

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF DA'WAH MESSAGE ABOUT MORALS IN THE SHORT FILM JI DULLAH

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the social criticism conveyed in the short film "Ji Dullah," directed by Alif Septian Raksono Putra from EmpatBelas_Project. The research analyzes scenes in the film containing da'wah messages about Islamic ethics (*akhlak*). The study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. This approach involves analyzing dialogue, scenes, and audio-visual effects to understand the da'wah messages conveyed. Roland Barthes' Semiotic Analysis theory is used as the framework to identify symbols or signs that carry moral or da'wah messages. The data for this research comes from analyzing the film's scenes and descriptions of da'wah messages. Key findings include prohibiting several undesirable traits: arrogance (*riya'*), succumbing to lust, harsh speech, unjust leader, and bribery. These findings highlight undesirable traits for Muslims as depicted in the film's da'wah messages. Ultimately, the research aims to inspire viewers to cultivate good character and avoid morally wrong actions.

Keywords: *Da'wah Message, Film, Semiotics.*

INTRODUCTION

Public criticism of policy is a hallmark of societies that value democracy. This includes holding elections to choose leaders guiding a region towards prosperity and upholding justice. The rapid pace of change presents new and diverse avenues for expressing criticism. One particularly creative approach involves using realistic, story-driven audiovisual works. This method allows for nuanced and detailed messages, even if delivered indirectly.

Researchers selected a film titled "Ji Dullah" from Empat Belas Project, a film production house based in Jember, West Java. This production house is known for creating films rich in social commentary. The chosen film, released in 2017, tells the story of Haji Abdullah, or Ji Dullah in the Madurese dialect. He has just returned from his pilgrimage and is offered the position of village head in exchange for a substantial amount of land. The synopsis of "Ji Dullah" exemplifies the Empat Belas Project's skill

in weaving social criticism into their films, particularly those that reflect issues relevant to the Jember region. As most people understand it, a film is an audiovisual work of art that conveys messages to the audience. It transcends its original role as sole entertainment, becoming a powerful medium that connects various societal aspects through spectacle. This allows filmmakers to explore themes rarely encountered in everyday life, delivering them as social commentary. Films can address regional issues, particularly during political times, highlighting negative aspects through social criticism (Atmojo, 2021).

Understanding the full meaning of a film rich in symbolism may require some background knowledge of the scientific study or topic explored. Semiotic theory can be a valuable tool in deciphering how each scene, with its dialogue and visual effects, contributes to the film's message, whether delivered directly or indirectly. Semiotics, originally applied to analyzing symbols in media, allows us to interpret these elements and gain a new perspective on the film's message. (Sobur, 2002). Roland Barthes' view of semiotics incorporates elements of myth within a culture. This allows for a fresh cultural perspective when presenting research findings. According to Barthes, myths embedded within society are a form of indirect communication. These myths influence the community's belief system and values (Hasanah & Ratnasari, 2017).

An understanding of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is crucial to analyze the short film "Ji Dullah" effectively. This theory goes beyond analyzing signs for their literal (denotation) and implied (connotation) meanings. It also incorporates the concept of myth, which helps us decode symbols related to cultural beliefs. Barthes' theory offers two levels of analysis. The first level allows for a straightforward interpretation of symbols. However, one must delve deeper into the local belief systems and values to understand signs embedded within myths and specific cultures. This is particularly important in Indonesia, a nation with diverse cultures across its regions. The political climate in Jember, the setting of "Ji Dullah," is a prime example. The film likely contains symbols intertwined with local beliefs and social issues. A thorough semiotic analysis considering cultural and social aspects is necessary to grasp the film's message fully.

Although this film also invites many pros and cons among film activists because the message conveyed will invite a lot of scathing criticism, it also reaps a lot of praise because it is brave in conveying audio-visual arguments to describe the behavior of people who abuse religious elements for political purposes (Rozi, 2018). Lifting a film entitled Ji Dullah from the Fourteen Project Film Production House gives researchers many opportunities to analyze the content of da'wah messages contained in each scene, which has a total of 24 scenes and a film duration of about 17 minutes. The da'wah message that the researcher focuses on is the theme of good and despicable morals.

The results of this analysis aim to provide a view from researchers to readers to learn a lot about individual and group behavior to establish *silaturrahim* in social life. Coupled with the packaging of this film based on field observations from the survey results of the Fourteen Project film crew, this film is easy for the general public to digest. Researchers used a Descriptive Qualitative approach to describe the various da'wah messages conveyed in this film.

As for the presentation of various results, the researcher applies the Semiotic Analysis method by Roland Barthes to analyze the signs or symbols related to the message to be conveyed in the form of scenes, dialogue, and visual effects. (Umaroh, 2020). The research results are presented after being examined and analyzed from connotation and denotation symbols or signs so that the final results of the research have included the analysis of both, including the results of the analysis of myths and culture contained in the background of the place. Then, arranged and connected with the content or material of the da'wah message so that the verses of the Qur'an or Hadith related to the scenes and dialog in the Ji Dullah film are also presented as a form of Islamic religious views that can be applied in a short film and make it easier for Da'I to make the form of da'wah messages easily accepted by the congregation.

In this film, Ji Dullah, researchers found many da'wah messages rich in social criticism that have been categorized into several parts, one of which is the attitude or behavior of a devout Muslim personality to practice humility and courtesy. It is not a despicable trait that presents religious values in itself as a tool to attract the attention of others to recognize itself as an arrogant or 'crazy' attention figure. So, the social criticism conveyed in this movie is not only about the Hajj title and political issues but more than that. It includes the despicable traits that should be shunned from the personality of a Muslim.

METHOD

This type of research is included in Qualitative research with a Descriptive Analysis approach to produce Primary Data from the results of Subjective Analysis based on the Semiotics theory by Roland Barthes. (Dr. J.R. Raco, M.E., 2010). Primary data is then supplemented by an interview session with the Director, Producer, and Scriptwriter from EmpatBelas_Project Production House on film captions that relate scenes, dialog, and visual effects of Ji Dullah Films.

The data analysis process in this research is applied to three stages in semiotic analysis by Roland Barthes, which focuses on data from symbols or signs that contain certain messages in each scene. First, analyzing Denotative meaning as 'visible' or objective data. Second, analyzing the Connotative Meaning that refers to the first stage as a form of subjective and indirect meaning. Third, at this stage, the Myth perspective needs to be used to understand the form of messages in a culture and social reality of geography or background of place and time in the Ji Dullah Film (Margareth Viruliana, 2022). The data presented in the form of da'wah messages about the

motivation to have noble character and the recommendation to stay away from despicable morals contained in each scene of the Ji Dullah film.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this introduction, the movie Ji Dullah produced by the Fourteen Project Production House departs from social criticism raised in an audio-visual work of art coupled with a storyline. It has the following synopsis: Ji Dullah, who has just returned from the pilgrimage, is offered by his neighbor to become the village head. Feeling attracted by the rewards, salary, and social status that will be obtained, Ji Dullah is willing to spend his wealth to campaign to become village head.

This movie is set in Jember, West Java, and raises a sensitive issue, namely the world of politics, precisely when a region is conducting a new regional head election. This issue then becomes an inspiration so that social criticism is contained in the Ji Dullah movie. The social criticism contained in this movie indirectly orders that in the election of candidates for village head, someone who holds the title of Hajj will be more considered by the residents to become a leader in the village. This certainly has a bad side that should not be allowed because it sells the religious side, which should be used for matters of worship, not for worldly needs alone.

This short film is neatly packaged, bringing the genre of humor and a little sarcasm so that the audience gets entertainment and realizes some light allusions related to problems or issues that often occur during political and cultural times that are commonplace in society. So linear plotting with a simple imaging style can make it easier for the audience to digest the messages conveyed.

By understanding the many da'wah messages contained in Ji Dullah's short film, researchers explained that there are at least six da'wah messages related to the theme of morals in addition to many other messages related to different themes such as Akidah, sharia, politics, and so on. The explanation of the da'wah message about morals aims to keep the research results focused on the core message of the Ji Dullah short film to criticize social culture so that people's attitudes will be closer to a moral point of view. Subjectively, the da'wah messages contained in this short film are presented into six, consisting of three da'wah messages about *akhlakul mazmumah* that must be avoided or prohibited in Islam. The message exposure is packaged as follows;

Arrogance or Riya'

The mosque terrace scene depicts the da'wah message about the prohibition of having the nature of *riya'* or being arrogant in doing a certain activity. This scene tells the story of Ji Dullah just entering the terrace of the mosque and seeing several villagers talking; this makes Ji Dullah want to give the image of a good person and attract the villagers' attention to see him give alms. To provide the impression of good nature, Ji Dullah uses a little cough sign and of course the villagers glance and can only admire while saying Masya Allah. By looking at the connotation and denotation

symbols in this scene, the law of *riya'* is clearly unequivocal is haram because it is included in the nature of the group of polytheists as the behavior of the Ji Dullah scene.

Riya in Ji Dullah's scene is included in the small Riya, which aims to attract the attention of others to his deeds of worship. The nature of *riya* is a heart disease that must be avoided because it will cause a bad impression in the eyes of others. One of the characteristics of *riya* is found in the characteristics of hypocrites as well, namely the enthusiasm of the perpetrator who increases when he intends only to be seen in front of others to appear good.

Riya's nature, which is the introduction of Ji Dullah's initial character, is an example of the characteristics of a hypocrite (Zulfikar, 2019). As in Islam, it is also mentioned in the Qur'an surah An-Nisa verse 142. This verse explains that the nature of *riya'* is to attract human attention to look greater and greater than others. Some people may pay little attention to this behavior in the real world. However, in this short film, Ji Dullah is introduced as a person who is religiously observant but negligent in maintaining his attitude before humans. It is illustrated when Ji Dullah wants to give alms in front of the people on the mosque's terrace to the dhikr that he deliberately loudens to appear pious when the community deliberates. It is evident that during the dhikr, Ji Dullah was more concerned with the content of the community's conversation about him than with *dhikr* to remember Allah SWT.

Riya' nature is also included in the despicable nature practiced by hypocrites and will eliminate the reward for anyone who maintains this despicable nature. The Prophet SAW was worried about his people who kept the nature of *riya'* because all the good deeds that gave merit would be lost just by maintaining this despicable trait. The hadith of the Rasul SAW describes the nature of *riya'* as a black ant walking on a black stone in the middle of the night.

The explanation of *Riya'* in Ji Dullah's short film makes us realize that Muslims should stay away from this despicable trait. With the many evils contained in *riya'*, anyone who maintains this trait will give a picture of a person's character or nature that seems lofty and 'thirsty' for the attention of others, including matters of worship that should be an individual matter with God, not a matter that must be shared with others as a form of religious character recognition.

Consumed by Lust

In the Scene Yoyon and Ji Dullah are sitting in front of Ji Dullah's house. Yoyon, at that time, told Ji Dullah to offer himself to run as the next village head to get the village treasury in the form of fifteen square hectares of land, which made Ji Dullah consumed by lust to own it. Being easily consumed by lust is certainly a despicable characteristic and will lead to misguidance, as stated in Q.S Yusuf verse 53. Controlling lust is not easy and even difficult to subdue. Lust has many bad sides if it is always fulfilled and will invite a lot of ugliness. Indeed, lust can be fought by fasting

and praying, so Muslims themselves must have a strong level of faith and remind other Muslims not to be easily consumed by lust (Gani, 2020).

Lust has the content of understanding, as explained by Al-Ghazali, who understands lust as the potential center of anger and lust in humans as the base of all despicable traits. Some other opinions also provide analogies related to lust in the form of the strongest enemy that must be fought and subdued. The Qur'an itself has explained the promise of Allah SWT for people who are strong and successful in controlling their lusts, namely in the form of rewards which then become an easy way for Muslims to get His paradise in the afterlife. However, lust looks like an object that brings many diseases in the human body if it continues to fulfill its desires. At least lust plays an important role for humans from the creation of humans who are given two software that are not given to other than His creatures, namely reason, and lust.

Lust functions as a driver of the human body or body if directed and guided towards goodness. It needs to be reminded that lust cannot be turned off entirely, what humans can use against lust is to control it so that it comes closer to everything good and away from various vices. People who are able to maintain their passions are included in the category of Mujahid or people who fight in the way of Allah SWT (Ahmad Zainal Abidin, 2017).

Speak Harshly

The scene describes the household situation in the family of Ji Dullah and his wife, especially the economic situation described through the state of the food served, which is a clear sign and symbol of a family's economic situation. Ji Dullah complains when the food served is seen as not much and does not satisfy his hunger; in addition, Dullah's wife is also easily provoked by anger when she judges her husband to be very wasteful in spending used for campaigning.

Signs in every scene between Ji Dullah and his wife in the dining room always discuss economic matters, including da'wah messages in prohibitions to speak harshly to hurt the interlocutors' hearts. The connotation and denotation meanings in this scene are found in the dialog and expressions of Dullah's wife, which makes Ji Dullah patient with his wife's attitude. Coupled with the rising tone issued by Dullah's wife when speaking, shows the meaning of anger from the Madurese tribe, which is characteristic of reminding goodness.

Practicing irritability that triggers harsh words in Islam is strictly prohibited. In addition to affecting the relationship between humans who establish communication, it will also affect other psychological aspects. The perspective of da'wah in viewing human nature that contains harsh words is a part that must be eliminated in order to establish a good and correct da'wah process. One of the communication traits that Muslims must maintain is *qaulan layyina* or gentle communication. This type of communication is not only in the sense of conversation. Still, it is included in the human character that must be a good listener so that the communicant or interlocutor

also feels respect in the conversation. *Qaulan laying* that is applied can be addressed to communication with people of different ages, such as parents who mean respect and children who must prioritize polite words as a form of example that they can imitate.

Character education in how a person communicates should continue to be improved to achieve a form of communication with a good and correct message. In addition, the form of delivery must continue to be developed in terms of intonation, rhetoric, and culture. With the different geographies in Indonesia, the formation of communication among people who live amid culture and environment is different (Rikza & Islam, 2019).

Despite the prohibition of abusive speech in Islam, there is a lot of ease behind the hardship. If we improve communication, a good reason is needed to motivate people to be better. Islam provides many conveniences for these people, as in QS. Al-Insyirah verses 5 and 6 contain the meaning of motivation for Muslims to continue maximizing the ease behind adversity. The description of this verse is for Muslims always to maximize and not waste everything because in life there are times when we are in trouble. However, behind the distress, there is a convenience that we must analyze and use to get out of distress. If staying away from harsh words takes time to change, Islam motivates Muslims to speak kindly. Communication woven with simple messages and inviting the meaning of goodness will always be the communication that everyone expects at every meeting.

Bribing for a Certain Interest

This scene shows Ji Dullah and Yoyon practicing bribery or bribing villagers with money so that sympathetic people are interested in voting for Ji Dullah on election day. The law of corruption or bribery in Islam is explained. The sign in this scene is in the form of color psychology, which is described as blue or cold temperature, which makes the time description in this scene the morning as well as Yoyon and Ji Dullah distributing several envelopes that the village to win himself the next village head.

The connotation and denotation meanings in this scene are in the dialogue and scenes in a hurry, indicating bribes for residents and on guard to stay safe. So the da'wah message in this scene is also a social criticism for the dark part of politics. However, the case of Riswah or bribery is an open secret that several groups of people cultivate. This seems to be increasingly cultivated if you look at the behavior of bribery in the bureaucracy, which is often referred to as 'smoothing' to facilitate matters for certain interests (Istiqomah & Harisudin, 2021).

Riswah, in terminology, is defined as anything that is given (either treasure or in the form of a gift) to get a benefit or any gift that aims to strengthen something false. Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, in the book *Fathul Bari*, explains that the meaning of Riswah is a treasure given to buy honor or power for those who have it to help or legalize

something that is not lawful, from the views of the scholars above in understanding and explaining bribery as a false act carried out for the achievement of a misguided goal.

The understanding of *Riswah* or bribery is often misinterpreted by the thinking capacity of people who think briefly. However, in practice, it is very difficult to distinguish between bribery and assistance behavior by certain parties. Although the expectation of the gift is very similar, namely as an attractor of the view of the person given that the impression or character of the giving party seems good and generous so that the desire arises from the person to return the favor.

In Islam, the business of bribery is included in acts of charity that are prohibited or forbidden because they will invite the curse of Allah SWT (Haryono, 2016). Bribery behavior is often associated with any form of political implementation or related to rank or position. It often occurs during political times, in small examples such as the time of the village head election, as shown in the movie *Ji Dullah*. Even within the village's scope, many bribery perpetrators occur, such as 'dawn attacks'. In the form of giving a number of assets in the form of assistance to take the community's attention and votes to become a vote. From the community's point of view towards the perpetrators of bribery, be firm and brave to dismiss them. Prospective leaders who have begun to use bribery to attract public votes need to be questioned about their religious basis and accountability for office and others (Fajrusalam et al., 2023).

Unjust Leader

In the scene of the Mosque Terrace, the villagers and the Mosque Manager are deliberating about the Village Head, who does not take care of the continued construction of the Mosque, making the villagers dislike him by considering the village head an unjust leader. The prohibition of being an unfair leader has been explained in QS. Ash-Shura verse 42, that the unjust leader will be afflicted with a painful punishment. Included in the category of unfair leaders, even with a certain status or rank, will be held accountable in the afterlife because it is unable to do justice to the people who have given the mandate to a leader.

A leader who carries his people's mandate should be at the forefront of bringing justice to life. Everyone deserves justice and can rarely be equalized in all forms of need. It is the leader's duty to see the problems in the field and wisely decide for the people. In Islam, a leader is considered worthy of leading a scope of society if his relationship with Allah SWT is in good condition with the aim that the leader can exemplify to his people that faith is one part so that he and his responsibilities can be maximized and not fall into the ease of being consumed by lust so as to cause chaos (Radhie Munadi, 2022). The value of worship also needs to be considered; leaders who neglect their worship will cause damage on Earth.

The Prophet Muhammad highly recommends the appointment of leaders to enforce Islamic law. The implementation of *amar makruf nahi munkar* will not be

implemented if no one starts and organizes its implementation. The problem is if the leader who will be appointed does not fulfill his rights as a religious believer, he must also pay attention to his relationship and obligations to Allah SWT. Therefore, people need to pay attention and know the character of the leader to be appointed.

In historical records, the character of an ideal leader has consistency towards fairness and wisdom. One example of Islam's history is in the leadership figure of the Caliph of the Bani Umayyah Dynasty and Must Ar-Rasyid and from Bani Abbasiyah. According to Al-Mawardi about the figure of the ideal leader if someone can be selected from the people's representatives of the results of deliberation so that with much consideration can be determined figure worthy leader and able to be given the mandate to solve the problems of the people and guide the people to progress and blessing. In addition, the previous leader can appoint the leader with consideration from people who already have experience as a leader so that the perception of the next leader can be considered clearly and weighty.

The five da'wah messages about Akhlak in the short film Ji Dullah, makes us as Muslims to uphold the Sharia, which is packaged in da'wah messages. Da'wah can not only be carried out conventionally but can be maximized from various aspects. One aspect of da'wah or part of da'wah that can be maximized is the media and da'wah messages that the objectives of da'wah and the congregation can form. Media da'wah that can be improved is one of them in the form of audio-visual works such as movies. With movies that can be engineered, Da'I can describe a scene or an event from the implementation of a da'wah message more freely. Including in events or cases that rarely occur in the community. So the congregation watches the movie at one time and encounters a similar incident as in the movie. Then, the congregation or communicant already has an attitude or response to the case.

As for other da'wah messages contained in Ji Dullah's short film are subjective and still need to be improved. With further research, more da'wah messages can be found in this movie. It must be understood that da'i is not only a person who already understands a lot about religious knowledge but can be from people who straighten their intentions to invite others to get out of the way of misguidance (Mudjiono, 2011).

CONCLUSION

Ji Dullah's film is rich in da'wah messages conveyed through various film elements, such as scenes, dialog, and symbols. These messages include the prohibition of *riya'*, submitting to lust, speaking harshly, being an unjust leader, and bribing. The consistent delivery of da'wah messages and the comedy drama genre with local dialog make this film easy to enjoy and various audiences easily accept its moral messages. Every da'wah message follows the signs in every scene, dialog, or glimpse seen in the screen frame. This shows that in producing a movie there is at least a message or thing that wants to be conveyed to the audience seeing the movie as a medium of da'wah in modern times.

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of the role of film as a medium of da'wah. Film and da'wah media have an important role in conveying moral and religious messages to the public. However, the intersection of film and da'wah also triggers debate, with various points of view that need to be studied and responded to wisely. Some parties question the content of films as an entertainment industry using symbols of da'wah (Islam) as a marketing effort. The film industry does not escape criticism regarding the potential for commercialization and commodification of religion. It is feared that da'wah becomes a tool for profit alone, without paying attention to the essence and values to be conveyed. This intersection is a recommendation for further research which in this study has not focused on this context.

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