *Kalian Pantas Mati* (2022), directed by Ginanti Rona, provides an important context for examining these processes because it combines elements of horror and school life to portray bullying through both verbal expressions and visual actions. Within this representation, bullying operates as a system of signs through which domination, exclusion, and social control are communicated.

The representation of bullying in film is significant because cinematic texts construct meaning through various modes of communication. Verbal expressions, such as insults, name-calling, and threats, do not function merely as spoken words but as symbolic practices that classify individuals and establish social hierarchies. Likewise, visual elements, including aggressive gestures, physical intimidation, body positioning, and acts of exclusion, contribute to the construction of meaning by presenting relationships of power and vulnerability. According to (Hall, 2013), representation is not a simple reflection of reality but a process through which meaning is produced and circulated through language and cultural systems. Thus, the representation of bullying in *Kalian Pantas Mati* can be examined as a process of meaning production in which verbal and visual signs interact to construct particular understandings of dominance, victimization, and social order.

Previous studies have investigated bullying representation in various media texts using semiotic and representational approaches. (Fadhila Nurul Atika, 2020), for example, examines bullying in the film *Joker* and identifies physical, verbal, and social exclusion as forms of violence represented through cinematic signs. Similarly, (Syachrany & Purwanti, 2024) analyze bullying representation in the film *Bebas*, demonstrating how adolescent interactions construct patterns of intimidation and marginalization. (Rahman & Sjafrizal, 2024) investigate *Please Don't Save Me* and highlight the role of narrative and visual elements in representing psychological violence. Other studies, including (Indah Erlina, 2022) research on *The Glory* and (Tri Ramadhani et al., 2024) analysis of *A Silent Voice*, reveal that bullying representations often contain symbolic meanings beyond the physical acts themselves. These studies demonstrate that bullying in media is closely related to issues of identity, social exclusion, and cultural meaning.

However, existing studies still leave several aspects insufficiently explored. First, many previous analyses focus primarily on identifying forms of bullying or interpreting individual signs without examining how different modes of representation operate together within a single cinematic text. In particular, the relationship between verbal and visual elements remains underexplored. Verbal bullying does not only exist through offensive language, while visual bullying does not only appear through physical actions; rather, both modes interact to strengthen particular meanings. For example, an insult directed at a victim may become more powerful when accompanied by threatening gestures, physical positioning, or the passive presence of observers. The combination of these elements creates a broader representation of domination, where language establishes social labeling while visual actions reinforce unequal power relations. Therefore, understanding bullying representation requires an analysis of how verbal

expressions and visual signs work together in producing meanings of exclusion, hierarchy, and normalization.

Second, previous research has paid limited attention to Indonesian horror films as spaces where bullying representation intersects with symbolic and ideological meanings. While existing studies have examined bullying in different cinematic contexts, fewer studies have explored how the horror genre intensifies representations of fear, punishment, and social control. In *Kalian Pantas Mati*, bullying is not represented only as interpersonal violence but also as a cultural practice embedded within school relations. The film provides an opportunity to examine how everyday acts of humiliation and intimidation become meaningful signs that reflect broader structures of power.

To address these gaps, this study employs Roland Barthes semiotic framework as the primary analytical approach to examine how bullying signs generate meaning through processes of denotation, connotation, and myth. (Barthes, 1991) explains that signs operate beyond their literal meanings because cultural values and ideologies can become naturalized through repeated representation. Through this perspective, bullying scenes in *Kalian Pantas Mati* can be analyzed not only as depictions of aggression but as signifying practices that construct social meanings about authority, inferiority, and acceptable behavior. The analysis of denotation identifies the literal representation of bullying events, while connotation reveals the cultural meanings attached to these signs. At the level of myth, the study examines how certain forms of domination and humiliation may become normalized as ordinary or justified social practices.

In interpreting these meanings, this study also considers Hall's concept of representation and Foucault's discussion of power relations as supporting perspectives. Hall's theory helps explain how language and visual signs contribute to the production of social identities and cultural meanings. Meanwhile, Foucault's concept of power provides a perspective for understanding how domination operates through everyday practices, discourse, and social interactions rather than through direct control alone. These perspectives are relevant for interpreting how bullying in the film reflects processes of social classification, exclusion, and normalization. However, they are not positioned as separate analytical frameworks but as conceptual perspectives that support the interpretation of meanings produced through Barthes' semiotic analysis.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a single-case study design to analyze the representation of bullying in the Indonesian film *Kalian Pantas Mati* (2022), directed by Ginanti Rona. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enables the interpretation of meanings embedded in social and cultural phenomena (Ishtiaq, 2019). Meanwhile, the single-case study design was used to facilitate an in-depth analysis of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Robert K. Yin, 2003).

The primary data source was the film *Kalian Pantas Mati* (2022). The data consisted of 27 purposively selected scenes representing verbal and visual bullying. Scene selection was based on their relevance to the research objectives, particularly scenes containing bullying indicators such as insults, name-calling, threats, mockery, intimidation, and social exclusion. Scenes that did not contain explicit verbal or visual bullying were excluded to maintain the analytical focus.

Data were collected through documentation. The researcher repeatedly viewed the film to identify scenes representing bullying, transcribed the relevant dialogues, and documented selected scenes using screenshots to support the visual analysis. Each data unit was

systematically labeled with its time code, characters involved, and type of bullying representation to ensure consistency and traceability throughout the analysis.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, supported by a data sheet used to organize and classify the data. The data sheet included the scene number, dialogue, visual description, type of bullying, and semiotic categories comprising denotation, connotation, and myth.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by (Miles, 2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, scenes relevant to the research objectives were selected and classified according to their forms of bullying representation. The organized data were then displayed in analytical tables containing dialogues, visual descriptions, and semiotic categories. Finally, each selected scene was interpreted using Roland Barthes semiotic framework of denotation, connotation, and myth to reveal the meanings embedded in the representation of bullying in the film.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the Indonesian film *Kalian Pantas Mati* (2022) identified 27 scenes that represent bullying practices within a school setting. Based on the characteristics of the data, bullying representations are categorized into two main patterns: verbal bullying and the combination of verbal and visual bullying. This classification is based on the presence of linguistic expressions such as insults, name-calling, and threats, as well as their reinforcement through visual actions including gestures, intimidation, and exclusion.

To provide a concise overview of the findings, the frequency of each category is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Bullying Representation in *Kalian Pantas Mati*

Type of Representation	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal Bullying	8	29.63%
Visual + Verbal Bullying	19	70.37%
Total	27	100%

As shown in Table 1, the findings indicate that visual and verbal bullying is more dominant (70.37%) compared to purely verbal bullying (29.63%). This suggests that bullying in the film is primarily constructed through the interaction between language and visual signs rather than through dialogue alone.

In terms of characteristics, verbal bullying is mainly expressed through insults, ridicule, and name-calling, which directly degrade the victim's identity. In contrast, the combination of verbal and visual bullying involves aggressive gestures, physical intimidation, and deliberate exclusion that reinforce verbal attacks. These patterns demonstrate that bullying is represented as a multimodal phenomenon, where meaning is produced through the integration of speech and visual performance.

To illustrate how these representations operate at the level of signification, two representative scenes are analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, covering denotation, connotation, and myth. These tables summarize the semiotic structure of the selected scenes, while the following discussion elaborates their meanings in relation to power, representation, and social hierarchy.

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis of Verbal Bullying

- The Data 1

Signifier	Signified
	The cyclist says “excuse me” to ask given way politely and apologizes showing guilt or not wanting to be a nuisance. One of the students replied “idiot” which shows telling the boy on the bike that he is stupid, careless, or useless.
Sign I (Denotation) A student accidentally passed by on a bike and apologized to another student, but was immediately verbally mocked as an “idiot”.	Signified II A form of verbal bullying that reflects quick judgment and contempt for individuals who are perceived to “disrupt” the existence of the dominant group.
Sign II (Connotation) It represents how social norms among students are often met with standards of dominant masculinity or group superiority. The word “idiot” shows a disproportionate reaction of instant humiliation to a small mistake, exposing the imbalance of power relations between students and their peers.	
Myth Verbal Bullying as a form of power domination between students. The myth that the victim deserves the blame in an unequal social structure and that it is normal to insult others forms an illusion of power spreading the notion that the wrong or disruptive deserves to be humiliated.	

The scene presented in Table 2 illustrates how verbal bullying operates as a form of symbolic domination. Although the victim demonstrates politeness by apologizing, the response he receives is immediate humiliation through the label “idiot.” At the denotative level, the interaction appears as a simple verbal exchange; however, at the connotative level, the insult represents a mechanism of social classification that positions the victim as inferior. This finding supports previous studies on bullying representation in film, which indicate that verbal expressions such as insults and name-calling function beyond direct communication by constructing negative identities and reinforcing social boundaries (Fadhila Nurul Atika, 2020; Rahman & Sjafrizal, 2024). However, the present analysis further demonstrates that verbal

bullying in *Kalian Pantas Mati* operates through a semiotic process in which language becomes a sign of unequal social positioning. In line with Hall's concept of representation, the label "idiot" does not merely describe the victim but produces a particular identity through language. From a Foucauldian perspective, such labeling represents a form of discursive power because it regulates who is positioned as acceptable or inferior within the group. At the level of myth, the repeated use of insulting expressions naturalizes verbal aggression as an acceptable social practice, transforming humiliation into a seemingly normal interaction rather than recognizing it as a form of domination.

Table 3. Semiotic Analysis of Verbal and Visual Bullying

- The Data 6

Signifier	Signified
	saying someone "Lunatic! Asshole!" who is considered insane, behaving in a crazy or unreasonable manner, stupid out of control, annoying.
Sign I (Denotation)	
One student pushed another student into the wire fence, shouting "Lunatic! Asshole!", witnessed by a female student who just stood watching.	Signified II
Sign II (Connotation)	
The word "lunatic" psychically stigmatizes the victim as insane or socially unworthy, while "asshole" is a moral insult. The push to the fence symbolizes literal and symbolic social alienation as a form of exclusion. The silent audience reinforces a social structure that accepts violence as a form of discipline or correction. This act is a form of informal power that serves to subdue individuals who deviate from group norms.	
Myth	

The myth is that violence and humiliation can be justified to maintain social and group norms. The labels “lunatic” and “asshole” are used not just to insult, but to assign negative identities. Violence becomes a way of ‘educating’ or ‘disciplining’ that is considered normal in the school environment, and the presence of inaction onlookers reinforces the illusion that these actions are acceptable.

As shown in Table 3, bullying is represented through the combination of verbal and visual elements, which intensifies its meaning and impact. The verbal expressions “lunatic” and “asshole” not only insult the victim but also assign a stigmatized identity, while the physical act of pushing reinforces domination through bodily control. Denotatively, the scene depicts aggression between students; however, at the connotative level, it symbolizes social exclusion and the enforcement of group norms. The presence of passive bystanders further indicates that such behavior is socially tolerated. This aligns with Foucault’s notion of power as embedded in everyday practices, where control is exercised through both language and physical actions. At the myth level, the scene constructs the idea that violence can be justified as a form of discipline, thereby normalizing aggressive behavior within the social structure. This finding indicates that bullying representation in the film is inherently multimodal, where meaning is constructed through the interaction between verbal expressions and visual actions rather than through language alone.

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