

## THEMATIC AND VISUAL ANALYSIS OF THE SHORT FILM "MANIPULATOR" AS A FORM OF COMMENTARY ON SOCIAL DYNAMICS

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### ABSTRAK

The purpose of this study is to analyze how short films may become forms of media that raise and comment on controversial issues in society. The authors used descriptive analysis to analyze an Indonesian short film titled "Manipulator" by Ferry Irwandi using thematic and visual analysis, in determining whether and how short films and the development of characters within the film, can serve as a form of commentary or even criticism on social dynamics occurring in society. The short film provides an overview of how social dynamics occur through the role of everyone in a community depicted through the game "Werewolf".

**Keywords:** short film, social role, community, thematic analysis, visual analysis

### 1. Introduction

Humans are basically social beings who live side by side with other humans in a group form, be it family, community, or society. In carrying out social activities every day, humans need a medium of communication in interacting or exchanging thoughts, information, or feelings that are being felt. One of the "media" in this communication is language. Through language, humans can understand each other with one another, provided that they have the same cultural culture, or understand the culture of the language that is being heard or read (seen) so that information or messages can be conveyed (Rabiah, 2012). Thus, a language and culture are an inseparable unit. In addition to being delivered directly, either between two people or groups, language can also be conveyed through other means that utilize objects or technology. Technology allows humans to convey opinions, thoughts, information, or messages more broadly. Thus, language is no longer conveyed in a limited manner (between two people or groups), but has been able to reach all communities outside the region and even throughout the world.

Over time, the media has developed and is still growing today. This can be seen through the forms of communication media used by humans in the past to humans today. For example, in ancient times humans sent messages by mail and had to wait days, months, or even years to receive a reply. Meanwhile, nowadays, humans can easily send information via cell phones and various other gadgets. The media based on its form can be divided into three types, namely visual media, audio media, and audio visual media.

Visual Media are media that rely on the sense of sight. Usually use a projection tool or projector as an intermediary. The message to be conveyed is poured into visual form. There are two types of visual media, namely silent visual media and motion visual media. Both can be combined or used. In addition, the function of visual media is also useful for

attracting attention, clarifying the material presented, describing facts that may be easily digested and remembered in visual form (Ardan, 2021)

Audio media can be used to transmit audio messages from the message source to the recipient of the message. Audio media is closely related to the sense of hearing. Judging from the nature of the message received, audio media can convey verbal messages (spoken language or words) and non-verbal (sounds and vocalizations). Examples of audio media include radio, tape recorders, telephones, language laboratories, and others.

Meanwhile, audio visual media can display sound and images. This type of media is more interesting than just visual or audio only. Combination to stimulate the senses of hearing and sight. The audio-visual media are divided into two types, namely silent and motion audio-visual media (Aksa, 2017). One example of silent audio-visual media is silent TV, sound books, and sound pages. For examples of motion audio-visual media are TV films, sound images, and so on.

In this type of audio-visual media, we can see that the film is one of the media for humans to convey the contents of their thoughts or feelings to others. This is because not infrequently, a film story writer or a filmmaker inserts moral messages or criticisms in it so that people who watch it can interpret the message conveyed through the film personally. The film itself at this time is very diverse. In terms of length of duration, there are films that have a short duration which are referred to as short films. Despite their short duration, short films often convey a fairly solid message in writing the story based on issues that are currently happening, or even have been happening for a long time, or even give predictions about an impact or future.

One of the things that can be discussed in a short film is social issues that occur in society. This social problem certainly occurs due to differences of opinion, regulations governing the times, phenomena and so on which then have an impact on society. These changes are then referred to as Social Dynamic (Abdhul, 2022). Changes that occur in society certainly occur as a result of the community itself. Societies have an important role to play in their own development. In a community group, each individual has a social role. According to Chris Drew (2022), Social roles are sets of social behaviors assigned to people based upon social status.

One short film that raises the issues and debates that occur in society and how social roles affect a community group is "Manipulator" (Ferry Irwandi, 2020). This analysis will focus on the issues raised in the short film "Manipulator" by Ferry Irwandi which is published on YouTube in 2020. The use of short films as a medium in providing criticism and suggestions on an issue is currently in great demand. The author is interested in analyzing the short film "Manipulator" to see how a culture (which in this case leads to a message or social issue being raised) is conveyed through the media (the short film "Manipulator") with the style of language in the form of dialogue contained therein.

## **2. Methods**

This study uses thematic analysis techniques and visual analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that involves reading through a set of data and looking for patterns of meaning in the data to find themes. It is an active reflexivity process in which the researcher's subjective experience is at the center of understanding the data. Thematic analysis is typical in qualitative research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns. Visual analysis is an analysis technique that focuses on what is visualized directly through a work of art. Visual analysis is the process of looking at a piece of visual art (painting, photography, film, etc.) and dissecting it for the artist's intended meaning and means of execution

This analysis is carried out through several stages. The first stage is to watch the short film in its entirety without taking notes. The second stage is to watch again but without audio and start noting important things related to visuals. The third stage is just listening to the audio of the short film without seeing the visuals of the film and noting important things about the conversations. The fourth stage is to re-watch the film as a whole.

### **3. Result and discussion**

The short film "Manipulator" is a short film directed by a content creator on YouTube, Ferry Irwandi. This film is uploaded on Ferry Irwandi's own YouTube channel with the channel name "Ferry Irwandi". In general, this short film tells the story of a group of people who are playing the game "Werewolf".

#### **3.1 About "Werewolf" game**

This game uses cards as a tool in which each card has a character that has its own strengths. There are residents, doctors, hunters and of course the werewolves themselves. Later players will get a card from the moderator (controller of game flow) one card each and each player does not know the cards of other players. The task of the players is to portray their character and not be caught so easily. During the game later the players will guess the characters of other players from the way they argue, speak, their movements, depending on how they form an assumption. Players may use the abilities of their cards after being asked by the moderator whether they will use their abilities or not.

This game has two sessions, day and night. During the day (usually the first afternoon) they will argue with each other to form an assumption of what role they are playing. At night, the werewolf's job is to kill villagers based on the assumptions they get during the day. During the night session, the moderator will tell the players to close their eyes (just call it a night), then he will ask the werewolf who he is going to kill. Then the player who is a werewolf gives the code who he kills. When the night session ends, it will be continued by the afternoon session, then the moderator will announce that there is a werewolf murder last night and who the victim is. Then do the voting, who is the werewolf. Later each player will vote on who becomes a werewolf and after the votes are obtained, that person dies (exits the game). Each of them is just assuming because no one knew for sure what role the other players played. Villagers can vote for werewolves, werewolves for werewolves, and even villagers for villagers. Therefore, skill in concluding is needed in this game (Kompasiana.com, 2014).

#### **3.2. "Manipulator" Short film (2020)**

Tells about a group of friends consisting of eight people who are playing the game "Werewolf". The setting of the story is a coffee and vape shop called "Agung Coffee & Vape". Meanwhile, the time setting is also written at the beginning of the film's story, namely Friday, November 29 2019. The film uses an "eye level" shooting technique (angle). The eye level viewing angle is made parallel to the eye or the object being targeted. The position of the camera is not tilted up or down. This position is the most neutral angle and the most honest point of view as it is (Hafizt, 2021). This angle invites the audience to jointly feel "participation" in the story or discussion of actors and actresses.

##### **3.2.1 Plot and Issues**

The short film entitled "Manipulator" is a short film that raises social issues that are currently happening in society in Indonesia. This can be seen through the conversations of the characters who like to associate all the problems that are going

on with what is happening in Indonesian society. In this short film, the story writer divides the story into four chapters, Chapter I is entitled, "Sebelum Malam", Chapter II is entitled, "Nilai sebuah Nyawa", Chapter III is entitled, "Lidah Tak Bertulang", and Chapter IV is given the title title, "Konklusi".

#### **A. Chapter I: "Sebelum Malam", minute 00:14-03:39**

Chapter I shows the interactions between the characters at a long table, where they sit together with the various characters they have. One by one the characters are introduced through text containing the name, job, and status of each character.

In this chapter, the character Ferry as the host of the game "Werewolf" begins to explain the rules of the game. There is a debate about the rules of the game between Iskandar and Ferry, but Intan intervened, who gave an opinion that agreed with Iskandar and is approved by all the players.

#### **B. Chapter II: "Nilai Sebuah Nyawa", minute 03:40-09:35**

The game begins, and Iskandar becomes the first victim. The debate began. Intan is the first player to start the discussion to determine who the Werewolf among the rest of the players is. Intan expressed her opinion, but is immediately opposed by Arin by belittling Intan as a woman (minute 05:12). Intan, who did not accept it, then argued with Arin, which in turn humiliated Arin in front of the other players.

Then, Agung suddenly, with the alibi of not liking Effendi, appointed Effendi (Aseng) as a Werewolf (minute 5:48) which is then supported by Ginda on the pretext that Effendi's face is considered the face of a con artist (minute 06:02). Effendi is then angry and disappointed with the accusatory system which always sacrificed minorities in various problems (in this case not native Indonesians) which according to him is a discriminatory act (minute 06:10). Arin eased the mood by pointing at Echa.

At 07:25, Effendi confessed that he is the "important person" in the game. Echa (at 07:36 minutes) then tried to come to a conclusion not to "kill" Effendi because he claimed to be an "important person". The situation then turned towards Agung. Effendi pointed to Agung who is then followed by Ginda (minute 08:26). Echa then instigated Arin to join in appointing Agung with the lure of an old friend, would pay for coffee, and pay for Arin's trip home (minute 08:48). Agung is cornered and expressed his disappointment (minute 09:21) by saying, "at this table, the lives of ordinary citizens have no meaning, huh" then showed a card showing that he had the role of "citizen" in the game. Echa casually said, "Yaudahlah, warga biasa yang mati." (Minute 09:33).

#### **C. Chapter III: "Lidah Tak Bertulang" minute 09:58-14:20**

As a result of Echa's wrong choice, Arin then accused Echa of being the real "Werewolf". Effendi then tried to break up the debate between Echa and Arin, then accused Ginda of being the real "Werewolf". Echa also agreed because she realized that Ginda always followed the direction of the conversation. Arin then questioned Effendi's choice in appointing Ginda as a "Werewolf". Effendi later confessed to being a "hunter" in the game and provided his alibi. Ginda then confessed at 11:37 minutes that he played a

"doctor" which is also an important role in the game. Arin later also claimed to be a "doctor".

Intan suddenly enters the conversation and accuses Effendi of being a real "Werewolf" with her opinion. Effendi tried to refute Intan's opinion and tried to convince the other players that he is not a "Werewolf". But in the end, Intan claimed to be the real "hunter" and Effendi had to show his "real identity" card. As a result of pressure from all the players, Effendi showed his cards, which later it is discovered that Effendi is one of the "warewolves" in the game.

#### **D. Chapter IV: "Konklusi" minute 14:21-17.53**

In this part, Arin must "fall" because he is "killed by a Werewolf". Leaving Intan, Ginda, and Echa. Intan showed a frustrated expression because there is still one "Werewolf" among the three of them. Echa swiftly directs his accusations at Ginda. Ginda later said that he is actually a "citizen" and not a "doctor". Echa is shocked and questioned Ginda's actions. Ginda reasoned that he knew, if he said he is a "citizen", then Echa would easily accuse him of being a "Werewolf" and make him "fall".

An argument ensued, Echa accused Ginda of being a "Werewolf", and Ginda chuckled that he is not a "Werewolf". But in the end, due to pressure from Echa, Ginda showed his card which is proof that he is a "citizen". Echa, who saw Ginda's card, showed her card which is also a "citizen". And in the end, Intan opened her card and found out that she is the real "Werewolf".

### **3.2.2 Characters and Social Roles**

Character recognition is introduced through the existing text when each actor is highlighted. The story writer provides quite detailed information on each character through their full name, occupation and status, to the age of each character. However, character recognition does not appear sequentially or transitions. Here are the names, information, and what roles each character plays in the story.

Table 1. Characters in "Manipulator" Short Film

No.	Full Name	Nickname	age	Profession	Role (in "Werewolf" game)	Additional information
1.	Eko Yuda Iskandar	Iskandar/Iis	34 y.o.	Cinema Electronic Television actor	not shown, but based on the results of the game, he plays a <b>"hunter"</b>	Has a critical thinking, likes to question things that he thinks are strange / awkward.
2.	Agung Tirtyasa Kesuma	Agung/Gung	31 y.o.	The owner of Agung	role as <b>"ordinary citizens"</b>	Take advantage of the power he

				Coffee & Vape		has to control others.
3.	Intan Nuraini	Intan/Tan	26 y.o.	a barista at Agung Coffee & Vape	role as a <b>werewolf</b>	Shrewd in speech and expression, manipulative.
4.	Rezha Rizky Pratama	Echa	32 y.o.	Procurement Manager of PT Sinar Harapan Sentosa	role as <b>"ordinary citizens"</b>	Just married, often lies to avoid household problems, likes to "play it safe" (reduces risk), likes to incite
5.	Kunto Arind	Arin/Lay	29 y.o.	wedding singer	not shown, but based on the results of the game and his confession, he plays a <b>doctor</b>	Underestimating women, easily instigated.
6.	Ferry Zahri Fiardani	Ferry	29 y.o.	Broker of Land Bulak Kapal Cikarang	Role as <b>host</b>	
7.	Ginda Sitorus	Ginda	30 y.o.	an English tutor	role as <b>"ordinary citizens"</b>	Go with the flow of the conversation (just go along with it), lie for safety's sake.
8.	Effendi Rizal Salim	Effendi/Fendi/Aseng	24 y.o.	reporter of Kantor Berita Cakrawala	role as a <b>werewolf</b>	Has high emotions

Each character in the short film "Manipulator" has a different character, be it gender, character, and status. Thus, each character then has their own role in the course of the story that is presented. With the theme of social issues, the characters in the story then represent different social roles. In his article, Drew (2022) writes that social roles are sets of social behaviors assigned to people based upon social status. Drew writes that there are 27 types of social roles that exist in society.

Table 2. 27 Social Roles according Chris Drew

Social Roles	Description
1. Leader	Organize, set rules, exercise authority
2. Follower	Listen, observe, follow, learn
3. Parent	Provide care, provide food, provide shelter
4. Student	Study, Attend class, Learn
5. Son/Daughter	Obeys to parent, Follow the rules, Learn
6. Spouse	Respect your spouse, Care for your spouse, Collaborate with your spouse



7. Grandparent	Care for grandchildren, Tell stories, Provide wisdom
8. Church Member	Attend church, Learn from priest, Follow religious doctrine
9. Volunteer	Follow volunteer coordinator, Provide social value
10. Friend	Provide company, Be supportive
11. Elected Official	Make laws, Listen to constituents, Argue for constituents' needs
12. Server/Bartender/Barista	Serve food, Clean, Take money
13. Teacher	Educate, Classroom management, Provide safe environment, Listen to Parents
14. Doctor	Provide advice, Provide emergency care, Diagnose
15. Authority Figure/Police Officer	Make ethical decisions, Enforce or follow laws, Provide emergency care
16. Elder	Provide wisdom, Pass on knowledge
17. Judge	Interpret laws, Make judgments, Remain impartial
18. Dissident/Antiestablishmentarian	Question laws, Advocate for change
19. Rebel/Countercultural Figure	Question authority, Create cultural trends
20. Historian	Record history, Interpret history, Deduce lessons from history
21. Journalist	Record current events, Interpret current events, Write opinion pieces
22. Ally	Support, Care, Advocacy
23. Musician/Artist/Culture Producer	Produce Art, Contribute to culture, Entertain
24. Comedian/Court Jester	Entertain, Tell stories, Make us think
25. Employees	Follow rules, Complete assigned tasks, Respect the workplace
26. Employers	Identify unmet needs in market, Get product to market, Generate profit
27. Protesters	Protest, Advocate for change, Question authority figures.

To raise community issues in the short film "Manipulator", then each character has or represents the social roles that exist in society. Therefore, it is necessary to categorize each character in the short film "Manipulator" into 27 social roles according to Drew (2022).

### 1. Eko Yuda Iskandar (Iskandar/Iis)

Iskandar has a critical nature and likes to question things that are quite strange to him or not to his liking.

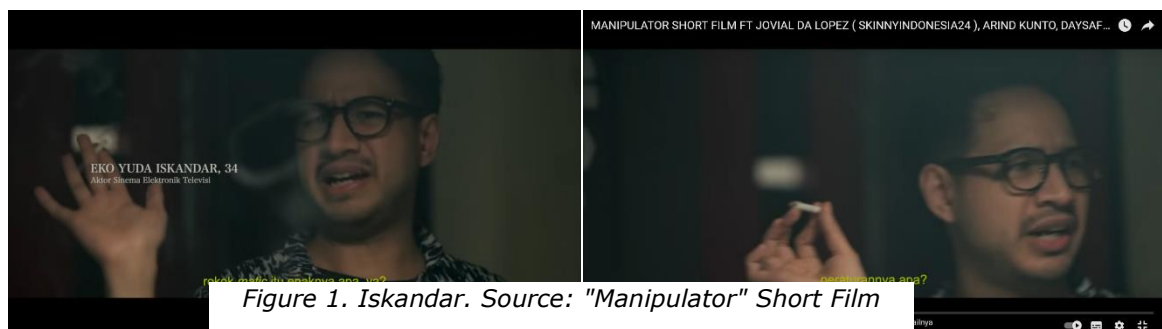


Figure 1. Iskandar. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

Iskandar initially questioned the enjoyment of using electronic cigarettes when compared to regular cigarettes. A few minutes later, before the game started, Iskandar questioned what the rules of the game were. In fact, Iskandar also denied that the regulations were "less exciting" or not in accordance with his wishes. There was a debate between Iskandar and the other players and the game host, but all players agreed because of Intan's support. But at the beginning of the game, Iskandar must lose because he was "killed" by the "Werewolf". This possibility illustrates that the figure of Iskandar is a figure who can "threat" the position of the "Werewolf" if allowed to "live".

With his characteristics, Iskandar can be categorized into **Dissidents, Rebels, and Protesters** who are both able to make changes and question the existence of a regulation that is not appropriate.

## 2. Agung Tirtyasa Kesuma (Agung/Gung)

Agung has the characteristic of liking to use his authority to be able to control forums or players. This was because the shop was the place where the games were held.



Figure 2. Agung. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

With this nature, Agung often threatens other players who disagree or fights him by threatening them to "pay" for their coffee. By looking at its nature, Agung can be categorized as an **Authority Figure**.

## 3. Intan Nuraini (Intan/Tan)

Intan is the only female character in the short film "Manipulator". However, Intan actually becomes the main antagonist in this short film by playing the role of "Werewolf". Intan has excellent communication skills and is good at using the atmosphere to be able to manage the flow of communication in games.



Figure 3. Intan. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

Intan's presence also serves as a "benchmark" for other players in making decisions about who a "Werewolf" really is. Knowing this, Intan took advantage of the players to argue and accuse each other. Thanks to her skills, the players didn't suspect that Intan



was a real "werewolf". Intan can indirectly be categorized as a **"Leader"** which also acts as if it were an **"Ally"**.

#### 4. Rezha Rizky Pratama (Echa)



Figure 4. Echa. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

Echa's character bears a resemblance to the character "Agung". However, what is different is that the character "Agung" seeks support by "threatening", while the character "Echa" seeks support by "offering". So that the character "Echa" is categorized as an **Authority Figure**.

#### 5. Kunto Arind (Arin)



Figure 5. Arin. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

Arin's character is actually a supporting character who is only a voice enhancer. Arin's character rarely gives opinions that change or influence other players, and instead is humiliated by the character "Intan" for mocking Intan just because she is a woman. Thus, Arin can be categorized as a **"Follower"**.

#### 6. Ferry Zahri Fiardani (Ferry)

Ferry acts as a "host" in the game. This role makes him the person who guides the course of the game and provides and establishes the existing rules of the game. Ferry is also a neutral role, not taking sides with anyone. Ferry's character can be categorized as **"Judge"**. Ferry's neutral demeanor was demonstrated at 15:32 which gave the players a "I am not interfering" sign attitude.



Figure 6. Ferry gives an "I am not interfering" sign attitude. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

## 7. Ginda Sitorus (Ginda)

Ginda's character has a character similar to Arin's. But what sets them apart is the way they become "**Followers**". Ginda, without being offered anything, always accuses the player who gets the most accusations.



Figure 7. Ginda. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

## 8. Effendi Rizal Salim (Effendi/Fendi/Aseng)

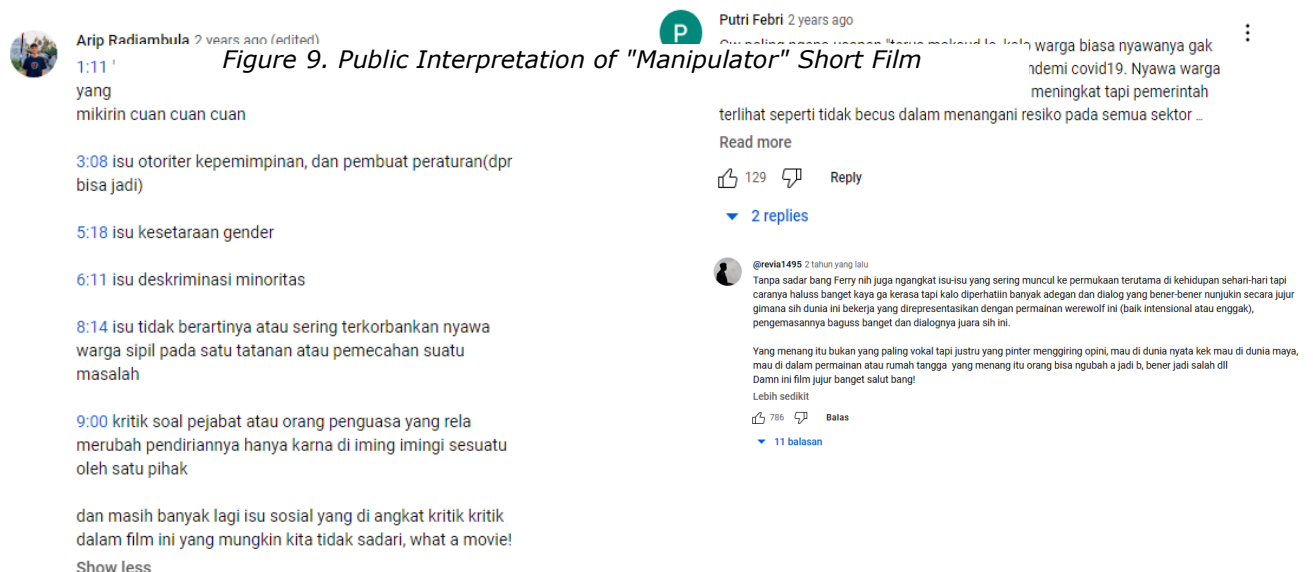
Effendi has a higher emotion than other players. In the game, Effendi also got the role of "Werewolf", but had to lose because he was "sacrificed" by Intan. His nature that often rebels with full of emotion makes Effendi categorized as a **"rebel"**.



Figure 8. Effendi. Source: "Manipulator" Short Film

### 3.2.3 Public Interpretation

The short film entitled "Manipulator" presents a series of debates that take place at a table in order to reveal who is the "Werewolf" among the players. Without any explanation either in the form of text in the video or video description, this film provides an opportunity for the audience to interpret what issues are actually raised in this short film. There are several accounts that then try to give their interpretation in the comments column on the short film.



## 4. Conclusion

Short films often convey quite dense messages in writing stories based on issues that are currently happening, or even have been happening for a long time, or even provide predictions about an impact or the future. The short film entitled "Manipulator" presents

social issues that occur in Indonesian society. The depiction of issues through dialogue and the characterization of the characters in the game "Werewolf" become a "vessel" for story writers in conveying these issues. Without giving a clear description of the meaning of the story, the story writer provides space for the audience to interpret the meaning and what issues are raised in this film.

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