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## Representations of Talking About Trauma and its Healing in the Film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” (May I Cry Just Once): A Case Study of UGJ Students

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**Abstract:** Representation is an important concept in understanding how meaning and language are constructed within a culture. Representation can be used to analyze how mental conditions such as trauma, anxiety, fear, and depression are represented. Trauma can have a significant impact on a person's life and requires a complex healing process. Therefore, the representation of trauma and its healing in films is an interesting topic to study. This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis approach, introducing several methodologies that have been widely applied in various fields of research. The semiotic framework can be categorized into three main methods: denotative, connotative, and mythical. The results and discussion of the study entitled “Representations of trauma and its healing in the film ”Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis“ (Can I Cry Just Once): A case study of UGJ students” reveal how this film depicts traumatic experiences and the healing process through its characters. This study successfully reveals how the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” functions as a medium for talking about trauma and the healing process. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, analysis of the visual and narrative signs in the film shows that the representation of trauma not only describes the experiences of individuals exposed to difficult situations, but also highlights the importance of the healing process involving social support and interaction with the environment.

**Keyword:** Trauma, Representation, Healing, Film, Students

### INTRODUCTION

Representation is an important concept in understanding how meaning and language are constructed within a culture. In the context of film, representation can be used to analyze how mental conditions such as trauma, anxiety, fear, and depression are represented. Previous studies have analyzed representation in film, such as cultural representation, representation of women, and representation of mental health. Trauma is one of the mental conditions that is often represented in films. Trauma can have a significant impact on a

person's life and requires a complex healing process. Therefore, the representation of trauma and its healing in films is an interesting topic to study.

The film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” (Can I Cry Just Once) was taken as the object of research and analyzed in depth using Roland Barthes' semiotic method. The film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Ku Menangis” has been watched by more than one million viewers and has been showing in theaters for several months, making it the 17th Indonesian film to reach that number. This drama film tells the story of the struggles of a young woman named Tari, played by Prilly Latuconsina. Tari grew up in a family filled with domestic violence, where her father, played by Surya Saputra, often behaved abusively towards her mother. The story unfolds when Tari joins an emotional support group to find a way out of her long-suppressed sadness. Together, they seek ways to deal with their respective traumas and find the strength to rise up. This story depicts internal struggles and emotional journeys in finding peace and freedom from a dark past. Released on October 17, 2024, this 1 hour 41 minute film is the work of director Reka Wijaya, who presents a profound message about the importance of seeking support and not hiding pain behind a smile.

The director of the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” (Can I Cry Just Once), Reka Wijaya, said he wanted to create a home for those who are emotionally wounded. Through this film, the audience is expected to find a place where they can feel support and closeness. He said that the film must first be close to its creator. This is so that the characters can be understood without justification. "We are trying to provide a space to understand that there is a flawed system in Indonesia. This film is intended to be a home for those who are emotionally wounded, a place where viewers feel connected and supported," said Reka Wijaya during a press conference in Jakarta on Thursday (October 10, 2024). (Video: Intern/Maysa). This film is worth studying because it conveys several important moral messages and successfully creates a warm yet touching atmosphere. The conflict-ridden relationships within the family are built slowly, allowing the audience to feel the emotional journey experienced by each character. The many issues of trauma taken up in this film evoke many perceptions from the audience, as these issues are very relatable in today's life.

Previous research on family conflict in films compares “Dua Garis Biru” by (Pertiwi et al., 2020) and research on the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis”. The first study focused on how viewers interpret conflict based on their social backgrounds, creating emotional connections. Meanwhile, the second study highlighted the representation of trauma and character healing, showing that the film conveys a message of hope. Both studies emphasize the importance of film in understanding family conflict and audience emotional engagement.

Previous research has identified similarities and differences in the article entitled “Semiotic Analysis of Existential Feminism in the Character ‘Judy’ in the Animated Film Zootopia for Students of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Swadaya Gunung Jati University” by Kurniasih et al. (2024). and the study titled “Representations of Talking About Trauma and Its Healing in the Film ‘Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis’ (May I Cry Just Once): A Case Study of UGJ Students.”

Both journals use a semiotic analysis approach to examine the representation of feminism in films. In addition, both journals also focus on film analysis and the representation of women. However, the first journal focuses on the analysis of existential feminism in the animated film Zootopia, while the second journal focuses on the representation of trauma and its healing in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis”.

This study aims to explore the psychological aspects of communicative trauma and its healing as depicted in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” through the lens of communication psychology. The study focuses on understanding how the representation of trauma and its healing in the film affects students' responses, particularly in relation to their

own experiences and perspectives on mental health. The main objectives of this study are as follows: 1. To analyze the representation of trauma and its healing in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis”. 2. To analyze Roland Barthes' theoretical approach in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis”. 3. To explore students' perspectives on trauma and its healing in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis”.

## METHOD

The qualitative research method used in this study focuses on an in-depth analysis of the themes of trauma and healing raised in the film. This study uses a semiotic analysis approach to understand the meaning contained in the film, both verbally and nonverbally.

Roland Barthes, a leading figure in semiotics theory, introduced several methodologies that have been widely applied in various fields of research, especially in the analysis of cultural and media texts. His semiotic framework can be categorized into three main methods: denotative, connotative, and mythical. Each of these methods serves to unravel the layers of meaning embedded in the text, allowing researchers to explore how signs communicate cultural values and ideologies.

An analysis of the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” using Roland Barthes' method can be done by identifying and interpreting the deeper meanings contained in the narrative and symbols in the film. Barthes' mythological method focuses on how a text, in this case a film, not only conveys literal meaning, but also constructs a larger narrative that reflects cultural ideologies and values.

Data collection for this study was conducted through in-depth interviews with UGJ students who had watched the film. The interview method was used to obtain the subjects' personal perspectives and experiences related to the themes raised in the film, which was in line with the principles of qualitative research described by Suyitno (Suyitno, 2018). In addition, other data collection techniques such as documentation studies and observation were also applied to complement the understanding of the context of the film and its impact on the audience (Suyitno, 2018).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of the study entitled “Representations of trauma and healing in the film ”Bolehkah sekali saja kumenangis“ (May I Cry Just Once): A case study of UGJ students” reveal how this film depicts traumatic experiences and the healing process through its characters. The film “Bolehkah sekali saja kumenangis” presents various aspects of trauma, including loss, regret, and the struggle of individuals in facing their past.

In this context, trauma is not only seen as an individual experience, but also as a social phenomenon that can affect the relationships between characters. This study shows that the film successfully conveys the message about the importance of social support in the healing process, where the characters help and support each other to overcome the trauma they have experienced (Syarifuddin & Riyadi, 2021). The healing process in this film is also represented through powerful symbols and narratives. For example, the use of visual elements and emotional dialogue creates a profound experience for the audience, who can feel the sadness and hope experienced by the characters. This is in line with semiotics theory, which states that symbols in films can influence the audience's understanding and interpretation of the message being conveyed (Supiandi, 2020). This study found that students who watched this film reported an increased awareness of the importance of mental health and emotional support in their own healing process.

The following are the results of the research analysis based on interviews conducted by the researcher with informants. With the characteristics of informants that the researcher had determined, there were ten informants who were students at UGJ Cirebon, namely Nova,

Putra, Anggi, Erika, Lulu, Tiara, April, Salwa, Dhea, and Salsa. These ten informants are individuals who have experienced trauma, as depicted in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” (May I Cry Just Once). The following are the results of the discussion on the analysis of trauma representation and healing, Roland Barthles' approach analysis: 1. Denotative 2. Connotative 3. Myth, and the influence of the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” on students as follows :

### Representations of Trauma and Its Healing

An analysis of the representation of trauma and its healing in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” can be done by considering various narrative and visual elements that describe the characters' emotional experiences. This film presents the journey of characters who experience trauma due to loss and sadness, as well as the healing process they undergo. In this context, we can use psychological and medical approaches to understand how trauma and healing are represented in the film.

The trauma experienced by the main character is often shown through deep emotional expressions and interactions with other characters. This representation reflects the understanding that trauma not only affects individuals physically, but also psychologically. Research shows that trauma can affect a person's mental and physical health, which in turn affects the healing process (Ardiansyah et al., 2021). In the film, we can see how the characters struggle with deep emotional pain, which can be linked to the concept of trauma in psychology, where individuals often find it difficult to cope with feelings of loss.



Source : Netflix

**Figure 1. Main Cast Scene (Tari)**

The healing process in this film can also be analyzed through various symbols and important moments that illustrate the characters' journey toward recovery. The use of natural elements or interactions with supporting characters can serve as metaphors for healing. Although this film does not explicitly depict physical healing, we can draw parallels between emotional healing and the process of healing wounds, both of which require time, support, and understanding.





Source : Netflix

**Figure 2. Support group Scene**

Furthermore, this film shows that social support and interpersonal relationships play an important role in the healing process. The characters in the film support each other, creating a crucial support network in overcoming trauma. Research shows that social support can accelerate the healing process both physically and emotionally, by reducing stress and improving psychological well-being (Ariyani et al., 2023). In this regard, the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” successfully depicts the importance of human connection in dealing with sadness and trauma.

In conclusion, the representation of trauma and its healing in the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” reflects the complexity of experience. Through an analysis of narrative and visual elements, we can understand how this film depicts the characters' emotional journeys, as well as the importance of social support in the healing process. Thus, this film not only presents a touching story, but also provides insight into the dynamics of trauma and healing that are relevant in psychological and medical contexts.

### **Analysis of Roland Barthes' Approach**

Roland Barthes' semiotic theory approach to the film “Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis” provides a framework for analyzing the layers of meaning embedded in the film's narrative and visual elements. Barthes' semiotic theory distinguishes between denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings that can be used to reveal the thematic content and cultural implications of this film (Bililah et al., 2024). The researchers selected five scenes that convey messages related to trauma and healing, which were analyzed using Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory, as follows:



Source : Researcher's Screenshot

**Figure 3. Tari's family is in the kitchen**

**Denotative Meaning :**

This scene shows Tari's family gathered in the kitchen. In the picture, Tari's mother is baking a cake with Tari's help, while Tari's father is answering a phone call from someone.

**Connotative Meaning :**

The connotation conveyed in this scene is that the cakes made by Tari's mother to sell caused Tari's father to become angry because they used too much electricity.

**Myth Meaning :**

The myth about men's role as the family's financial manager. Pras feels responsible for the finances and feels entitled to get angry when there is wasteful spending. This reflects the myth that men are the head of the household and the controller of spending.



Source. Researcher's Screenshot

**Figure 4. Tari and her mother are crying in the room**

**Denotative Meaning**

Mother and Tari were in the room. Tari told her mother about her sadness regarding her family's lack of harmony. Mother simply stroked Tari's hair and cried.

**Connotative Meaning**

Tari feels that her family is not harmonious because every time she comes home, she always feels uncomfortable. Tari's dialogue indicates that home, which should be a place to return to, has instead become a source of pain or trauma for her.

**Myth Meaning**

This scene debunks the myth that home is a safe and warm place. Tari explains that going home does not always mean comfort for some people. In fact, for some people, home can be a place where trauma occurs.



Source : Researcher's Screenshot  
**Figure 5. Trauma Healing Class**

### **Denotative Meaning**

In this scene, Tari and her friends are in a community gathering room where the community is a therapy class.

### **Connotative Meaning**

The serious expressions on the characters' faces indicate that this is not just a casual conversation, but rather a meaningful space, like a trauma therapy session, as a form of healing from the traumas experienced by the characters.

### **Myth Meaning**

In the myth, the narrative is “Emotional wounds must be kept to oneself.” This scene contradicts that narrative. The film conveys that talking about wounds collectively can be part of the healing process.



Source: Researcher's Screenshot  
**Figure 6. Trauma Healing Class**

### **Denotative Meaning**

In this scene, Tari's father, Pras, is arguing with Tari's mother, who insists that Pras' attitude is not firmness. And this argument is witnessed by Tari.

### Connotative Meaning

The connotative meaning in this scene is conveyed in Tari's mother's words, "You are not firm, Pras," which criticizes Pras' authoritarian or stubborn attitude, which is disguised as "firmness" as a father and head of the family.

### Myth Meaning

The myth that "a strict father is a good father": Pras represents a harsh father figure who claims to be "strict." In fact, this is a form of verbal/emotional abuse.



Source : Researcher's Screenshot

Figure 7. Trauma Healing Class

### Denotative Meaning

In this scene, Tari is attending her therapy class. She reveals that she has begun to love herself and that her trauma is gradually healing.

### Connotative Meaning

This sentence marks a moment of self-affirmation, after Tari experienced trauma, family pressure, and emotional wounds. Tari states that she has chosen to make peace with herself. Tari's gentle facial expression reflects her long struggle to accept and love herself, a form of self-love that is not easy, especially in the context of family.

### Myth Meaning

The myth that loving yourself is selfish. This dialogue challenges that perception. It shows that loving yourself is not selfish, but a form of self-healing.

### The Influence of the Film "Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis" on Students

Based on interview research, this film is highly anticipated by fans from the general public and students alike. Each character has their own trauma issues, and some viewers can strongly relate to the trauma experienced.

The healing process in the film is also very relevant to what the informants experienced. With the support group in the film, consisting of a psychologist and friends who have different traumas, they feel more relieved and it is very helpful in finding a solution for their healing.





Source : Personal Documentation  
**Figure 8. Interview with UGJ Students**



Source : Personal Documents  
**Figure 9. Interview with UGJ Students**

In real life, informants compare the disclosure of traumatic stories they have experienced, "In movies, people with trauma feel more comfortable expressing their feelings without fear of the responses of others who hear them, because they understand each other. Meanwhile, in real life, most people who have trauma are not yet able to be more open in sharing their stories with others because the listeners always judge them and do not help in the healing process," said Putra. Informants also really hope for support groups as a form of healing process for people who have mental health trauma, which is prevalent among students.

The film had a strong emotional impact on the informants. The film, which raised the issue of trauma, made them realize that there are many people who have trauma with different problems. With this film, the informants said that people with mental health trauma also need support from those around them and can get to know themselves better in terms of what they feel.

## CONCLUSION

The research entitled "Representations of Talking About Trauma and Its Healing in the Film 'Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis' (May I Cry Just Once): A Case Study of UGJ Students" can be summarized as follows: This study successfully reveals how the film "Bolehkah Sekali Saja Kumenangis" functions as a medium for talking about trauma and the healing process. Through Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, analysis of the visual and narrative signs in the film shows that the representation of trauma not only describes the experiences of individuals exposed to difficult situations, but also highlights the importance of the healing process involving social support and interaction with the environment. Interviews with UGJ students show that this film provides deep insights into the psychological impact of trauma and ways to overcome such experiences. Students identified

elements in the film that resonated with their personal experiences, so that this film serves not only as entertainment, but also as a tool for reflection and understanding of mental health.

Thus, this study confirms that films have significant potential in discussing sensitive issues such as trauma and healing. The representations offered in films can trigger broader discussions among the younger generation about the importance of mental health and social support in the recovery process. These findings make an important contribution to the study of media and mental health, and open up opportunities for further research on the relationship between media representations and individual emotional experiences in a broader social context.

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