



Semiotics Perspective on Representation of Patriarchal Culture in Films

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Abstract. The patriarchal issue is a cultural issue which becomes an interesting topic in films. It can be used as an educational medium to anticipate social conflicts related to women's empowerment in fulfilling gender equality. Through the message in films, one can learn how to deal with this issue within the community. This paper aims to describe the representation of patriarchal culture through film messages through visual and verbal elements in films. The method used is descriptive qualitative with the elaboration of semiotic theory by Pierce, with three studies focusing on the visual elements of icons, indexes, and symbols that appear in the film. The result shows that meaningful analysis of the representation of patriarchal culture in films based on Pierce's theory provides a broad audience perspective. In conclusion, the analysis helps people understand a film's message through icons, indexes, and symbols. In addition, proper interpretation of patriarchal cultural representation found in films will influence people in how they deal with social problems around them, especially those related to the fulfillment of equal rights and obligations between women and men in general.

Keywords: Patriarchal Culture, Film, Pierce's Semiotics.

1 Introduction

The current development of films has given a new color to the scientific approach, allowing films to be used as a medium of education for every level of society. This development can happen because films are currently an audio-visual media that is very easy to access anytime, anywhere, and by anyone. Film as an educational medium can contain various issues according to the message the film wants to convey to the audience. Ida [1] stated that one of the functions of film today is as a visual medium that works with images, symbols, and visual signs as elements in its presentation so that films have a role in presenting a spectacle as an alternative media of information and education. The use of pictures, symbols, and visual signs in films can make it easier for viewers to get information and education through film messages. However, this can sometimes lead to different perceptions among audiences. The meaning of the film's

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message will vary greatly because several things can influence it. Still, the most important factor is the audience's ability to process the visual information contained in the film. The audience's ability to understand the film's visual elements allows people to enter an era of life that uses visual symbols as social culture [1]. In this case, people tend to be able to read visual signs through meaning and interpretation that produces the message in the film. Phenomena like this are phenomena of social culture closely related to everyday life and people's lives in the current era [2]. Besides this, Miszooff [3], stated that this has led people to inevitably have to deal with modernity centered on social and cultural aspects. This is also confirmed by Penuju [4], who stated that understanding messages in films are one of the educational methods for social development for individuals, namely, the film audience themselves .

Films have three categories that must be well understood by the audience: documentary films, fiction films, and experimental films. These three categories have characteristics that can become a reference for the audience to understand each of the three categories mentioned above. This writing focuses on analyzing data from 3 fictional films with the theme of women and a patriarchal cultural system. Widharma [5] stated that fiction films are based on mere imagination. However, it does not rule out the possibility that the story being told is taken from a true story that did happen. One also needs to understand that fictional films taken from real events can be developed using elements of composition that still have storylines, characters, and settings (place and time) that can be adapted to the wishes of the filmmaker who produces the film. A fictional film with the theme of women and a patriarchal cultural system is a significant thing to do as an effort to anticipate negative things that can occur as a result of the emergence of a patriarchal culture. The negative things in a patriarchal cultural system will be very detrimental to women and should be avoided in the current era, where women should have equal rights and obligations with men. In response to the issues and phenomena above, studies related to media and cultural science are very interesting to do because audio-visual media that elevate cultural values have extraordinary appeal, as do social issues regarding the gap between women and men in the current era [6].

The understanding of the equality of women and men is widely discussed in films, bearing in mind that many cases still corner women in their daily lives. Dwiyani [7], through a study from a documentary film perspective, found that in the documentary film "Amerta Ning Sinar" female characters who live in big cities, such as Denpasar City, still have to deal with discrimination issues. This paper also examines the elements of discrimination aimed at women, which consist of marginalization, subordination, violence, and a double burden on women. This is, of course, a matter of great concern, so education related to this must continue to be carried out by conducting studies and analyses that can be published to the public. This writing aims to increase awareness regarding this social issue and to provide space for women to seize opportunities to be equal to men. Studies related to women's gender equality in the film are also found in an article titled "The Context of Marginalization of Women in the film "Kartini" which highlights that Kartini's struggle as an Indonesian woman as she is confined by a patriarchal culture [7]. The large number of studies as educational media films is an effort to increase the knowledge of all parties so that the existing patriarchal cultural system can positively empower women in all aspects. The film "Kartini" can also be

said to be a form of women's construction in the media industry, where the film can present a storyline that can influence the audience's feelings and logic, making it easier for the message to be conveyed to be well understood by the audience [8].

This writing will examine the use of visual signs used in films by using Pierce's semiotic theory in related to the third trichotomy, which describes rheme, decent sign, an argument [9]. Pierce's theory will collaborate with CIDA's theory regarding discrimination against women. The scope of the study is visual signs in the form of rhemes, descent signs, and arguments as representations of female discrimination in films that use the social issue of female discrimination. As with the explanation above, the purpose of this writing is to increase education and understanding regarding the patriarchal cultural system so that women's rights can be equal to the rights possessed by men. This paper aims to provide a new perspective in understanding the patriarchal cultural system to increase women's empowerment in the current era.

2 Method

This writing uses a qualitative descriptive approach which will elaborate on the Semantic theory by Pierce to represent patriarchal indicators, especially discrimination against women (CIDA in Dwiyani) [10]. Data analysis was carried out by determining visual signs in the films *Hidden Figures*, *Athirah*, and *Kim Ji Young: Born in 1982*. The visual forms that were sorted are visual signs which are included in the form of rheme, decent sign, and argument. After determining each category from the 3rd Pierce trichotomy, the analysis process was followed by an analysis of the meaning, which was adjusted to the representation of the indicators that are part of women's discrimination. The analysis of the indicators mentioned was carried out in the form of an essay so that it can produce deep messages that follow the authors' interpretation of the storyline of each film. The results of the analysis were described in categories according to Trichotomy 3 by Pierce using the approach in the visual research area proposed by Ida [1], where it is stated that in the visual research area, the researcher has a point of view or position taken to produce the analysis as desired. The intended point of view is the Site of Self, where the researcher can act alone to interpret the meaning and understanding of the observed visual object. The meaning of the visual sign is interpreted by observing the visual composition that forms the visual sign using the content analysis and semiotic/audience method.

3 Result and Discussion

The research results on the visual signs found in the three films were categorized based on the 3rd trichotomy by Pierce. The meaning of the visual signs in the three films used as primary data is a representation of women's discrimination which is a form of the patriarchal system that is still developing in society. Understanding the film's message will determine the relationship between the visual sign and the intended representation by parsing the meaning according to the storyline, which will later support the suitability of the visual sign with the film's message.

3.1 Result Presentation

The presentation of the analysis, in this case, will begin with an explanation of the film's theme, which raises the patriarchal cultural system as a conflict in the film. An understanding of the themes and conflicts in the film will begin with the meaning of the visual signs associated with the messages contained in the film. The films *Hidden Figure*, *Athirah*, and *Kim Ji Young* have the same theme and conflict with different cultural backgrounds, which of course, will affect the patriarchal theme, which limits the space for the main character in the film, which incidentally is a woman. Understanding the storyline and conflict in the film will make it easier for the writers to understand and describe the meaning of visual signs in the form of rheme, decent sign, and arguments which are explained as follows:

Rheme is a sign that allows it to be interpreted differently. The meaning of visual signs in the three films used as primary data in this paper is more represented in the scenes and gestures of the protagonists, who have a very narrow mindset towards the abilities of women who are female characters in films. In this case, the visual signs represented can be found in actions, gestures, and expressions.

Dicent sign is a sign that corresponds to reality. The scope of the study in this paper includes visual signs that represent views of gender and race that restrict women from doing things that can only be done by men or even certain groups based on their ethnicity, class, and religion of female character in the film.

Arguments are signs that contain reasons about something. The analysis results in the argument category represent the actions and words given to women who are considered weak creatures. This is only based on the interpretation of a woman's physique. For example, there is an assumption that women cannot do things that rely on a certain level of intelligence and physical strength.

3.2 Discussion

Analysis of the representation of the patriarchal cultural system found in the films *Hidden Figures*, *Athirah*, and *Kim Ji Young: Born in 1982* with the elaboration of Pierce's theory in Piliang [9] and CIDA's theory of Discrimination of Women in Dwiyani [10], can be explained as follows:

Hidden Figures. Three brilliant African-American women at NASA: Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson, served as the brains behind one of the greatest operations in history: the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit, a stunning achievement that restored the nation's confidence, turned around the Space Race and galvanized the world. Based on the synopsis above, the film's message is that discrimination against women can occur in the world of work based on an assessment of the

race of the film's main character, a black woman [11]. Pierce's 3rd trichotomy study can be classified as follows:

Rhemes. Indicators of marginalization appeared in visual cues of cynical attitudes from the major group of working white men and women. They assume that black women are a group of women who have less educational backgrounds and come from low-income families.

Decent sign. Indicators of marginalization are found in visual forms where the workplace of the main female characters is separated from the rest of the workers with several sign systems in the office.

Argument. the subordination indicator is marked with a visual sign where the main female character is considered unable to do work with a high level of difficulty in science, which is considered only able to be done by white people. For white people, the most appropriate job for black women is only as lowly employees, such as cleaning services.

Athirah (2016). This film describes an Indonesian woman in the 1950s in Makassar struggling with doubt and humiliation when her husband begins an affair with another woman. The message the film wants to convey is that a society with a thick patriarchal culture is unable to curb women's desire not to depend on men or other families to survive for the sake of the children they have [12]. Pierce's semiotic representation of discrimination against women as part of a patriarchal cultural system can be based on three existing categories. Rhemes, an indicator of marginalization, can be seen in the scene, which shows that a wife only has to take care of her children in the culture where Athirah lives with her son. Subordination, an indicator of marginalization, can also be found in the film Athirah, which requires women to only surrender to every problem they face. Women have no right to complain or blame other people for the suffering they get. Arguments in the film Athirah can be seen from the representation of the double burden for women found in visual signs that require women to carry out their obligations to care for their families and help their husbands support them economically.

Kim Ji Young: Born in 1982. This film tells a storyline that centers on a housewife who becomes a stay-at-home mother and later suffers from depression. It focuses on the everyday sexism that the character experiences in her youth. The film's message is that every married woman in Korea, who decides to become a housewife, sometimes has to deal with responsibilities as a wife and mother, which can cause problems [13]. The representation of the semiotic perspective on the patriarchal system in this film can be formulated in the form of rheme, decent sign, and argument. Rheme can be identified in the form of marginalization, in which the film shows us that women's rights are limited to housewife obligations. A decent sign indicates subordination, as seen in the visual sign that women are not allowed to speak up for their rights. And the last trichotomy mentioned as arguments can be seen in the form of violence. The film's scenes show

that the closest person may verbally and physically abuse the main character to show the world that women are more priceless than men.

From the description above, one can see that a semiotic perspective on the study of patriarchal culture in film can be done by determining visual signs that can represent the 3rd trichotomy proposed by Pierce in Piliang [9], which can be used as a reference in determining messages in films about the patriarchal culture that occurs with a different cultural background in the films *Hidden Figures*, *Athirah* and *Kim Ji Young*.

4 Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it is found that indicators of discrimination as a form of a patriarchal cultural system can be grouped into the 3rd trichotomy category from Pierce, which consists Marginalization (Presented in the form of rheme found in "*Hidden Figures*"; "*Athirah*" and "*Kim Ji Young: Born in 1982*"; Presented in the form of a Decent Sign found in "*Hidden Figures*"), Subordination (Presented in the form of argument found in "*Hidden Figures*", rheme found in *Athirah*, a decent sign found in "*Kim Ji Young: Born in 1982*"), Violence which presented in the form of argument found in "*Kim Ji Young: born in 1982* and *The double burden for women* which presented in the form of argument found in "*Athirah*".

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