Semiotics of Sexual Harassment Representation in *Photocopier*: A John Fiske Semiotic Theory of Reality, Representation, and Ideology

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Abstract

Sexual harassment is an interesting issue in a nation that was once safe and peaceful, Indonesia. Sexual harassment seizures that get less attention, both from the authorities and the authorities or even have to choose silence when dealing with the more powerful parties often occur. This creates a negative stigma and causes sexual abuse traffickers to be afraid to complain about the crimes that occur to themselves and the absence of a deterrent effect on the perpetrator makes the perpetrators act freely because they feel themselves safe. This phenomenon was made into a Light Confiscation Film Photocopier. The purpose of the researchers in raising this discussion is to describe and represent the case of sexual harassment raised in the film Photocopier. Researchers used analytical techniques using qualitative methods and took John Fiske's semiotic examination methods to pass codes and profound importance on to films. The outcomes showed that the portrayal of sexual brutality in this film there are three phases as per John Fiske covering the degree of the real world, the degree of portrayal and the degree of philosophy inferred from the depiction of sexual violence carried out and concluded that in this film use patriarchal ideology and social class.

Keywords

Representations of Sexual Harassment, Light Confiscation Film (Photocopier), John Fiske

Abstrak

Pelecehan seksual merupakan topik yang tengah hangat terjadi pada negeri yang dulunya aman dan damai, Indonesia. Para penyitas pelecehan seksual yang kurang mendapatkan perhatian, baik dari pihak keliarga maupun pihak yang berwajib atau bahkan harus memilih bungkam saat berhadapan dengan pihak yang lebih berkuasa sering terjadi. Hal ini menimbulkan stigma negatif dan menyebabkan para penyitas pelecehan seksual menjadi takut untuk mengadukan kejahatan yang terjadi pada diri mereka dan ketiadaan efek jera pada pelaku membuat pelaku pelecehan seksual bertindak dengan bebas karena merasa diri mereka aman. Fenomena ini diangkat

menjadi sebuah Film Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier). Tujuan peneliti dalam mengangkat pembahasan ini adalah untuk menjabarkan dan merepresentasikan kasus pelecehan seksual yang diangkat pada film Photocopier. Peneliti menggunakan teknik analisis dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan mengambil teknik analisa semiotika John Fiske untuk menyampaikan kode-kode dan arti mendalam pada film. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa representasi kekerasan seksual pada film ini terdapat tiga tahapan menurut John Fiske meliputi level realitas, level representasi dan level ideologi disimpulkan dari penggambaran kekerasan seksual yang dilakukan dan disimpulkan bahwa pada film ini menggunakan ideologi patriarki dan kelas social.

Katakunci:
Representasi Pelecehan seksual, Film Penyitas Cahaya (Photocopier), Analisa Semiotika John Fiske

Introduction

The world of cinema, at present, has various functions, among which is becoming one of the media used as a channel for digital mass communication (Ridwan & Adji, 2019). Film, then, is viewed as a very effective communication medium in disseminating an idea. This is because a film has the potential to influence a broad audience (Purtanti & Hendriyani, 2022). Therefore, films at present are made with various purposes, among which is to convey issues that are currently present and experienced by society (Azhari, 2020).

A film is claimed to be able to become a good communication channel and can deliver the message it contains effectively because it uses good visual representation, combined with supporting audio, interesting expressions from the actors, and is supported by a compelling and intriguing narrative flow for its viewers (Schmälzle & Meshi, 2020). From a film, a person will not only be entertained, but can also learn about how something can happen, learn many emotions portrayed, recognize various cultures in society, and absorb some information contained in it (Madhona & Yenny, 2022).

Film, according to (Köse, Arıcı-Şahin, & Abakay, 2021), is a creative work made based on the reality that occurs in the society of the filmmaker. In addition, according to (Ridwan & Adji, 2019), a film is also stated to be a reflection of the reality of life in society. Then, (Sun, 2020) argues that, in media studies, film is actually a good message deliverer in the study of culture, society, politics, and so on. Therefore, the function of film greatly depends on its creator. In a film, there is an ideology and idea as well as a message that the filmmaker wants to highlight and convey to the wider public (Tokosh & Chen, 2020). In addition, film is also a medium,for conveying messages and unrest experienced by society, presented visually through symbols or dialogues that criticize certain parties by portraying the existing reality so that it is hoped that the public's mindset can change. Penyalin Cahaya is one of the films made and based on issues that are currently occurring related to sexual harassment. This film by Wregas Bhanuteja raises the theme of sexual harassment experienced by female students (Selvira, 2022).

The film Penyalin Cahaya is based on the many incidents of sexual harassment survivors who do not get justice. Sexual harassment is not only carried out in the form of physical touch such as hugging, kissing, and touching unwanted body parts.

However, unwanted non-physical behavior is also a form of sexual harassment, such as taking pictures without permission, peeping, giving signals with sexual elements, forcing someone to engage in sexual acts, observing sexual parts directly or through technology, as well as verbal acts or physical touches (Febriyani, 2020).

Sexual harassment can occur in public transportation and other public places such as in educational environments, at home, at social gatherings, and in online groups. This sexual harassment can happen in many ways such as face-to-face interaction, through phone, text, social media, email, and others (Burn, 2018). The presence of various stigmas such as the absence of a support system, safe space, and lack of public knowledge about sexual violence becomes one of the causes why victims of sexual violence choose to keep the incidents they experienced to themselves (Novirdayani, 2021). This film is considered to have its own courage because it was released and simultaneously displays sexual violence that is currently widely happening in Indonesia.

The victim of sexual violence raised in the film Penyalin Cahaya is a female student named Sur who was trapped and harassed during a theater success party. Sur then reported it to the campus authority. Unfortunately, Sur was instead cornered by the perpetrator, who brought in a lawyer. This caused Sur to not get justice as a victim of sexual violence. Sur was even forced to make a clarification video of apology (which was recorded by her own father) after a tense argument with the perpetrator's side.

This led the researcher to conclude that the party in power has a greater opportunity to win even though they are the ones at fault. Meanwhile, the victim seeking justice is increasingly marginalized. The writer even underlined that the victim does not always get support from the family. This is because the clarification video of Sur was recorded by her own father. In fact, the family should be the ones who give encouragement and accompany the victim in fighting for justice for herself.

This film also erases the stigma that women's revealing clothes are an opening for perpetrators of sexual crime. This contradicts the main character in this film, Sur, who was still harassed even though she wore a closed kebaya with long inner sleeves and did not wear revealing clothes either in her daily wear. This was done based on her father's advice not to wear revealing clothing at the party.

However, the researcher also took note of the actions of Sur's mother. The mother, who knew that her daughter was slandered and treated unpleasantly by the campus, fully supported Sur to continue seeking other evidence. Unfortunately, other evidence that might free Sur from negative stigma, sexual harassment, and violence experienced was ignored by the authorities (Prasetya & Rahman, 2020). This caused the victim of sexual harassment, once again, to be silenced. This helpless sexual harassment victim, sadly, is not only experienced by Sur.

This film, which criticizes sexual crime perpetrators and those who support them in Indonesia, is based on a true event from one of the writers. The film Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier) provides a representation based on the real story of a sexual violence survivor in Indonesia who had to choose to remain silent when facing a more powerful party (Sadikin, Ramdhani, & Tayo, 2020). Based on data from the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (Simfoni PPPA) cited from (Kompas.com, 2022), a total of 1,411 cases of violence against women occurred in Indonesia from January 1 to February 22, 2022, recorded by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA). Furthermore, as many as 26%

of women aged 15-64 experienced physical and/or sexual violence by partners or non-partners. These two data points prove that the issue raised in this film is a real occurrence that must receive more attention.

This film, which was released during the peak of public discourse on sexual violence occurring in Indonesia, successfully won 12 Citra Awards and received positive responses from film critics.

Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier), through this film, also aims to convey that if the victim's report is seriously followed up by the authorities first, it may reveal what actually happened. Then, this will make the victim more courageous and make the perpetrator feel deterrent. Thus, it is hoped that this will minimize similar incidents.

Through this film, the researcher also underlines that the academic system, which should act as protector and supervisor while the victim is still a student under that academic institution, should not merely submit and trust people with power or higher social status without further investigating the incident that harmed its student.

This film Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier), according to the researcher, represents more aspects about sexual violence. Based on several data, phenomena, and explanations mentioned above, the researcher is interested and considers that the study on The Representation of Sexual Harassment in the Film Photocopier is important to be researched. Moreover, there is an issue that John Fiske's Semiotic Analysis is used by the researcher to study signs and meanings of sign systems, learning how a meaning is built in society. Through John Fiske's Semiotic Analysis, the researcher will explain clearly the codes that exist in the television world and link them to form a meaning (Azizah, 2021).

There are several similar previous studies regarding films using John Fiske's Semiotics, for example a study conducted by Hidayat & Prasetio (2015) titled The Representation of Nationalism in the Film Habibie & Ainun. With a qualitative method using the theory The Codes of Television by John Fiske, this study found that even though the film Habibie & Ainun is wrapped in romantic drama, there is a nationalism ideology owned by Habibie that can be seen through speech, movement, expression, and dialogue. One of them is through the conversation when Ainun asked whether Habibie would return after graduating, to which Habibie replied that he must return because he promised to build Indonesia and has big dreams as a citizen.

The next study is a work written by Simanullang (2018) titled The Representation of Polygamy in the Film Athirah, with a qualitative method and focus on audio-visuals, using a critical paradigm and John Fiske's analysis. The result of this study shows the representation of polygamy in the film Athirah as seen through three levels: the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology, namely the impact of polygamy on the wife and children as seen through appearance aspects, speech, camera aspects, lighting, music, and others.

There are several similarities and differences between previous studies and what is being researched this time, namely the similarity in using film as a research object, the use of John Fiske's analysis theory, and the aspects used. However, there are also differences in the film issue being studied, where this time it is more of a social critique regarding the disparity of treatment and harassment often received by women, as well as describing the reality where the courage and firmness of victims to seek justice and stand for themselves are often not enough to gain support and trust from those around them, and in the end they are often blamed and considered

'deserving' to be harassed. Not only that, the resistance to stigma fought by women and how certain parties respond to sexual harassment in this film are very close to what is happening in Indonesia. This becomes a novelty and an interesting point to be researched.

explain more deeply about the representation of sexual harassment in the film Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier) with the title John Fiske's Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Sexual Harassment in the Film Penyalin Cahaya. The research will be conducted using a qualitative method with analysis and exploration. Research with this method aims to interpret and understand the meaning of an event as intended from the perspective of the researcher (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). The researcher's hope after writing this study is to show students and the public more broadly about how the values represented by the director are conveyed through the film Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier). This study will thoroughly discuss the representation of sexual harassment as presented in the film.

Method

This research adopts a **qualitative descriptive method**, which aims to describe and interpret the meaning of a social phenomenon based on the subjective experiences of both participants and the researcher. Qualitative research focuses on meaning, understanding, and deep interpretation of social phenomena. According to Neuman (2014), qualitative data are typically obtained in the form of written or spoken words, observations, or images. Creswell (2015) also emphasizes that qualitative research findings may include participant voices, researcher reflections, interpretative analysis of research problems, or contributions to the literature that drive social change.

The **critical paradigm** is employed in this study, as it emphasizes the constellation of power relations that occur during the processes of meaning production and reproduction. This paradigm is particularly useful in analyzing how media operates as a site of ideological struggle, especially in shaping public perceptions about social issues such as sexual harassment (Ardianto & Q-Anees, 2009).

To examine the representation of sexual harassment in the film *Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier)*, the researcher utilizes **John Fiske's semiotic approach**. Fiske's theory, known as **"The Codes of Television,"** deconstructs media texts on three interrelated levels: the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology (Vera, 2014). These levels serve as the analytical framework to interpret the signs, codes, and meanings embedded in the selected scenes from the film.

The data collection method applied in this study is **documentation**, which involves collecting data from both public and private records. These documents may include visual records from the film, transcripts of scenes, news articles, journal publications, and other relevant materials. As Creswell (2015) states, documentation in qualitative research can encompass newspapers, meeting minutes, personal journals, letters, and digital media that provide valuable information for analysis.

The data collected are non-numerical in nature, consisting of narratives, dialogues, symbols, and visual codes from the film. The data sources include: (1) **primary data**, which are scenes from the film that depict aspects of sexual harassment; (2) **secondary data**, which consist of related literature such as academic articles, previous studies, and media reports; (3) **observation**, which involves

systematically watching and recording visual and auditory elements of the film such as body language, dialogue, setting, and soundtrack; and (4) **documentation**, where visual captures (screenshots) and narrative notes are archived for analysis.

The **unit of analysis** in this research comprises individual scenes that portray sexual harassment. These scenes will be selected and categorized for in-depth analysis using Fiske's three-level semiotic framework. At the **level of reality**, the analysis focuses on facial expressions, gestures, voice intonation, costumes, and setting. At the **level of representation**, the study examines production techniques such as camera angles, lighting, editing, music, and narrative structure. Finally, at the **ideological level**, the researcher interprets deeper symbolic meanings that reflect power imbalances, victim stigmatization, and the social construction of sexual harassment.

To ensure **data validity**, this research employs **source triangulation** by comparing and cross-checking information from multiple sources. This includes correlating visual elements from the film with relevant literature and theoretical concepts, thereby increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

The final phase involves drawing **conclusions** based on the findings at each level of semiotic analysis. The researcher will present a comprehensive interpretation of how sexual harassment is represented in *Penyalin Cahaya*, and how the film offers critical insights into social power dynamics, the marginalization of victims, and the broader socio-cultural context of sexual violence in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

Penyalin Cahaya (Photocopier) is a film produced by Rekata Studio and Kaninga Pictures, directed by Wregas Bhanuteja. The film made its international debut on October 8, 2021, at the Busan International Film Festival and was subsequently released globally through the online streaming platform Netflix on January 13, 2022 (Rachmania, 2022). Addressing the critical issue of sexual violence, *Photocopier* gained widespread popularity, entering the **Netflix Top 10** in 26 countries. Notably, it became one of the most-watched Southeast Asian films on the platform, with a total global viewership of **6.82 million hours** (Rachmania, 2022). This achievement underlines the film's significant impact in bringing issues of sexual harassment to a broader international audience.

Figure 1. Light Copier Film (Photocopier)

Figure 1 illustrates the promotional poster displayed when *Penyalin Cahaya* received multiple accolades and was nominated in 17 award categories. Through

observation and close viewing of the film, several scenes were identified that depict acts of sexual harassment experienced by the characters. These scenes were analyzed using **John Fiske's semiotic framework** (Pah & Darmastuti, 2019), particularly focusing on the **Level of Reality**, which examines how signs within a text signify the "real" through recognizable social cues. This level includes four main indicators: **appearance**, **behavior**, **movement**, and **articulation and environment**.

In terms of **appearance**, *Penyalin Cahaya* portrays the everyday fashion typically worn by urban college students. The protagonist, Sur, is consistently shown wearing modest clothing such as T-shirts and jeans, presenting a simple and unassuming image. Similarly, the other student characters—Farah, Rama, and others—are also dressed in attire that aligns with general expectations for university students. Figure 2 presents Sur's clothing, which tends to be modest and conservative. Her father is portrayed as a protective figure who pays close attention to how she dresses, further emphasizing Sur's identity as an obedient and respectful daughter.

This depiction aligns with findings from a **Safe Space Coalition survey** (Koalisi Ruang Aman) reported by *Detik.com* (2019), which concluded that there is no correlation between a woman's clothing and the likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment. The survey found that **47.09%** of harassment victims were wearing long skirts or pants, long-sleeved shirts, or loose-fitting clothing at the time of the incident. Furthermore, **52.90%** of respondents wore hijabs, work uniforms, or knee-length skirts and trousers, with only **3.02%** wearing clothing that could be considered revealing. These statistics challenge the persistent stereotype that a victim's attire provokes harassment, and the film visually reinforces this critical perspective.

Figure 2. Clothes Worn by Suryani (Sur)

However, in terms of appearance, not all female characters in *Penyalin Cahaya* (Photocopier) who become victims of sexual violence are portrayed as conservatively dressed as Sur. For example, Farah (another victim in the film)is depicted as having a more open and casual style of dress, often wearing clothing that reveals more of her body compared to Sur. Furthermore, several photographs of victims, which were secretly collected by the perpetrator, show them wearing relatively revealing clothing. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Rama, the perpetrator of sexual harassment, is portrayed wearing standard student attire (such as a jacket, T-shirt, and jeans) which reflects no deviant or suspicious visual cues. This reinforces the idea that both victimhood and perpetration cannot be inferred from one's outward appearance alone.
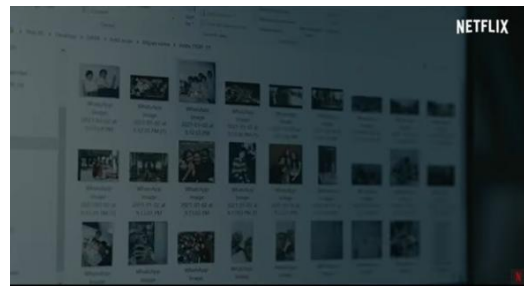
Figure 3. Syria Seeks Evidence

Figure 3 illustrates a scene in which Sur is investigating the photographic evidence of sexual violence, revealing that most of the victims wore revealing clothes. On the aspect of speech and language, all characters in *Photocopier* speak using either the Betawi dialect or standard Indonesian, which aligns with the film's urban setting. The manner of speech employed by Sur, Farah, and the other female victims is typical of university students: casual, polite, and natural in tone. However, when Sur and Farah begin to suspect the existence of sexual violence within the Mata Hari theater group, their conversations become increasingly tense. This tension leads to emotional confrontations and arguments, often accompanied by high-pitched tones and harsh words. Such interactions are evident particularly in scenes where Sur demands answers from Thariq, one of the theater members, driven by the traumatic experience she has undergone. The group itself experiences mounting pressure, especially as the confrontation occurs just two weeks before their scheduled performance in Kyoto, while Sur is still desperately seeking to prove who brought her home intoxicated.

Figure 4. Suryani When She Feels Strange About Herself

Figure 4 depicts a pivotal moment in which Suryati (Sur) begins to sense that something unusual has happened to her following the sexual assault. In terms of behavior, the psychological consequences of sexual violence are clearly reflected in the responses of the female victims, particularly Sur and Farah. Sur becomes emotionally unstable after losing her scholarship due to the circulation of a photo showing her drinking alcohol, which damages her reputation. She begins to act with desperation, engaging in unauthorized access to her theater peers' smartphones in a frantic attempt to uncover evidence that someone had drugged her. Her erratic behavior underscores the trauma and disorientation often experienced by victims of sexual violence.

Conversely, the behavior of Rama (the perpetrator)is gradually unveiled over the course of the film. In the final scenes, his culpability is confirmed through the

discovery of eight incriminating videos found on his phone. These videos reveal Rama secretly photographing intimate parts of victims' bodies without consent, often while the victims were unconscious. This concrete evidence firmly establishes Rama's role as the primary offender in the narrative and highlights the covert, manipulative strategies often employed by perpetrators to exploit their victims.

Figure 5. Syria is Saddened

Figure 5 captures Sur's deep sadness and emotional turmoil after losing everything she held dear as a consequence of the sexual assault she experienced. In the scene, she is seen returning home with her mother, who silently understands the profound psychological distress her daughter is suffering.

Figure 6. Suryani Wants to Prove Even though She's Drunk, She's Still Conscious

Figure 6 presents a moment in which Sur attempts to prove her consciousness, despite being intoxicated, highlighting her desperation to reclaim agency and truth. Farah, another survivor of sexual violence in the film, also displays clear signs of trauma, particularly when trying to speak out. Her efforts are met with disbelief, as her reputation for social drinking and frequent interactions with male peers has led others to dismiss her claims—reflecting a common societal bias that undermines victims based on preconceived judgments of character.

In terms of bodily movement, the psychological consequences of sexual violence are visibly portrayed in Sur and Farah's behavior. Both characters exhibit clear signs of post-traumatic stress, particularly in their interactions with other members of the Mata Hari theater group. Sur avoids group gatherings and often isolates herself. This behavioral withdrawal aligns with the findings of Sesca and Hamidah (2018), who in their journal article *Post-Traumatic Growth among Early Adult*

Women Survivors of Sexual Violence explained that survivors often experience interpersonal difficulties, including lack of trust, social withdrawal, fear of men, and self-isolation. Sur's behavior illustrates these symptoms, as she becomes reclusive and maintains close contact only with individuals she trusts—namely Amin, the photocopy operator, and Anggun, the theater director. Despite this withdrawal, Sur continues to fight for justice. In a crucial scene, she photocopies her back to reveal a unique birthmark, which proves that the explicit photo used in a visual projection during the theater performance was indeed taken of her without consent, confirming the violation.

Farah, like Sur, also experiences a similar form of alienation and distress. The film later reveals that the victims are not limited to women—several male students are also exposed to abuse. Rama, the main perpetrator, does not exhibit any suspicious bodily movements throughout the film. On the contrary, he conceals his predatory nature with sophistication. His calm demeanor and outwardly kind personality allow him to gain the trust of others and remain unsuspected, reflecting the calculated behavior of many real-world abusers.

Tirto.id (2017) supports this portrayal, noting that sexual harassment is often committed by individuals close to the victim. In *Photocopier*, Rama is not only Sur's college friend but also a member of the same theater group. The narrative later discloses that five other classmates also fell victim to Rama's abuse. In terms of facial expressions, Sur frequently appears distraught, frustrated, and confused. The aftermath of the assault and the subsequent withdrawal of her scholarship lead her to be expelled from her home. These compounded traumas amplify her despair. Throughout the film, her face expresses emotional volatility—determination when seeking justice, sadness when disbelieved, and rage when facing the perpetrators' denial.

Avina and O'Donohue (2022) explain that survivors of sexual assault often suffer from *post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*, a condition marked by symptoms such as intrusive memories, insomnia, emotional numbness, and hyperarousal. The film presents a vivid depiction of this condition through Sur's psychological breakdown. Her confusion, emotional outbursts, and obsessive pursuit of proof point to a deeply rooted trauma that continues to haunt her.

In terms of environmental context, *Photocopier* portrays Rama as a well-respected student from an affluent family. His polished behavior and social status make it difficult for others to suspect or challenge him. The film demonstrates how privilege and power can be manipulated to shield perpetrators from scrutiny. Rama carefully orchestrates his assaults, using accomplices and taking advantage of moments when victims are most vulnerable—typically inside a vehicle and during early morning hours—to avoid detection. His environment, which includes loyal followers and societal capital, provides him with both access and protection.

Figure 7. Suryani Meets Rama's Father

Figure 7 shows a scene where Sur attempts to confront Rama's father. Despite her efforts, she is rendered powerless by the immense influence of Rama's family, who not only believe in his innocence but have also supported Sur in the past by employing her for a website project and covering her tuition after her scholarship was revoked. This complex relationship highlights how power dynamics and indebtedness can complicate justice for survivors. In contrast to Rama's privileged status, Sur comes from an ordinary background and relies only on Amin—the kind-hearted photocopy operator—for support and emotional strength.

The film *Photocopier (Penyalin Cahaya)* presents a nuanced depiction of sexual violence, its impact on victims, and the structural systems that allow such acts to be concealed. One of the film's central characters, Sur, experiences severe personal losses after the incident of sexual violence. As illustrated in one key scene, Sur is shown returning home accompanied by her mother, visibly crushed and despondent after being expelled from her university and disowned by her father. This scene reflects not only her academic and social downfall but also the emotional rupture within her own family. Her support system collapses, rendering her more vulnerable and isolated.

The character of Farah, another survivor of sexual violence in the film, is portrayed as deeply traumatized and silenced by the judgmental attitudes of those around her. Because Farah is known for frequently attending parties and associating with many men, her experiences are dismissed due to prevailing stereotypes. This social bias mirrors what often occurs in real-life cases, where victims are blamed based on lifestyle or appearance rather than being treated with dignity and compassion. Both Sur and Farah exhibit body language and behavioral withdrawal that align with psychological studies on the long-term effects of sexual violence, such as isolation, mistrust, and emotional detachment (Sesca & Hamidah, 2018).

Despite being a victim, Sur strives to uncover the truth behind her assault. She only trusts a few individuals: Amin, the photocopy shopkeeper, and Anggun, the assertive director of the Mata Hari theatre group. A pivotal moment is when Sur photocopies her own back to reveal a birthmark, proving that it was her body used in the theatre's installation. Meanwhile, the perpetrator, Rama, is portrayed as charismatic, intelligent, and trustworthy—an image that obscures his role as an aggressor. His respected public persona allows him to evade suspicion, echoing findings that perpetrators are often individuals close to their victims (Tirto.id, 2017).

The film also underscores the stark contrast in social class between Sur and Rama. While Sur comes from a modest background—her parents own a small food stall—Rama hails from an influential, upper-class family. In one scene, Sur visits Rama's father, but is dismissed and ignored. Rama's family had previously provided

financial assistance and employment to Sur, further complicating her position and silencing her voice. This reflects how class hierarchy often shapes whose truth is acknowledged and whose is suppressed.

From a cinematographic perspective, the film uses close-up and steady shots to emphasize key visual elements such as the tattoo on Farah or Sur's back, which are used in the theatre performance. The film's color palette leans towards warm tones, dominated by green hues, evoking a sense of visual freshness and realism. In contrast, scenes in the photocopy shop are dimly lit, creating a tense and suspenseful atmosphere. These lighting choices mirror those commonly found in thriller and crime genres to intensify the emotional tone of the narrative.

In terms of sound design, the film opts for minimal background music, relying instead on ambient sounds and silence to highlight the emotional intensity of key scenes (Dea, 2022). This approach draws the viewer's attention more directly to the characters' internal struggles and reinforces the stark realism of the story.

On the ideological level, the film reflects a strong critique of patriarchy and class structure. The campus administration, composed predominantly of men, consistently downplays or dismisses the sexual assault allegations. Sur's own father, adhering to patriarchal values, forces her to record a video apology in front of her peers—including the perpetrator—despite clear evidence of her innocence. Similarly, Farah is rendered voiceless due to societal expectations that prioritize male credibility over female testimony. Patriarchy in this context operates through familial, institutional, and cultural norms that silence victims and protect perpetrators (Mukminto, 2020; Mahanani et al., 2020).

However, the film does not solely dwell on victimhood. Characters like Anggun—a principled and assertive female leader—demonstrate resistance to patriarchal structures. Sur herself embodies resilience, choosing to seek justice rather than remain silent. These portrayals offer a counter-narrative to the dominance of male authority and highlight the capacity for female agency in hostile environments.

The power imbalance further extends to legal and institutional responses. Despite Sur presenting substantial evidence, Rama uses his family's influence and wealth to manipulate the system. He even hires an expensive lawyer to reframe himself as a victim of defamation. This dynamic illustrates how social class can determine access to justice, as well as public perception.

Metaphorical imagery further deepens the film's social commentary. One particularly symbolic scene involves fogging, accompanied by repeated utterances of "drain, close, bury," reflecting how sexual assault cases are often silenced and forgotten. This motif suggests that survivors' traumas are frequently overshadowed by new public distractions, rendering justice elusive. Another significant metaphor is the parallel drawn between Sur and Medusa, the demonized woman in Greek mythology. Like Medusa, Sur is vilified despite her contributions to the theatre group, and is betrayed by the very institution she helped promote. This allusion intensifies the critique of how victims are demonized, erased, or discarded.

Through its narrative, visual, and ideological elements, *Photocopier* not only presents a powerful portrayal of sexual violence but also critiques the social structures that perpetuate silence, victim-blaming, and injustice. The film's strength lies in its capacity to present these issues with emotional depth and narrative complexity,

thereby challenging the viewer to reflect on the realities of gender-based violence and inequality in contemporary society.

Conclusion

Sexual violence in the film *Photocopier (Penyalin Cahaya)* is depicted through the character of Suryani, who struggles to prove that a member of the Mata Hari Theatre group was responsible for assaulting her—an incident that left her unconscious and led to the revocation of her scholarship after an incriminating selfie surfaced on social media. Throughout the film, Suryani's testimony is consistently doubted by those around her, largely due to the respected public image of the perpetrator, Rama, who is perceived as a polite, high-achieving male student from a prestigious family.

Based on an exploration of the film's visual and narrative portrayal of sexual violence, this analysis applies John Fiske's semiotic framework to examine how the representation unfolds across three distinct levels: the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. At the level of reality, sexual violence is expressed through elements such as appearance, speech, behavior, body language, facial expression, and environmental context—analyzed from both the victim's and the perpetrator's perspectives.

At the level of representation, the film makes deliberate use of cinematographic techniques such as camera angles, lighting, and sound or musical choices. These technical elements are employed not merely for aesthetic purposes but to emotionally engage the audience and support the progression of the storyline.

Finally, at the ideological level, the film underscores the power structures that enable sexual violence to remain unpunished. The perpetrator is a wealthy, well-mannered male figure whose social status affords him credibility and protection. In contrast, the victim, Suryani, is disempowered and dismissed despite presenting compelling evidence. This dynamic reveals the film's critique of patriarchal ideology, which places men in dominant social positions while relegating women to roles of subordination and disbelief. Moreover, the disparity in social class between the victim and the perpetrator further amplifies the systemic injustice, highlighting how class and gender intersect to silence victims and protect those in power.

Declaration of competing interest

There are no known conflicts of interest.

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