JOURNALISTIC REPRESENTATION IN THE FILM VINA: *SEBELUM 7 HARI* REGARDING THE ISSUE OF BULLYING IN INDONESIA: A SOCIAL CRITIQUE

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article history:	*The film Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari portrays the true story of a teenage girl from Cirebon who became a victim of bullying that ultimately led to her death. This film serves not only as a medium of entertainment but also as a tool for social advocacy, raising public awareness about the dangers of bullying. Through a journalistic approach, the film presents a powerful visual representation of the psychological and social impacts of bullying, as well as the role of the media in shaping public perception. This study employs a semiotic analysis method based on John Fiske's perspective to examine how the film represents sexual violence against women and its effects on public perception. The findings reveal that the film features two scenes of sexual violence, which, when analyzed through semiotic theory, depict the realities of sexual violence, critique societal norms, illustrate patriarchal dominance, and highlight social apathy—all reflected through reflective, intentional, and constructionist representations. Moreover, the film also emphasizes the phenomenon of "trial by social media" that occurred following the circulation of the video depicting Vina's harassment. This demonstrates how social media can act as a double-edged sword in the pursuit of justice, while also illustrating how both mass and social media influence public opinion regarding issues of bullying and sexual violence. Through strong journalistic representation, this film not only exposes the harsh reality of bullying cases but also encourages the public to be more critical in responding to social issues in the digital era.*
	Keywords: *Bullying, Sexual violence, Media representation, John Fiske's semiotics, Social documentary film, Public opinion.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the mass media forms with significant power in shaping public opinion and conveying social messages. As an audio-visual medium, film functions

not only as entertainment but also as a tool for education and reflection on social realities. One issue frequently raised in films is bullying, a phenomenon that has garnered increasing attention in Indonesia due to its serious impact on mental health and individual social development.

Bullying cases in Indonesia are becoming a growing concern, especially with the rising number of reports regarding the psychological effects experienced by victims. Bullying does not only occur in school environments but also in daily social interactions, both directly and through digital media. Studies show that victims of bullying often experience stress, anxiety, and even depression, which can have long-term consequences (Nuryuliza et al., 2024; Pramudita et al., 2022). However, despite its severe impact, bullying is still frequently regarded by some members of society as a normal part of social interaction.

In this context, the film Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari emerges as a representation of social reality that profoundly addresses the issue of bullying. The film illustrates how victims of bullying face social pressure, and how their surrounding environments—family, friends, and institutions—often fail to provide adequate support. With a socially critical approach, the film not only presents a dramatic narrative but also invites viewers to gain a deeper understanding of how bullying occurs and its effects on victims.

Furthermore, this film can also be examined in the context of journalistic representation. The media often plays a role in shaping public perception of bullying cases, whether through news coverage or films based on real events. As Kamzin (2015) argues, journalism is not merely about presenting facts, but also holds an educational function that can foster social awareness. In this regard, Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari can be seen as a form of visual journalism that represents the social reality of bullying through film.

The documentary Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari presents this true story as a medium to convey broader social messages. Beyond entertainment, the film serves as a tool for social advocacy that raises public awareness regarding the impact of bullying and sexual violence, as well as the role of the media in shaping public perception of such social issues. Through a journalistic approach based on visual and symbolic perspectives, the film provides a powerful representation of the violence experienced by victims, as well as society's response to these incidents.

A semiotic analysis approach, particularly through the perspective of John Fiske, becomes a relevant method for examining media representation in this film. Fiske asserts that mass media, through the symbols and images it presents, does not merely serve to convey information, but also constructs more complex meanings about social realities. Therefore, this study will examine how the film represents sexual violence against women, as well as how social and mass media play a role in shaping public opinion on bullying. The main focus of this study is to identify how the film creates social meaning around bullying and sexual violence

using specific symbols that reflect Indonesian social realities, which are often veiled by patriarchal norms and social apathy.

In studies on bullying in Indonesia, many researchers have identified that bullying is often linked to the social and cultural structures that shape societal behavior. For instance, according to Trianita (2020), bullying in Indonesia can occur in various forms, such as physical, verbal, or even online bullying, which is frequently overlooked due to prevailing social norms that tend to ignore this issue.

Film, as a form of mass media, plays a significant role in educating the public and shaping public opinion. One of the functions of film is to serve as a tool for creating social awareness. According to Arief (2019), film can be an effective medium for conveying social critique, particularly when the issues raised are related to ongoing social problems.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using content analysis of the film Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari and interviews with selected audience members. The content analysis technique is applied by examining how bullying is portrayed in the film, through visuals, narrative elements, and character development. Meanwhile, the interviews aim to explore audience perspectives on the film's impact on their perception of bullying and whether the film effectively conveys messages relevant to the issues it raises.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The primary message conveyed is that bullying is not a trivial issue and should not be ignored. The film seeks to communicate that silence is not an option, and every individual bears responsibility for protecting and supporting victims. There is a strong moral pressure for society to be more attentive and responsive to bullying cases. In a culture that tends to prioritize harmony and avoid conflict, many victims feel reluctant to report incidents. The film illustrates how social pressure leads victims to feel isolated. This depiction strongly reflects the dynamics frequently observed in schools and broader social environments. (Informant I, interview, May 2, 2025)

Data from Informant II shows that the bullying scenes were painful to watch due to their realism. "I felt anger and sadness, especially when seeing that Vina did not receive proper support from those around her. The film made me reflect on the profound psychological impact that bullying can inflict." (Informant II, interview, May 5, 2025)

Informants III, IV, and V stated that the film evokes empathy by placing the audience in the victim's perspective. The emotionally intense scenes depicting Vina's suffering build sympathy and understanding. Additionally, the indifferent

dialogue and reactions from other characters provide a stark contrast that encourages viewers to critically reflect on their own roles in preventing bullying.

Film has the power to touch emotions and open viewers' eyes. If widely screened, particularly among students and parents, this film could serve as an effective educational medium. With further discussion, such films could become catalysts for social change in combating bullying.

The author draws a conclusion based on interview findings from several informants that the journalistic representation in Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari regarding bullying issues in Indonesia functions as a form of social critique and has had a societal and communal impact. This is evidenced by the majority of viewers and respondents in this study stating that the film accurately represents common forms and patterns of bullying occurring in Indonesian social environments, particularly among adolescents. Through the representation of characters, dialogue, and social settings, the film demonstrates that bullying is not limited to physical violence, but also includes verbal and emotional abuse, and in certain contexts, can escalate to sexual violence. The film also portrays how victims are often marginalized socially and lack protection from those closest to them, including schools and families. Thus, the narrative presented in the film reflects the reality experienced by many bullying victims in Indonesia, albeit dramatized for narrative purposes.

The representation of bullying depicted in this film is considered highly relevant to the Indonesian social and cultural context, where patriarchal norms, social hierarchies, and a culture of shame and silence remain prevalent. The film illustrates how victims are often silenced by social pressure and fear of stigma, while perpetrators are protected by unjust systems or power structures. This representation reflects real societal dynamics, where violence is often legitimized or concealed in the name of family or institutional honor. Therefore, the film not only authentically portrays the phenomenon of bullying but also offers a sharp social critique of a culture that enables violence.

Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari can be regarded as one of the most effective audio-visual media in raising public awareness about bullying and sexual violence. With a narrative approach that combines social documentary elements and emotional drama, the film not only informs but also influences public opinion. It reinforces the notion that bullying is a serious issue that requires collective attention and systemic support. Through widespread dissemination on social media, public discussions, and emotional responses from audiences, the film contributes to the formation of public opinion that sides with victims and encourages social change. Therefore, the film deserves recognition as an educational and advocative medium in anti-bullying campaigns in Indonesia.

The film builds audience empathy through a strong emotional and narrative approach, portraying the human side of victims that often goes unseen in real life. Through the visualization of suffering, internal dialogues, and the loneliness

experienced by Vina, viewers are invited to feel the helplessness and trauma endured by victims of bullying and sexual violence. This representation creates an affective connection between the viewer and the character, forming the foundation for empathy. By showing that victims are human beings with feelings, hopes, and dignity, the film successfully dismantles negative stereotypes about victims and encourages audiences to be more sensitive and attentive to social conditions around them.

The majority of viewers and respondents in this study stated that the film accurately represents the forms and patterns of bullying commonly found in Indonesian social contexts, particularly among adolescents. Through the representation of characters, dialogue, and social settings, the film demonstrates that bullying involves not only physical acts of violence but also verbal and emotional abuse, and, in certain contexts, may lead to sexual violence. It also shows how victims are often socially marginalized and lack protection from those closest to them, including school authorities and family members. Therefore, the film's narrative reflects the lived experiences of many bullying victims in Indonesia, even though it is packaged in a dramatized format for storytelling purposes.

The character of Vina is portrayed as both empowered and vulnerable, reflecting the psychological dilemma experienced by bullying victims. In the film, Vina attempts to maintain her integrity and identity despite facing immense pressure, both from the bullies and the surrounding social environment that seemingly justifies such actions. Vina's efforts to resist and seek justice become a symbolic representation of resistance against the culture of silence and power imbalances in society. Viewers regard Vina's character as a representation of women's struggle in confronting a patriarchal and repressive system. Although Vina ultimately does not receive complete justice, her story provides moral strength and becomes a symbol of resistance for other victims.

The film conveys a strong moral message regarding the importance of courage, social solidarity, and empathy in addressing bullying. Although the solutions offered are not explicitly presented in the form of policies or concrete protection systems, the film provides a reflective space for the audience to understand the importance of creating a safe and inclusive social environment. The film draws attention to the need to listen to victims' voices and the necessity for community and institutional involvement in preventing and handling bullying cases. Thus, the film's positive message lies in its call to raise collective awareness and to build a culture that rejects all forms of interpersonal violence.

The central message that can be drawn from this film is the importance of dismantling the culture of silence surrounding bullying and sexual violence, which often takes place within hierarchical social settings that are insensitive to the victims' suffering. The film invites viewers to see bullying as a systemic problem that cannot be resolved individually, but rather requires structural transformation through education, victim-centered legal policies, and active community

involvement. Through Vina's narrative, the film affirms that the courage to speak out and seek justice is the first step that must be supported by strong social solidarity.

4. CONCLUSION

Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari is a cinematic work that not only presents a fictional narrative based on true events, but also raises highly relevant and critical social issues currently facing Indonesian society, namely bullying, sexual violence, and the structural injustices experienced by victims—particularly women. Through a strong and emotional media representation approach, the film successfully depicts the complex dynamics of violence, not merely as individual acts, but as social phenomena rooted in patriarchy, a culture of silence, and a weak legal protection system.

This study shows that the film is capable of evoking strong affective responses from its audience. Most respondents reported feelings of empathy, anger, and sadness over the suffering experienced by the main character, Vina. These emotional reactions demonstrate the film's representational power in portraying social realities that are often hidden or not openly discussed. By presenting scenes of bullying and sexual violence in an explicit yet artistic manner, the film not only delivers sharp social criticism, but also functions as an educational and advocative tool to shape more progressive public opinion regarding gender-based violence.

Within the framework of John Fiske's semiotic analysis, the film contains numerous signs that connotatively represent power relations, social inequality, and the stigmatization of victims. The school, which should be a safe space, becomes a symbol of a non-responsive system, while Vina's character personifies courage, trauma, and the struggle to seek justice in a society that is permissive toward violence. These signs not only strengthen the film's narrative but also create a discursive space for audiences to reflect on their position within the broader social structure.

Furthermore, through a narrative style resembling that of a social documentary, Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari effectively blurs the line between fact and fiction, fostering genuine collective awareness in the public sphere. The film indirectly exercises an agenda-setting function by framing bullying as a public issue that requires immediate response from society, educational institutions, law enforcement, and policymakers. The film's success in shaping public opinion and creating dialogue spaces across various platforms, including social media and mainstream media, demonstrates that visual media plays a central role in fostering critical awareness and driving social transformation.

Overall, Vina: Sebelum 7 Hari not only succeeds in portraying bullying and sexual violence in a realistic and emotionally moving manner, but also positions itself as a piece of visual journalism with a social mission. In this context, the film

becomes an effective medium for voicing victims' experiences, stirring public empathy, and sparking social change through discourse, public opinion, and collective awareness. Therefore, this work deserves recognition not only as a work of art but also as a tool for social advocacy, fighting for victims' rights and demanding structural justice.

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