

Representation the impact of bullying in the film *Sekawan Limo*

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Abstract

Bullying is a multidimensional social problem that impacts both victims and perpetrators, thus requiring serious attention, one of which is through the role of mass media in shaping public perception. The film *Sekawan Limo* is interesting to study because it presents the issue of bullying in the storyline, with the aim of analyzing the representation of the impact of bullying while making the film a reflective medium to increase public awareness about the dangers of bullying. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method to reveal the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings in the film *Sekawan Limo*. Data were collected through observation of scenes and dialogues that represent bullying and analyzed using a semiotic framework to interpret their impact. The results of the study show that bullying in the film *Sekawan Limo* is represented in verbal, emotional, and symbolic forms that have an impact on the victim's self-esteem and psychology. This finding confirms that the film does not only function as entertainment, but also as a reflective medium that reveals the social impact of bullying practices. The film *Sekawan Limo* represents bullying in various forms, both verbal, emotional, physical, and symbolic, which are often disguised through jokes or cultural norms. This film simultaneously emphasizes the profound psychological impact on victims and serves as a social reflection to foster empathy and collective awareness in preventing bullying.

Keywords: bullying; *Sekawan Limo*

1. Introduction

Bullying is a social problem that remains a serious concern, especially among adolescents. This phenomenon arises when individuals experience pressure due to the negative actions of others and fear that such actions will recur (Aminudin, 2019). Bullying impacts not only the victims but also the perpetrators, affecting them psychologically, emotionally, and socially. The resulting impacts can be short-term or long-term, such as trauma, reduced self-confidence, isolation, and even aggressive behavior (Yusuf et al., 2022). This situation demonstrates that bullying is a multidimensional problem that requires serious attention from various parties.

In the context of disseminating social information, mass media plays a crucial role as a communication tool capable of influencing public opinion. Media not only conveys messages but also shapes public perception of an issue (Kusnanto & Yusuf, 2024). When a social phenomenon is packaged through media, the message can reach a broader and more diverse audience. Thus, mass media plays a strategic role in educating the public about bullying issues and raising social awareness to address them.

Film, as a form of audiovisual mass media, has a unique appeal due to its ability to convey messages through a combination of narrative, visuals, and emotions. Films serve not only as entertainment but also as a means of education and social reflection. According to Prasetya, (2019), films have the power of communication to influence how society views a phenomenon. However, films can also create biased or exaggerated representations, thus influencing public perception of an issue, including bullying. Therefore, analyzing the representation of bullying in films is crucial to understanding how popular media frames this social phenomenon.

One interesting Indonesian film to study is *Sekawan Limo*. This film combines elements of horror and comedy, set against an East Javanese cultural backdrop, and has attracted over 2.5 million viewers since its release. In addition to presenting a mystical story, the film also addresses the issue of bullying through several characters, such as Juna, who is a victim of bullying due to social stigma against his family. This illustration illustrates how traumatic experiences and social pressures can influence an individual's personality and how they interact with their environment (Tundra, 2024).

The depiction of bullying in *Sekawan Limo* not only reflects social reality but also highlights the impact of discrimination based on family stigma and physical appearance. This demonstrates that film can be a reflective medium that brings social issues into the public sphere, thus opening up opportunities

for discussion about the importance of empathy, awareness, and social support for victims of bullying. Thus, film serves a dual function: as entertainment and as an educational medium that can build collective awareness about the dangers of bullying. However, academic studies specifically discussing the representation of bullying in Indonesian films, particularly *Sekawan Limo*, are still limited. This indicates the need for in-depth research on this issue (Aldo, 2023).

Based on this description, this study focuses on analyzing the representation of the impact of bullying in *Sekawan Limo*. The research problem is formulated as follows: How is the impact of bullying represented in *Sekawan Limo*? Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to analyze how the impact of bullying is represented in the film. This research is expected to contribute academically to understanding the representation of social issues through popular media, particularly regarding bullying, as well as to raise public awareness about the importance of preventing and addressing bullying practices in everyday life (Ginting & Rudy, 2023).

2. Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with the aim of interpreting phenomena that could contribute to the study (Snelson, 2016). The analytical method employed was Roland Barthes's semiotics to uncover the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings in the film "*Sekawan Limo*." The primary data for this study were texts and artwork within the 112-minute film, while secondary data were obtained from relevant literature, such as books and articles, reviewed during the research period of April 2025.

Data collection techniques included observing the film, listening to dialogue and scenes depicting bullying, noting and categorizing key findings, and selecting significant data for analysis. The researcher served as the primary instrument in the interpretation process (Sugiyono, 2011). The analysis utilized Barthes's semiotic framework to examine how the impact of bullying is represented in the film "*Sekawan Limo*."

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

This research has conducted data analysis using the primary data source in the form of a 112-minute film recording and Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis. Four types of scenes have been identified that discuss bullying cases and their impact in the film *Sekawan Limo*. Furthermore, data analysis was conducted in the form of denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings from the documented visual data and dialogue.

Table 1. Representation of the impact of bullying in the film *Sekawan Limo*

Scene	Visual
Figure 1. Scene time 11 .23	
Figure 2. Scene time 11.48	

3.1.1. Denotation

Denotatively, the image depicts a brown-skinned young man with short curly hair wearing a red bandana, a blue plaid shirt, and a light brown jacket, carrying a large backpack. His face is round and his mouth is slightly open, as if telling a joke. In the context of bullying, his remark could be interpreted as a subtle dig comparing his friend to the famously handsome character "Arjuna." So, while seemingly a joke, it still carries the risk of diminishing dignity and hurting feelings.

Denotatively, the photo depicts Juna, with long hair and a slightly overweight build, carrying a large backpack filled with climbing gear. He is wearing a plaid shirt and a gray jacket and appears to be smiling slightly as he speaks. The text that appears on the screen reads, "It's okay, bro, I'm used to it." This denotatively indicates that the character is engaged in climbing and is responding to someone's comments with a tone that appears resigned and attempts to calm the situation.

3.1.2. Connotation

Connotatively, this image depicts a state of mockery delivered through a derogatory joke. The cynical statement comparing someone to Arjuna, a figure known for his physical attractiveness, serves as a subtle criticism of appearance. The laughter of the man on the left indicates that the joke is more intended to insult than to amuse, while the face of the woman on the right looks uncomfortable, indicating a feeling of annoyance or hurt. From a social perspective, this type of comment is often viewed as normal or amusing, but it can emotionally damage the dignity of the individual being targeted.

The phrase "I'm used to it" indicates that this person has often been treated unkindly. The smile and resigned tone indicate that she is suppressing pain or sadness, but is covering it up to avoid being perceived as weak. This reflects the coping mechanism of a victim of bullying who chooses to remain silent and accept it, feeling that their voice will not be heard.

3.1.3. Myth

The sentence "Isn't Arjuna the most handsome of the Pandavas?" demonstrates the existence of social norms regarding the characteristics of the ideal man. In our culture, Arjuna is often depicted as handsome, strong, and ideal. When someone is compared to Arjuna, especially in a joking or satirical setting, it reflects that judgments of individuals, especially men, still focus heavily on physical appearance.

Culturally, this scene reflects the common belief that victims should appear strong and not show sadness. Society often ignores victims' feelings, even considering suffering a normal part of social life. The sentence "I'm used to it" reflects a misleading social narrative, where suffering is seen as something to be accepted without protest. As a result, forms of violence such as bullying are normalized and no longer considered a serious problem.

3.1.4. Conclusion

Through the denotation of this image, we observe the clear expressions and interactions taking place. Through the mythical meaning, we realize that this is more than just a joke, but rather an act of humiliation. And as the story unfolds, we understand that culture contributes greatly to maintaining this type of behavior through societal standards of beauty and humor.

This image, through semiotic analysis, reveals that behind the characters' smiles and resignation, lies the deep psychological and social impact of bullying. It's not just about physical exhaustion, but also about a heart that's been constantly wounded and forced to adapt..

Table 2. Representation of the impact of bullying in the film Sekawan Limo

Scene	Visual
Figure 3. Scene time 44.35	

Scene	Visual
<p data-bbox="325 315 624 344">Figure 4. Scene time 44.40</p>	

3.1.5. Denotation

Denotatively, this image shows two men standing in the forest. They appear calm and smiling. One of them states, "My parents are still alive." This means he is telling the story that his father and mother are still alive.

A man, dressed in full hiking gear, carrying a large backpack, stands in the middle of the forest, smiling while holding a water bottle. The subtitle states: "When it comes to enthusiasm, I'm enthusiastic."

3.1.6. Connotation

Connotatively, the phrase "My parents are still alive" could be seen as a dig at someone who has lost their parents. If uttered with a belittling tone or in the context of an insensitive joke, this expression has the potential to be a form of verbal bullying, where the perpetrator uses humiliating words or touches on another individual's emotional wounds. This type of bullying may not be physically apparent, but its effects are significant because it attacks the victim's psychological and emotional well-being. The sarcastic smile of one of the characters also indicates that the statement was made not simply to share, but as a form of social pressure on the other person.

Although the statement sounds positive, the facial expression and situation could reflect a defense mechanism. This person may be hiding feelings of fatigue, insecurity, or disrespect from their group. Saying "I'm enthusiastic" could be a form of denial of mistreatment or teasing from their peers. This could be a passive response to bullying, maintaining a positive attitude despite being under pressure.

3.1.7. Myth

Mythically, this statement supports the social view that having a full complement of parents is an essential element of a perfect and complete life. Indirectly, society creates a myth that assumes children who still have parents tend to be happier or considered normal compared to those who have lost them. This can reinforce emotional or social class differences in friendships and become a form of culturally embedded symbolic violence. This myth demonstrates how seemingly simple statements can carry positions of meaning that reinforce emotional inequality in society.

Mythically, there is social pressure to always appear strong and optimistic, especially in front of friends. In our culture, someone who is being teased often chooses to smile or maintain a positive attitude for fear of being perceived as weak or easily offended. This reflects norms of masculinity and pseudo-resilience, where individuals feel compelled to mask pain in order to be accepted within the group.

3.1.8. Conclusion

The scene in the image shows that bullying doesn't always manifest in physical or verbal abuse, but can also be hidden in seemingly ordinary phrases, such as the statement "My parents are still here." Denotatively, this statement merely provides information, but implicitly, it can hurt others' feelings if not conveyed with empathy. Within Roland Barthes's framework of myth, this statement contributes to the social narrative that having an intact family is a measure of happiness and the norm. This has the potential to exacerbate emotional imbalances among people, especially those who have lost parents. Therefore, it is important to recognize that bullying can also occur in more subtle ways, such as statements that convey superiority or a lack of sensitivity to others' circumstances.

This image represents the impact of covert bullying, where the victim masks their discomfort with false enthusiasm. This demonstrates that bullying isn't always overtly physical or verbal, but can manifest through emotional pressure and social standards that force victims to feign strength.

Table 3 Representation of the impact of bullying in the film Sekawan Limo

Scene	Visual
Figure 5. Scene time 39.18	
Figure 6. Scene time 39.23	

3.1.9. Denotation

Denotatively, this image depicts two men engaged in a discussion. The man on the right appears to be saying the sentence "Are all faces like this?" with a very serious expression, while the man on the left merely turns his head with a silent gaze. The statement directly touches on physical appearance, particularly the face, and is expressed in a derogatory tone. This demonstrates an act of teasing or insulting that falls under the category of verbal bullying, as it attacks a person's self-confidence through comments that touch on their appearance.

3.1.10. Connotation

The remark has a derogatory or mocking tone about someone's appearance, as if suggesting that the other person's face is unattractive or doesn't meet standards. This is an example of verbal bullying, as it directly insults another person's physical appearance.

3.1.11. Myth

A common myth circulating in society is that teasing about physical appearance is considered normal or a sign of closeness. However, such comments can hurt feelings and damage an individual's self-confidence. In Indonesian culture, comments about physical appearance are often used as a joke, but they can also be a form of hidden bullying.

3.1.12. Conclusion

This film demonstrates that teasing about appearance, while seemingly joking, is actually a hurtful form of verbal bullying. While the culture of demeaning others' physical appearance is often considered normal, it can have a detrimental impact on a person's feelings and self-confidence. This film illustrates how words can hurt, even without physical violence.

Table 4. Representation of the impact of bullying in the film Sekawan Limo

Scene	Visual
Figure 7. Scene time 51.48	

Scene	Visual
<p>Figure 8. Scene time 01.41.23</p>	

3.1.13. Denotation

Denotatively, one scene explicitly depicts bullying. A man is seen injured in the corner of a room with a distressed expression. He is wearing casual clothing, and a piece of paper with the words "Son of a Corruptor" taped to his forehead is attached, while a sign hangs on his chest that reads, "Beware! Son of a Corruptor is a jerk!" At the bottom of the image, there is a curse word, "Son of a Corruptor is a jerk!", reflecting a very profound form of verbal bullying. Denotatively, this moment depicts someone who has not suffered any physical injuries, but is experiencing mental stress due to the stigma and discriminatory treatment from those around him.

Denotatively, this image depicts a man wearing a checkered shirt at night, with an expression full of emotion. He appears to be sincerely expressing his feelings in a profound atmosphere.

3.1.14. Connotation

Connotatively, this scene demonstrates societal rejection and a deep sense of shame. The stigma attached to an individual as a "child of a corruptor" represents a swift and unfair form of public judgment. Society often readily associates a person's identity with the mistakes made by their family members, even though the individual is not always directly involved in the corruption. In many circumstances, the children of criminals are often perceived as guilty simply because of family ties, rather than based on their own behavior or actions. The red clothing worn by the character in this situation can symbolically be associated with feelings of anger, an unseen threat, or even a manifestation of the social label attached to them. The color acts as a visual cue that reinforces the negative views of those around them. Meanwhile, the tired facial expression and hunched posture suggest that the individual is experiencing significant emotional distress due to the stigma. They are not seen as individuals with unique identities and experiences, but rather reduced to a reflection of the crimes committed by their parents. This demonstrates the profound impact of social prejudice on an individual's psychological well-being, especially when society cannot distinguish between perpetrators and those uninvolved. Connotatively, her facial expression reflects pain and emotional instability. The phrase "feels like I have a truly sincere friend" suggests that she may have never experienced the warmth of friendship before, possibly due to experiences of being ignored or bullied. There's both sadness and happiness in the sense that she finally finds the acceptance she's long sought.

3.1.15. Myth

Mythologically, this scene demonstrates the growing social view that children often bear the consequences for their parents' mistakes. This is one result of the myth of "inherited sin," which remains deeply rooted in society, where people are often judged not by individual faults but by their blood relationship to perpetrators of crimes such as corruption. Furthermore, there is a false social justice myth, namely the view that publicly shaming the children of corruptors is considered a legitimate way to fight injustice. In reality, this act is a form of bullying that damages the honor and mental health of victims who are not directly involved in the corruption.

The prevailing myth holds that individuals who are frequently bullied or neglected will feel a sense of meaning when they finally find acceptance and true friendship. This reinforces the notion that victims of bullying tend to live in solitude and deeply appreciate any form of affection, no matter how small.

3.1.16. Conclusion

Thus, this scene not only depicts verbal violence and emotional distress, but also conveys a message about how communities often unknowingly act as perpetrators of bullying through social judgment rooted in cultural beliefs and a lack of understanding of true justice.

Bullying can create significant psychological impacts such as loneliness, feelings of worthlessness, and hesitation in social interactions. This scene demonstrates that when individuals who have previously experienced bullying finally receive genuine care and friendship, the moment feels deeply emotional and meaningful, potentially becoming a crucial moment in the emotional healing process.

3.2. Discussion

This research shows that the impact of bullying in the film *Sekawan Limo* is not only physical but also manifests in verbal, emotional, and symbolic aspects, which are often overlooked. One form of verbal bullying is evident through insinuations about appearance, such as the sarcastic joke "Isn't Arjuna the most handsome?", which connotatively indicates a mockery of one's good looks. This type of teasing aligns with research findings (Gini & Pozzoli, 2013), which states that verbal bullying is often disguised as humor or familiarity, but can psychologically demean victims and create a negative self-image.

Furthermore, in the second part, the phrase "My parents are still alive" is used as emotional insinuation directed at another character who has lost their parents. While the statement may seem trivial in its literal meaning, its meaning and context emphasize the emotional deficiencies of the interlocutor. The social myth emerging in this scene is the belief that individuals with complete families are happier or more normal than those without. This statement, therefore, constitutes a form of emotional abuse that highlights social and psychological inequalities. Nuraini, (2019) explains that this type of bullying, although not overt, can cause deep emotional wounds because it touches on the most intimate aspects of the victim's life.

The third scene depicts an interaction between two characters, in which one of them utters the insulting phrase, "Are all your faces like that?" This statement, in context, is an example of verbal bullying that escalates into physical humiliation. Although in Indonesian society, such statements are often considered commonplace or a sign of familiarity, they have the potential to severely harm the targeted individual and undermine their self-confidence. Purnamasari, (2021) notes that offensive comments about someone's face, especially repeated ones, can lead to feelings of low self-esteem and cause someone to withdraw from social interactions.

The peak of bullying in this film is seen in the fourth scene, where a character is in a corner of the room, depressed, with a sticker on his face that reads "Child of a Corruptor" and a sign that reads "Beware! The Son of a Corruptor is a jerk!" hanging from his chest. This scene clearly highlights social stigma as a form of symbolic and psychosocial bullying. In this context, society not only judges individuals based on their family's behavior but also imposes social sanctions that destroy their sense of self-worth and identity. The widespread idea is that parental mistakes are passed on to children, and society feels entitled to shame individuals who were not actually involved in their family's actions. Astuti, (2019) explains that this kind of stigma is a form of collective violence that can trigger deep trauma and even lead victims to develop mental health problems.

Bullying often leaves impacts that are invisible to others. On the outside, someone may appear cheerful or fine, but beneath that facade may be hidden heartache, exhaustion, and even despair. A simple phrase like "I'm used to it" delivered with a faint smile actually reflects a feeling of resignation from an individual who has experienced injustice too often. They no longer have any hope of being defended or heard. This is a form of silent defense (Verywell, 2022).

A person who consistently displays enthusiasm and hope in front of others, even though they are internally exhausted and depressed, may be hiding the pain of mistreatment from their social environment. In many situations, those who are bullied choose to act as if everything is fine for fear of being perceived as weak or overly emotional. They pretend to be cheerful simply to gain acceptance from others. Amini, (2008) notes that social pressure encourages children to conceal their status as victims of bullying, which can have long-lasting psychological effects.

On the other hand, when individuals finally feel accepted and valued by others, the experience can be deeply moving. After facing rejection or loneliness for so long, receiving genuine acceptance is

incredibly rewarding. Amini, (2008) states that children who are frequently bullied tend to experience doubts about their self-worth. Therefore, when they finally find a positive social connection, it can be the first step in healing the emotional wounds they have been holding onto for so long.

4. Conclusion

This research shows that the film *Sekawan Limo* represents various forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, emotional, and symbolic, through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of several key scenes. Bullying is depicted not only directly but also disguised in jokes, sarcasm, or cultural expressions often considered normal by society.

Furthermore, the film highlights how victims attempt to mask their pain with a facade of strength, reflecting the reality that many children choose to remain silent for fear of being ostracized. Thus, *Sekawan Limo* serves not only as entertainment but also as a social reflection, emphasizing the profound impact of bullying and the importance of empathy and collective awareness in preventing it.

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