



## Semiotic Analysis of Depression Representation in the Short Film "The Sign" on Nicky K.'s Youtube Channel

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### ABSTRACT

*As many cases of suicide are caused by depression, researchers are interested in researching what causes depression in a person. This study aims to determine how depression is represented in the short film "The Sign" by Nicky K through John Fiske's semiotic analysis. This film depicts how a child goes through his bad days without anyone caring about the inner pressure he receives. This research uses descriptive qualitative research. The author chose this study because of the lack of public attention related to depression cases around him. The author wants to know how depression is portrayed in this film, through behavior, traits that make it a depressive disorder. Researchers want readers to be more sensitive to cases like this. Therefore, the writer is interested in the title of this research. The results of this study indicate that there is a representation of depression in this short film which is seen from the three levels proposed by John Fiske. There are three levels, namely the level of reality, the level of representation and the level of ideology*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process by which a person can convey messages from one person to another to achieve a certain goal. The definition of communication according to James A.F Stoner is a system in which one person tries a communication concept and mentions the notion of communication is a system in which verbal and nonverbal language symbols are sent and received as well as in giving meaning, according to Colin Cherry understands that communication is a system used information by all parties to achieve a common goal. (Wiryanto, 2004).

The simplest definition of mass communication was coined by Bittner, namely: Mass communication is a message that is disseminated through the mass media by a large number of people. From the media, we can see that mass communication should use mass media such as

broadcast radio and television. Both, known as electronic media, while newspapers and magazines as print media. Film is also included as a medium of mass communication, an example is film. (Ardianto & et al, 2009).

Film is a work of art because the film has several elements of art such as acting, aesthetics, dramaturgy, artistic and visualization as well as music. In these elements are interrelated and cannot be separated from each other in a film. (Effendy, 2003). However, in general, films can include a variety of messages, entertainment and information. Messages in films often use mechanisms such as signs or symbols that exist in the human mind such as words, clothing, message content, conversations, settings and so on.

Movies are also not only as a means of entertainment, art or as a mere business tool. However, films can also be part of a communication. In fact, one form of mass communication that can convey messages through audio and visual. Films can describe and realize the reality of human life. Besides being able to convey messages in one direction, films also have a very large effect on communication. Although one-way communication does not have the same effect as two-way, films can have a very deep effect on the audience. What is produced by the media (film) is a representation of social reality which is a window to be able to understand what and what reality looks like and how it works.

Film is a mass media tool that is very interesting and more memorable than other mass communication media. Having a storyline in it and creating communication through stories, implied messages and reality can be packaged so as to make the film interesting and very memorable. The audience will not get bored watching it if the film is packed with a good and interesting storyline.

As a mass communication medium, film becomes a \_\_media to convey the message content to the audience who watched the film. By watching it, then we can receive what the message contained in the film. However, sometimes the implied meaning in the film is not realized by the audience in general and just enjoys the film. Devito (2011, p. 131) says that a sign has a freedom of meaning (arbitrary) a film does not have the characteristics or properties of the object or thing the film describes, a word has the meaning or meaning described by the film, that's why we are free to determine meaning or meaning.

One of the films that is interesting to study is the short film "The Sign". This film raises the story of issues related to mental health, namely depression. The short film produced by Nicole Koutsoumbas which was uploaded to Nicky K's Youtube account in 2017 is one of the short films with a duration of 19 minutes 22 seconds and has been watched by more than 1 million viewers in a period of 3 years. The film directed by Nicole Kountsoumbas was inspired by the 2017 film series 13 Reasons Why.

The film tells how an Angel must get social sanctions due to the harassment he received from his lover. When Angel wanted to tell his parents about the incident about the abuse he had, Jesica and Andrew just thought it was normal for them. Right the next day at school, news of the abuse had spread widely, the problem was that her boyfriend turned the facts upside down and instead made Angel a suspect instead of a victim. As a result, he was shunned and even bullied in his school environment due to the fake news spread by his ex-lover. Even a teacher commented on the way she dressed and did bodyshaming or actions that indirectly insulted her body due to the news that had spread in the school environment. With his condition like this makes Angel feel isolated in the school environment and even his own home. He was shunned by his friends around him, which made him feel alone and had an impact on his mental health.

Teenagers (15-24 years) get a depression percentage of 6.2%. Severe depression will feel a tendency to hurt yourself (self harm) and even commit suicide. As many as 80%-90% of suicide

cases are a factor of depression and anxiety. Suicide cases in Indonesia can reach 10,000 or equivalent to every hour there are suicide cases. According to a sacredologist, 4.2% of students in Indonesia have thought of committing suicide. Among college students, 6.9% had the intention to commit suicide and another 3% had attempted suicide. Depression that occurs in adolescents is caused by several things such as bullying, pressure in the academic field, economic problems to family can also be a factor in depression. (Rachmawati, 2020)

Apart from the stigma of society, the courage to open up to others and seek treatment is one of the right steps in dealing with stress.

In this study, researchers used the method of semiotic analysis. Semiotics can be defined as the study of signs, the function of signs and the production of meaning. (Asriningsari & Umay, 2010) in his book explains that semiotics is the science of signs that views phenomena as social communication or society and culture. (Lantowa & et al, 2017) also explains in his book that semiotics is one of the interpreters in interpreting or analyzing a text. And researchers used the theory of television code John Fiske. Basically, films can involve a form of visual and linguistic symbols in signaling the message to be conveyed to the audience (Sobur, 2016). John Fiske divides several categories of television codes into three levels, namely the level of reality, representation and ideology.

### **Semiotic Theory.**

Semiotics is a word that comes from the Greek "semeion" which means a sign or "seme" which means the interpretation or translation of a sign. The sign at that time still meant something that indicated the existence of something else, for example, smoke signaled the presence of fire. (Drs. Alex Sobur, 2004)

Semiotics is a science (Noviani, 2002) or an analytical method to examine a sign that tries to find ideological nourishment in a text (Berger, 1982). Signs are tools we use to help us find our way in the world, among people, and with people. This basic concept explains a very broad theory that deals with signs, language, discourse, non-verbal forms, how signs relate to their meanings, and how they are structured. In general, the study of signs is related to semiotics. (Drs. Alex Sobur, Communication Semiotics, 2009)

The process of physically interpreting ideas, knowledge and messages in the study of semiotic analysis can be referred to as representation. In this case, representation is defined as the use of signs to attach something that is absorbed, imagined and felt in a physical form. (Danesi, 2010). The semiotic study of representation is something that represents something in the form of a sign, both verbal and non-verbal, and has denotative and connotative meanings.

The point is semiotics wants to interpret a text. The text itself is a collection of signs that are given by the sender to the recipient with a certain code and are in certain communication containers such as radio, newspapers, tv, and magazines. In semiotics, if you want to get an understanding of a meaning, you have to do what is called an analysis of a sign that is related to meaning and based on a certain reality. (Kusumastuie & Faturochman, 2004).

John Fiske said semiotics is a study that studies the signs and meanings of sign systems, how these meanings are constructed in media texts or how signs of any type of work in society and which consume meaning. (Fiske, 2004).

Fiske's mindset does not agree with the theory that people consume the products offered to them without a thought process. Fiske rejects the idea that "audience" assumes an uncritical mass and suggests "audiences" with various backgrounds and social identities to accept different texts. (Vera, 2014).

In the theory of semiotics, John Fiske explains about television codes (television codes) which are usually referred to as codes used in the world of television. Television codes (television code) is a theory introduced by John Fiske or commonly called the codes used in the world of television. According to Fiske, the codes that appear or are used in the television show are interconnected to form a meaning. According to this theory, a reality does not just appear through existing codes, but is also processed through the sensing of reference fibers already owned by television viewers, so that a code will be perceived differently by different people. (Setiawan, 2015). The theory of language and meaning translated by John Fiske is in a way that can be applied to analyze all types of media texts by means of cultural/critical textual analysis. Fiske's context in the semiotic approach is the basis for critical thinking. Interpret actions, pictures and words to understand the messages in the media. (Fatima, 2019).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODE

In this study, researchers used a qualitative approach. Researchers understand that even reality can be constructed in society based on mutual agreement. Similarly, as stated by Mulyana and Solatun (2013, pp. 5-6),\_conventionally qualitative methods have been associated with researchers' desire to examine meaning, context, and a holistic approach to phenomenon. Reinforced by Kirk and Miller in (Moleong, 2016, p. 4) defines qualitative research as a certain tradition in social science that is fundamentally dependent on observations of humans both in its area and in its terminology.

Qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behaviors that we can observe (Pawito, 2008). Qualitative research was also conducted to gain an understanding of what was experienced by researchers in order to understand the phenomena related to this representation.

The object of the qualitative data of this research is using semiotic analysis. Semiotic analysis is an analytical method to examine a meaning in the film. Semiotics is a very broad field of study. Semiotics is known for its sign theory in the form of images, engravings, photos so that signs are also included in the art of photography. A sign can also refer to words, sounds and body language.

The study, entitled "Analysis of the Semiotics of Depression Representation in the Short Film "The Sign" on Nicky K's Youtube Channel" seeks to find out the representation of depression contained in each piece in this film. The analysis process uses John Fiske's semiotic analysis method or what is known as code analysis or a sign. John Fiske describes three levels to determine the representation in this short film, as for the three levels, the first is the level of reality such as documents, transcripts, sounds, clothes and expressions and others. The second level of representation such as sentences, photos, and taking pictures. The third is ideology as a combination of the level of reality and the level of representation which is integrated into the relationship of acceptance and social relations.

## 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

In scene 1, an adult woman with short hair is leaning on her bed and the woman's name is Angel Newman. Angel is watching his parents who are going to read his suicide note, which the doctor and detectives found where he had attempted suicide. Angel's face looked uncomfortable and a little panicked.

In this scene, the reality level that shows depression is the facial expression. Angel felt scared and panicked, because the events that he got were poured into the suicide note. His facial

expression can't fool the audience if he's uncomfortable because his trauma is still embedded in him.

In this scene which shows the level of representation in the short film *The Sign*. In terms of shooting technique. The shooting technique in this scene uses close ups. This technique shows clearly how Angel's facial expression looks and can be seen clearly by the audience.

The close-up technique, which limits the head to the lower neck, has the impression of giving a clear picture of the object. (Bonafix, 2011). This technique is used to clarify and emphasize the emotional object. Close-ups focus on the face, showing facial expressions clearly so that they can describe a person's emotional message or reaction more deeply and the audience can also feel the emotions expressed by the object. (Nuzula, 2017).

In this scene, Angel is seen talking to the audience, with teary eyes, while explaining the beginning of the incident that happened to him.

In this scene, the reality level that shows depression is when Angel tells the beginning of all the events that happened to him. Glassy eyes, messy hair.

In this scene which shows the level of representation in the film *The Sign*. In terms of the camera using a close up technique. This technique shows clearly how Angel's facial expression looks and can be seen clearly by the audience.

The close-up technique, which limits the head to the lower neck, has the impression of giving a clear picture of the object. (Bonafix, 2011). In this scene there is no background because the focus is only on the story of the main character. Dark lighting makes this scene more in line with the atmosphere on display. A monologue that shows on the representation of depression as follows:

“You're probably wondering why I did this. Well it's all started with a stupid heartless boy.

In this scene, Angel, who just came home, tells his parents that a man made him like trash.

In this scene, the level of reality that shows depression is in terms of how to speak and Angel's facial expression. Angel's way of speaking that trembled and held back tears, until his sad face. This is because the story of being almost abused is considered normal by his mother, and makes him feel even more depressed.

In this scene, the level of representation shows depression in *The Sign* film from a camera perspective. The shooting technique in this scene uses a big close up. In this picture, it can be clearly seen the reaction of the main character when his parents gave an answer to the statement he gave earlier.

The big close up technique is the limit of the head to the chin of the object, so this technique has the impression of showing objects with certain expressions. (Bonafix, 2011). In this scene no music is used, only the light of the room is a little dark. The dialogue that shows the representation of depression is as follows:

Angel: he treat me like a piece of feces i hated

Jesica: “when they did stupid boys you'll get over it, who didn't used to it so then you know .” (when they're stupid men do that because they're used to it, so if you're not used to it, then you'll know it.)

In this scene, the level of reality that shows depression is in terms of expression and gestures. In this scene, it shows Angel being bullied by Victoria and Penny, related to rumors circulating at school between her and Gabe. Angel had shown an angry expression because what they were saying was not true, but the two people still accused Angel so that Angel had given up and was tired so that when she was pushed by Victoria, Angel just kept quiet.

In this scene the level of representation in terms of the camera is to use the technique of taking pictures by means of a medium shot. This technique shows the whole scene when Angel feels depressed, and lowers his head.

The technique of taking a medium shot, which is from the head to the waist, has the impression of showing someone with their looks (Bonafix, 2011). There is no background music in this scene and the lighting is quite normal. Dialog showing depression representation:

“I am not they say. I am not slut, I am not easy.

In this scene, Angel is seen wearing a yellow shirt holding a knife and looking at him seriously. In this scene, Angel thought about slashing the knife into his hand, but his senses were still functioning so he put the knife back on the table.

In this scene, the reality level that shows depression is Angel's action. Angel's thoughts about to scratch the knife into his arm are included in self harm, where someone's mind wants to hurt himself.

In this scene, the level of representation in terms of the camera is the technique of taking pictures using close ups. This technique shows clearly how Angel's facial expression looks and can be seen clearly by the audience.

The close-up technique, which limits the head to the lower neck, has the impression of giving a clear picture of the object. (Bonafix, 2011). This technique is used to clarify and emphasize the emotional object. Close-ups focus on the face, showing facial expressions clearly so that they can describe a person's emotional message or reaction more deeply and the audience can also feel the emotions expressed by the object. (Nuzula, 2017). This scene has no backsound and only normal lighting in the room. Dialogue that conveys depression representation:

“What would you say to someone you've lost if you could talk to them again. I love you or you are my world, unfortunately those people are gone now and you can't say those things, you can't take people for granted. I bet you didn't take me for granted.” (what would you say to someone who has lost you if you could talk to them again. I love you or you are my world, sadly those people are gone now and you can't say that, you can't take people for granted. I sure you don't take me for granted.

In this scene, Angel tries to tell the teacher the reason why he doesn't submit assignments. He said that he couldn't sleep and was under stress, but the teacher interrupted him by saying that a child of Angel's age doesn't know what stress really means. He continued to deny Angel's reasoning so that the woman was even more depressed.

In this scene, the reality level that shows depression is the attitude and statement of the teacher to Angel, which makes Angel even more depressed and cornered. The teacher underestimated the condition that was happening to Angel. So you can see the frustrated look on Angel's face.

In this scene, the level of representation in terms of the camera uses an over-the-shoulder shooting technique. This over-shoulder technique uses the technique of taking pictures from the area behind the object's shoulder. (Danisa, 2018) Where the camera wants to show that Angel is talking to his teacher. And this shooting technique shows a person's emotions and reactions in sharing messages in the scene. In this scene, no background music is used and only lighting from inside the room is used. The dialogues used to represent depression are:

Angel: “i haven't been getting enough sleep and i am really stressed.”

In this scene, it is Angel who is really down with the events that happened to him. He also did self harm by slicing his hand with a knife.

In this scene, the level of reality that shows depression is in terms of action. In this scene, Angel cuts his hand using a knife, this action is called self harm or self-harm.

In this scene, the level of representation in terms of taking pictures is the technique of taking pictures by means of close ups. In the technique of taking this scene, Angel looks down while looking at his hand which is sliced with a knife. This scene uses a backsound that makes the audience get deeper into the storyline. In this scene it is a monologue, while the monologue that shows the representation of depression is as follows:

“what is it about me that people can just leave me so easily. i work so fucking hard and it sucks because nothing i do is ever good enough not even for my damn self. I already feel dead, so maybe it's better than that”. good like that.

This scene tells of a teacher who reprimands Angel because he thinks Angel's way of dressing is wrong. But according to Angel it was not, and seemed normal. The teacher said why did Angel wear tight pants and Angel said wearing pants like this is normal, even his other friends can wear pants like this. The teacher again said that Angel was not suitable to wear pants like that because his body shape did not match.

In this scene, the reality level that shows depression is Angel's expression. In the scene, it can be seen that Angel does not believe what the teacher is saying. The male teacher compared his body shape with other people, the teacher said it was because the pants that Angel was wearing didn't match his body shape, and Angel's expression showed disappointment due to the teacher's words.

In this scene, the level of representation in terms of taking pictures is the technique of taking close ups. In shooting with this technique, the focus of Angel's face is more clearly visible. In this scene there is no accompanying music displayed and the lighting in this scene is done indoors. The dialogues that show the representation of depression are:

Angel: How come super skinny girl can wear leggings, but i can't

Teacher "Because you have a more distracting body"

Angel: “do you even know what people have been saying about me? (do you know what people say about me?)

Teacher: “no well good change out of those right now.

This scene shows Angel crying remembering all the incidents she has experienced, from harassment to bodyshaming that her teacher gave her. He also looked for anti-depressant pills and took the drug until he overdosed.

In this scene, the reality level that shows depression is Angel's expression. Where in this scene he looks desperate and cries and ends up taking a large dose of anti-depressant pills, causing him to overdose.

In this scene, the level of representation in terms of shooting is using the big close up shooting technique. Where this technique only focuses on Angel's crying face. This scene uses backsound to make the story of this scene deeper and the lighting in this scene from inside the room. As for this scene, there is no dialogue or monologue.

Depression at the Ideological Level in the short film The Sign on Nicky K .'s Youtube Channel

As for the theory of the code of television belonging to John Fiske, where the third level is ideology. The ideological level is that all elements are categorized in an ideological code, such as race, class, patriarchy, materialism, capitalism, individualism and so on. (Fauziah & Kurnia, 2018). The reality level stage and the representation level stage are descriptions that contain explanations regarding pieces of images and scenes. Meanwhile, at the ideological stage, this is the result of the reality and representation stage.

This short film The Sign is a film that gives many positive messages to the audience. Where this film tells the story of a girl who goes through labor incidents so that it indirectly makes her mentally disturbed and ends up depressed.

This film is actually easy to predict the plot, it's just that the message that we can take from this story is very much especially related to the psychology of children. Depression in this film is one of the incidents of a child who has to endure the pain due to the abuse he received, the indifference from his parents, to the bullying he received in his school environment and he thought no one could accept him in the environment around him.

As a result, the child was tired of his life and ended up trying to commit suicide by taking anti-depressant pills until he overdosed. But fortunately the child survived, even though the child still had a very deep trauma, so his parents had to provide intensive care by bringing in a psychiatrist. In general, the ideology in the short film "The Sign" adheres to environmental ideology. Where the ideology depicted scene by scene in this film is a picture of the environment around Angel who doesn't care about him, ostracizes him at school and ends up being bullied and no one wants to listen to his complaints. So that Angel cannot defend what he receives from the social environment and ends up suffering from depression.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Depression is where a person feels he has a disturbance in his feelings, a prolonged emotional condition and continues to surround a person, behavior and feelings of helplessness and feels hopeless.

The depression described in the short film *The Sign* is about a condition where Angel feels isolated in the school environment and even in his own home. Starting from being bullied by his friends and teachers who also judged him, so that he felt alone and had an impact on his psyche and other activities and it was called a depressive disorder. Depression is a factor in attempted suicide.

Based on the results of research and discussion related to the representation of depression in the short film *The Sign*, researchers focused on audio and visual and analyzed using John Fiske's semiotics. So it can be concluded several conclusions related to depression in this short film *The Sign*.

This short film *The Sign* shows that the representation of depression in the film is seen from three levels introduced by John Fiske, namely:

1. At the level of reality, depression can be seen from aspects, speech, expression, behavior and appearance. As shown in the scene of the short film *The Sign*, Angel often feels depressed about her situation, cries, and does self harm or hurts herself to vent her disappointment towards the people around her.
2. At the representation level, the technical code in the short film *The Sign* which describes depression is reflected through the aspects of shooting, music, lighting and sound. From the aspect of shooting and lighting, the audience is able to see and understand the storyline of how Angel has to go through the injustices he has received so that he becomes depressed and ends up trying to commit suicide. Music and sound are also supportive, from dialogue to monologue, the cast can really support the atmosphere that describes depression in every scene that appears.
3. At the ideological level that can be concluded, the description of depression and the perpetrators who cause depression are carried out by people who are around Angel, so the ideology that researchers can conclude is the environment.

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