

Representation of Men in the Film “*Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*”: A Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* (2025) presents a representation of masculinity that differs from the dominant patterns commonly found in mainstream Indonesian cinema. The male protagonist, Jonathan, is not portrayed as a stable, heroic, or authoritative figure, but rather as a vulnerable individual experiencing an identity crisis and in need of self-reflection to achieve independence. This study analyses how Jonathan’s masculinity is constructed through visual and narrative signs in the film, using Roland Barthes’ semiotic approach. The research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical design. Primary data were obtained through close viewing of scenes, dialogues, gestures, and visual elements in the film, while secondary data were collected from relevant literature on semiotics, film studies, and masculinity studies. The analysis applies Barthes’ three levels of meaning denotation, connotation, and myth, and is further enriched by R.W. Connell’s perspective on hegemonic masculinity. The findings indicate that the film deconstructs the myth of hegemonic masculinity that emphasises absolute independence, emotional control, and dominance, and instead offers an alternative masculinity that values vulnerability, self-awareness, and a commitment to a healthy lifestyle as new forms of strength. Thus, *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* not only represents individual transformation but also reflects a broader shift in the discourse on masculinity within contemporary Indonesian socio-cultural contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Film is a dominant form of visual mass communication that has now expanded into new media formats worldwide. Hundreds of millions of people watch films in cinemas, and over the last ten years, television content has increasingly been accessed through the internet due to the growing role of new media [1]. The development of Indonesian cinema in recent years has begun to present more complex portrayals of gender. Unlike earlier periods, when female characters in films were often limited to domestic roles, contemporary films

increasingly depict women as strong, independent, and broad-minded individuals. At the same time as these varied representations of women emerge, a unique phenomenon also appears: men's representation shifts toward a more fragile, ambiguous position, no longer occupying a dominant role.

In the current year, an interesting film titled *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* was released in cinemas on July 10, 2025, and reached more than three million viewers by mid-August 2025. The film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* was adapted from the web series *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*, which was released on February 1, 2017, on the Tropicana Slim YouTube channel and has been viewed approximately 5.5 million times. The film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* is a romantic drama with elements of fantasy. It tells the story of the mysterious female character Sore, portrayed by Sheila Dara. In the film, Sore is described as coming from the future and as the future wife of the male protagonist, Jonathan, portrayed by Dion Wiyoko and directed by Yandy Laurens. Jonathan is an Indonesian photographer who has lived in Croatia for a long time.

Sore's purpose in coming from the future is to change a bad fate that will occur by altering Jonathan's lifestyle. Jonathan has a very unhealthy lifestyle. Sore struggles to change Jonathan's fate through affection and attention, which eventually touch him and lead him to change his lifestyle. This reversal of roles provides an opportunity to analyse how the concept of masculinity is represented in a condition that is "disordered" and requires the attentive and patient role of Sore for recovery. This is rarely found in mainstream films, which often portray men as flawless heroes. For example, in *The Karate Kid* (1984), Mr. Miyagi trains Daniel not only in karate but also in life philosophy, showing a form of masculinity that is wise and patient. Similarly, in *Keluarga Cemara* (2019), the film presents the character Abah, portrayed by Ringgo Agus Rahman, as a resilient and responsible head of the family who, despite facing severe economic hardship, continues to guide his family with values of simplicity, honesty, and affection, demonstrating strong family resilience.

In this analysis, the researcher employs Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis approach. Kustati in [2] states that Barthes views meaning as dynamic, constantly changing in accordance with social and cultural contexts. In the context of visual media such as drama, semiotics is used to interpret meaning from scenes, facial expressions, gestures, colours, and symbols within the narrative.

The primary reason the researcher chose the film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*, directed by Yandy Laurens, is that the film presents a unique concept that distinguishes it from other films. Typically, male characters are portrayed as saviours or as more mature guides for female characters. However, in *Sore*, the female character is depicted as the saviour who guides and improves Jonathan's character. The film also portrays conditions that are relevant to today's young generation, including unhealthy lifestyles and poor mental health. The conflicts presented in *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* are realistic and closely aligned with issues currently faced by young people. The main character, Jonathan, has a successful career as a photographer abroad, yet behind this success, he lives an unstructured life, including smoking and consuming alcohol, which are forms of unhealthy behaviour. The film illustrates a crisis or deficiency in modern masculinity, where male characters may feel inadequate despite achieving professional success.

This study formulates the problem of how the representation of the male main character in the film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* can be interpreted through the perspective of Roland Barthes' semiotics. In line with this formulation, the purpose of this study is to identify and describe the representation of the male main character in the film through Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of the meanings constructed through signs, symbols, and narrative.

The benefits of this study encompass both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to broader insight and knowledge for both readers and the author, particularly in literary and film studies that apply Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, and to serve as a reference for observers of literature and film in analysing representations of male main characters. In practice, this research can serve as a source of reflection for students interested in conducting studies in literature and film, as well as provide readers, especially young people, with information on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle, as represented in the film *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive-analytical design to examine the construction of male imagery in the film "*Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*." Qualitative research is a type of research that tends to rely on analysis and is descriptive in nature; descriptive research in qualitative research involves describing and elaborating on an event, phenomenon, or social situation under investigation [1]. The researcher chose a qualitative approach to explore the complexity of meanings and socio-cultural phenomena in the film, which would not be adequately examined using a purely quantitative approach. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher can systematically and thoroughly describe Jonathan's character while simultaneously interpreting the ideological dimensions underlying his portrayal.

2.1 Research Focus

This research analyses representations of contemporary masculinity in the film "*Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*," specifically in the character Jonathan. This study examines three main aspects:

- a. Representation of men as fragile figures who require guidance or female intervention to initiate change in their lives. This research explores how the film *Sore* constructs Jonathan's image through a series of visual and narrative signifiers that depict him as fragile, dependent, and directionless, thus requiring personal repair or self-reconstruction.
 - b. Reversal of gender roles in the relationship between Jonathan and Sore, where the film portrays the female figure as the guide and driving force for positive change, while the male character becomes the subject who undergoes transformation. This focus analyses how gender hierarchies are reconstructed through interactions between the characters.
 - c. Formation of ideal masculine values, specifically how the ideal male character is shaped through Jonathan's transformation process from unhealthy and disorganised living habits toward a healthier, more disciplined life. This research focuses on values such as
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responsibility, self-care, and awareness as idealised masculine attributes presented in the film.

Through these three research focuses, the researcher aims to reveal the ideological meanings embedded in representations of masculinity in the film *Sore* by employing Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis as the primary analytical framework.

2.2 Types and Sources of Data

This study uses two main data types that complement one another. Primary data are obtained directly from the object of study, namely the film *SORE: Istri dari Masa Depan* (cinema release 2025). This material includes all audiovisual elements that construct the representation of the character Jonathan, ranging from visual layers (such as facial expressions, body language, makeup and costume, setting, camera angles, and lighting), sound layers (including dialogue, tone of voice, musical illustrations, and sound effects), to narrative layers (including plot progression, conflicts, and the dynamics of Jonathan's character development). Primary data collection is conducted through repeated close viewing of the film, accompanied by dialogue transcription and visual recording of significant scenes.

Secondary data are derived from various supporting materials outside the film. These data include academic works such as journal articles, reference books, and prior studies on gender representation, masculinity, and film semiotics. The presence of secondary data functions as contextual support that deepens the analysis, assists in interpreting signs within the film, and provides a comparative framework for representations of masculinity in Indonesian popular media. By integrating both types of data, the research can be conducted comprehensively and in depth.

2.3 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques employed in this study consist of two stages. The first stage is in-depth observation. In this stage, the researcher conducts focused observation by watching the film "*Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan*" with an analytical orientation. This includes understanding the overall narrative structure, focusing on the character Jonathan and his interactions with Sore, and identifying key scenes relevant to semiotic analysis. Documentation is then carried out by capturing screenshots or frame images of scenes that function as significant signifiers, such as scenes depicting Jonathan's transformation (before and after meeting Sore), scenes of emotional conflict, scenes illustrating gender interactions, and scenes containing strong visual symbols. Subsequently, audiovisual transcription is conducted by recording significant dialogues and describing visual elements in detail.

The second stage involves secondary data collection, which is carried out through literature studies of relevant previous research. The researcher critically examines various academic sources, including journals and theses on representations of masculinity in Indonesian films, Barthesian semiotic analysis of visual media, and the adaptation process from web series to feature film.

2.4 Data Analysis Technique

This research applies a qualitative analysis method through a staged application of Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. The initial stage begins with selecting and documenting audiovisual signs depicting the character Jonathan in the film. Various elements such as scene excerpts, dialogues, facial expressions, body movements, costumes, and narrative settings are collected and categorised according to the three layers of meaning in Barthes' theory: denotation, connotation, and myth. To strengthen this stage, the results of the semiotic analysis are further reviewed through the perspective of hegemonic masculinity as proposed by R.W. Connell. This step allows the research not only to deconstruct signs but also to examine how these signs reinforce, transform, or critique dominant standards of masculinity within society.

The entire analytical process is reinforced through triangulation, comparing findings with previous studies and the film's production context. This approach ensures depth, reliability, and validity of the interpretations developed, enabling the research to present a comprehensive and contextual understanding of male representation in the film "*SORE*."

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Theoretical Framework of Analysis

- a. *Representation*: Baker in [1] states that the term representation derives from the English term, which means depiction or portrayal. Representation refers to the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged within culture. Baker defines representation as a depiction or portrayal through which social reality is constructed and communicated [9]. Hall further emphasises that representation is not merely a reflection of reality, but an active process of meaning production shaped by cultural codes and power relations [10]. In film studies, representation possesses materiality because meaning is conveyed through visual composition, dialogue, narrative structure, and symbolic objects that operate within specific socio-cultural contexts [13].
 - b. *Roland Barthes' Semiotics*: According to Sobur, as cited in [2], Roland Barthes' semiotic theory introduces a two-level system of signification consisting of denotation and connotation [6]. Denotation refers to the literal, descriptive meaning of a sign commonly agreed upon within a culture, while connotation connects signs to broader ideological frameworks, emotions, and cultural beliefs [7]. When connotative meanings become naturalised and accepted as universal truths, they form myths that function ideologically within society [6]. Barthes argues that myths operate subtly by disguising cultural constructions as common sense, eventually solidifying into dominant ideologies [7]. In cinematic texts, these meanings are conveyed through *mise-en-scène*, including lighting, sound, character performance, and production design [8].
Furthermore, when connotative meanings are accepted as normal and natural, or as values prevailing in a particular period, as if they were part of divine destiny, they are referred to as *myth*. Myths are produced through cultural constructions, yet appear as universal or absolute truths that seem to preexist and be embedded in common sense. Myth shares similarities with ideology because both operate at the level of connotation. Barthes even argues that well-established myths eventually become ideology [2]. In the
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- film *Sore*, several elements of *mise-en-scène* are present, including aspects that appear on camera, such as the actors’ performances, sound, and production design.
- c. *Hegemonic Masculinity*: According to Suprpto in [3], Hegemonic masculinity refers to culturally dominant ideals of manhood that legitimise male power and marginalise alternative masculinities [11]. Connell explains that hegemonic masculinity is historically contingent and continuously reconstructed through social practices and media representation [12]. These ideals often emphasise autonomy, emotional restraint, control, and physical dominance, while suppressing vulnerability and dependence [20]. Media representations play a central role in maintaining or challenging hegemonic masculinity by normalising certain masculine behaviours and identities [17].

These three theoretical frameworks are interconnected. Representation theory explains how perspectives on men are constructed in the film *Sore*, while Roland Barthes’ semiotics serves as an analytical tool for examining signs and meanings. Hegemonic masculinity serves as the interpretative lens for understanding the ideological and cultural meanings embedded in the representation. By integrating these three theoretical foundations, this study can reveal not only the content of the representation displayed but also the process of its construction and the underlying reasons behind these representational formations.

3.2 Analysis of Masculinity Representation Across Three Phases

Table 1. Semiotic Analysis of Key Scenes

No	Key Scene	Denotative Sign	Connotative Sign	Masculinity Myth
1		A man sits alone, looking out the window, cigarette smoke and dim lighting.	Contemplation of life, and smoking as a form of release from life’s problems.	Men are expected to be strong and silent in the face of life’s hardships.
Figure 1.				
2		A man (Jonathan) sits with his friends in a bar with warm lighting, holding a glass of beer. Jonathan appears calm and comfortable.	Beer becomes a means of obtaining pleasure.	The assumption that drinking together builds closeness and enjoyment in male friendships.
Figure 2.				
3		A woman (Sore) breaks Jonathan’s cigarette, while Jonathan only accepts it silently.	A reversal of lifestyle; a shift in gender roles and power relations.	Women are also capable of disciplining men.
Figure 3.				

No	Key Scene	Denotative Sign	Connotative Sign	Masculinity Myth
4	 Figure 4.	A woman (Sore) throws away a bottle containing Jonathan's alcoholic drink. Jonathan remains silent without resistance.	Symbolic cleansing; feminine control over Jonathan and the cessation of escapism.	Women are seen as caretakers and guides, while men are perceived as unable to overcome their own weaknesses.
5	 Figure 5.	Sore gives Jonathan fresh and healthy fruit on his work desk. Jonathan smiles and accepts it.	A change in Jonathan's lifestyle through nutrition and discreet intervention.	Women are considered skilled at managing men's nutrition; change is expected to come through pleasant, agreeable means.
6	 Figure 6.	Sore closes Jonathan's laptop when it is time to sleep, and Jonathan accepts it with a smile.	Lifestyle change; improvement through regular time management. Health is prioritised over work.	Women are perceived as regulators of time and health, which are valued above work.
7	 Figure 7.	Sore invites Jonathan to exercise by jogging in the morning.	Lifestyle change; active accompaniment and gradual transformation of habits.	Women are seen as motivators of men's healthy lifestyles; exercise requires guidance at the beginning.
8	 Figure 8.	Jonathan rejects Sore's control.	The peak of resistance; assertion of Jonathan's freedom, and the crisis of transformation.	Men must be independent and should not be controlled; autonomy is a core masculine right.

No	Key Scene	Denotative Sign	Connotative Sign	Masculinity Myth
9	 Figure 9.	Jonathan cries and tells Sore about his trauma.	The collapse of Jonathan's masculine defences; past trauma as the root of problems; the emergence of feminine care through Sore.	Men are allowed to cry only for major life problems; masculinity is shaped by past family trauma.
10	 Figure 10.	A female character (Elsa) acknowledges Jonathan's change; Jonathan appears calmer.	Recognition from a woman; calmness as an indicator of change and autonomy.	Calmness is a sign of masculine maturity.
11	 Figure 11.	A friend (Karlo) asks about Jonathan's decision to stop smoking and drinking alcohol; Jonathan responds only with a smile.	Social recognition of masculinity; nonverbal communication as a sign of transformation.	Real change does not require excessive explanation; validation from peers strengthens masculine transformation.
12	 Figure 12.	Jonathan performs physical activity regularly.	Routine as proof of self-driven change; discipline without supervision; the body as a marker of transformation.	Physical discipline, mental discipline, and a healthy lifestyle form the foundation of a new masculine identity.

Based on the analysis presented in Table 1 above, three interconnected representations of masculinity can be identified. The first is the crisis phase, marked by objects such as cigarettes and alcohol; the second is the intervention phase, which illustrates a shift in gender power relations through Sore's actions toward Jonathan; and the third is the transformation phase, which highlights healthy values emerging from Jonathan's personal agency, such as engaging in physical exercise. These three phases collectively form a comprehensive perspective on the reconstruction of contemporary masculinity.

1. **Crisis Phase: Masculinity in a "Broken" Condition.** The analysis of two opening scenes, the first showing Jonathan alone smoking under dim lighting at minute (05:20),

followed by a scene of wine consumption at a bar at minute (25:12), depicts a male figure who has lost direction and maintains an unhealthy lifestyle. In the first scene, the denotative meaning presents a solitary male figure in contemplation, with low lighting and cigarettes as the dominant object. The connotative meaning connects this solitude with a loss of life direction, where cigarettes are portrayed as symbols of escape and simultaneously as companions during moments of social withdrawal. At the mythic level, this scene reflects a cultural assumption that men must endure life's struggles alone, and that smoking is perceived as a normal form of contemplation associated with masculinity.

The second scene reinforces a similar pattern through the denotative depiction of drinking wine or beer within a male social circle at a bar. Connotatively, alcohol functions not merely as a beverage but as a bonding mechanism in male friendships and a collective means of escape from life's difficulties. The myth constructed here is the belief that alcohol consumption is an intrinsic component of masculine identity, and that bar spaces, along with bottles of alcohol, represent a natural domain for men. Together, these scenes portray Jonathan as a representation of disordered masculinity that has lost its sense of direction. Despite his successful career as a photographer in Croatia, Jonathan fails to manage his life properly and neglects his health. This representational depiction serves as the narrative foundation for his transformation, while simultaneously conveying an implicit critique of transnational standards of masculinity embraced by Indonesian professionals abroad, which often prioritise career and social appearance over psychological and physical well-being.

The depiction of Jonathan smoking alone and consuming alcohol in social settings reflects a masculinity crisis characterised by emotional isolation and unhealthy coping mechanisms. Cigarettes and alcohol function symbolically as tools of escapism, aligning with cultural myths that normalise male self-destruction as a sign of toughness [19]. Bar spaces are often portrayed as masculine domains where emotional suppression is masked through collective leisure and substance use [15]. This representation reinforces hegemonic expectations that men endure psychological burdens silently while maintaining a façade of control [11].

2. **Intervention Phase: Feminine Domestication and Masculine Resistance.** The second stage of Jonathan's transformation reveals how change occurs through a series of interventions orchestrated by Sore, which are observable in six scenes: Sore breaking Jonathan's cigarettes at minute (25:12), disposing of his alcohol at minute (25:33), preparing fresh fruit for him at minute (26:10), closing Jonathan's laptop to stop his late-night work at minute (25:28), inviting him to jog in the morning at minute (27:02), and culminating in Jonathan's firm rejection of Sore's control at minute (46:55). These interventions gradually shift from confrontational methods to participatory approaches. Initially, Sore engages in physical actions based on an agreement that Jonathan will comply with her requests, such as breaking cigarettes and discarding alcoholic beverages, along with other objects symbolising Jonathan's negative habits. These actions directly portray a woman actively cleaning and reorganising a man's living

environment. Culturally, this reflects a process of taming masculinity through feminine intervention characterised by caregiving and patience. The myth that emerges is the belief that women possess moral authority to discipline men and that fundamental change requires external intervention capable of dismantling previous identities.

However, this phase does not progress linearly. Jonathan's mindset shifts from initial passivity to open resistance, particularly in the scene at minute (46:55) when he firmly states, "no one can control me, not even my wife." Literally, this statement affirms Jonathan's independence; culturally, it signifies the reemergence of a suppressed masculine identity; and mythically, it reinforces the notion that independence is a core masculine value. The relational pattern that develops illustrates a complex dynamic between feminine control and masculine autonomy. In this context, Sore functions not only as a helper but also as a catalyst for Jonathan's critical awareness regarding the boundaries of external intervention. This representational construction invites audiences to reflect on the ambivalence inherent in personal transformation, where support from others is necessary, yet genuine change ultimately arises from individual awareness.

Sore's intervention in Jonathan's lifestyle reflects a gendered dynamic where women are culturally positioned as caregivers and moral regulators [23]. Her actions initially reinforce the myth that men require external control to overcome personal weaknesses [21]. However, Jonathan's resistance highlights the tension between masculine autonomy and external guidance, reaffirming the hegemonic belief that independence is a core masculine right [12]. This phase illustrates how masculinity is negotiated through relational power rather than fixed identity [17].

3. **Transformation Phase: Vulnerability and Independence.** The final stage of Jonathan's development is encapsulated in four key scenes: his emotional confession about childhood trauma at minute (70:40), Elsa's observation of his changes at minute (94:00), a conversation with Karlo at minute (101:21), and his independent exercise routine at minute (102:38). This phase illustrates a transition from dependency on others toward self-regulation. When Jonathan cries while recounting his childhood wounds, the tears represent not merely sorrow but signify the collapse of his rigid masculine defences. This moment reveals an implicit assumption that profound sadness is considered acceptable when experienced by men, and that issues of masculinity often originate from problematic relationships with fathers.

Elsa's acknowledgement that Jonathan has become calmer provides external validation that his transformation is tangible and observable. When Karlo questions Jonathan about his decision to stop smoking and drinking, Jonathan's simple smile becomes the most powerful response, conveying certainty without the need for words. His new habit of exercising regularly, without reminders from anyone, demonstrates that a healthy lifestyle has become integrated into his new identity. Collectively, these moments portray a new concept of masculinity that no longer separates resilience from sensitivity. Jonathan emerges as a figure capable of embracing past wounds while cultivating new discipline, accepting external support while maintaining inner independence. This representation offers an alternative perspective on the traditional ideal of masculinity,

which is often depicted as unwavering and entirely self-sufficient, devoid of vulnerability.

Jonathan's emotional confession challenges the long-standing taboo against male vulnerability. Crying is semiotically redefined from weakness into emotional courage, destabilising dominant masculine myths [6]. This aligns with studies on men's mental health in Indonesia, which emphasise the psychological costs of suppressing emotional expression [24]. Recognition from peers and former partners serves as social validation of transformed masculinity, reinforcing that masculine identity is relationally constructed [9]. Jonathan's disciplined exercise routine symbolises embodied self-regulation, presenting a new myth in which emotional maturity and physical care coexist [18].

3.3 Discussion: Deconstruction of the Myth of Hegemonic Masculinity

- a. *The Myth of Masculine Strength = Total Independence.* This film implicitly critiques the common understanding that equates male toughness with absolute independence, namely the belief that a man can change and stand on his own without any intervention from others. The data presented in the research table reveal a paradox at minute (46:55): when Jonathan firmly states to Sore that no one can control him, not even his wife, it is precisely at that moment that Jonathan is in an extremely vulnerable and fragile condition. The rejection, which at a glance appears to assert independence and power, in fact places Jonathan at the peak of an unresolved identity crisis. This contradiction becomes even more evident in another scene at minute (70:40), where Jonathan sheds tears and displays his vulnerability in front of Sore. These two opposing moments, one in the form of a harsh rejection and the other as a fragile confession, demonstrate that true independence does not mean continuously hiding everything and bearing it alone. Instead, it is the ability to know when one must stand alone and when one needs others to help and understand. Connell's perspective on hegemonic masculinity, which emphasises total autonomy and full control, is challenged by Jonathan's journey, in which he gains a new form of strength by accepting his own vulnerability. The film conveys that genuine masculine strength lies in the space where one can balance the need for independence with the courage to accept help when it is needed.
- b. *The Myth of Women as Saviours or Controllers.* The analysis of this film reveals a gradual transformation in Sore's role through three stages of development. Initially, Sore appears as a dominant controller who regulates Jonathan's life. She then shifts into a supportive role that encourages and accompanies Jonathan's movement toward positive changes in his life, until Sore is no longer physically present when Jonathan finally achieves full independence. At the beginning of the transformation, Sore starts by breaking Jonathan's cigarettes, discarding his alcoholic beverages, regulating his sleeping and working patterns, inviting him to exercise, and arranging healthy meals for him. Visually, this depicts a woman as a helper to a fragile man experiencing a life crisis. As the narrative progresses, Sore's role changes from controller to motivator, and eventually she is no longer visible or involved at all when Jonathan reaches his own

internal strength. This transformation dismantles the common belief that women must always act as regulators, constantly present in men's lives. Instead, the film shows that sustainable, consistent masculine change requires awareness and a willingness on the part of the man himself.

The relationship between Sore's role and character and contemporary gender perspectives in Indonesia is particularly significant. On one hand, the film acknowledges feminine agency in encouraging transformation, in line with the advancement of gender equality discourse in Indonesia. On the other hand, the film avoids falling into a pattern of change driven solely by feminine direction by demonstrating that external help is effective only when accompanied by the individual's internal desire. Sore is not portrayed as a superwoman who solves all of Jonathan's problems, but rather as a catalyst who initiates a process of independent transformation. This characterisation aligns with the evolving gender discourse in Indonesia, which increasingly moves away from rigid divisions between passive and active roles and instead emphasises cooperation and mutual recognition of agency between men and women.

- c. *The Transformation Phase: Vulnerability and Independence.* Jonathan's developmental phase is marked by four defining moments: his confession about his childhood past at minute (70:40), Elsa's statement acknowledging Jonathan's change at minute (94:00), his conversation with Karlo at minute (101:21), and his decision to start exercising independently at minute (102:38). These four events represent a fundamental shift from dependence toward full self-regulation, while simultaneously constructing an alternative form of masculinity that challenges hegemonic standards.

The semiotic reading of the scene at minute (70:40) reveals three interconnected layers of meaning. At the literal level, the scene depicts a man crying at night as he recounts his past. At the cultural level, the tears symbolise the collapse of conventional masculine defences that have long suppressed emotional expression. At the mythic level, the scene dismantles the assumption that men are only allowed to cry over suffering deemed worthy and that masculinity issues stem from problematic relationships with the father figure. At this mythic level, the scene challenges the long-standing belief that forbids men from shedding tears. The belief that crying signifies weakness and a lack of masculinity is overturned when the male character allows himself to cry. His sobbing in the middle of the night, accompanied by his childhood story, is not a sign of defeat. Instead, it becomes a symbol of courage to acknowledge wounds and to choose honesty over a façade of toughness. In doing so, the character not only violates old rules but also opens the way for a new definition of strength that arises from sincere acceptance of one's vulnerability.

Jonathan's independence becomes more evident in the scene at minute (94:00), when Elsa states, "You have changed, you are calmer." This acknowledgement from a former partner serves as social validation that his transformation is real and recognised by others. This aligns with Baker's theory of representation (in Atmojo et al., 2019), which emphasises that representation is constructed through reciprocal recognition between subjects.

The culmination of Jonathan's journey toward independence occurs in the film's final two scenes. When Karlo asks about Jonathan's behavioural changes at minute (101:21), Jonathan responds only with a smile. Semiotically, this wordless response serves as a powerful sign of inner calm and self-assurance. According to Barthes (as cited in Sobur, 2018), such visual signs can communicate meaning more economically and effectively, particularly in the context of masculine expression, which often avoids emotional verbalisation. The closing scene at minute (102:38), in which Jonathan exercises alone, further solidifies this alternative construction of masculinity. His disciplined bodily movement serves as a physical metaphor for his psychological transformation, generating a new myth: that a man's emotional maturity is manifested in conscious care for his physical health.

Collectively, these four scenes weave a cohesive narrative of an alternative masculinity that integrates three key elements: a willingness to embrace emotional vulnerability, the ability to make independent decisions, and a commitment to disciplined self-management. This representation not only shifts away from Connell's hegemonic masculinity discourse that emphasises violence and control, but also presents a more humane and sustainable form of masculinity, in line with the growing appreciation for the complexity of masculine identities in Indonesian gender discourse. Jonathan's journey from fragility to resilience demonstrates that the essence of true masculine strength lies in the courage to embrace sensitivity while consciously building the capacity for self-regulation, rather than in denying emotions or relying on external parties.

The film critiques the myth that masculine strength equals total independence by revealing how emotional denial leads to psychological fragility [12]. Jonathan's journey demonstrates that true autonomy emerges not from isolation, but from the ability to negotiate vulnerability and self-discipline [11]. The portrayal of Sore avoids positioning women as absolute saviours, instead emphasising their role as catalysts within a broader process of self-awareness [22]. This narrative aligns with contemporary gender discourse that advocates fluid and cooperative identity formations rather than rigid binaries [23].

3.4 Implications and Research Contributions

- a. *Theoretical Implications.* This study makes significant theoretical contributions in three areas. First, in the field of Indonesian film semiotics, this research demonstrates how a two-level analytical approach, moving from literal meaning to cultural meaning, can be applied to uncover the construction of gender ideology in cinematic media. These findings enrich the methodological repertoire of local film analysis, which has often been limited to surface-level narrative readings. Second, the study deepens the discourse on fluid masculinity within Indonesian popular media. Through an in-depth reading of Jonathan's transformation, masculinity is shown to no longer be fixed within rigid hegemonic frameworks but to be capable of dynamically shifting between vulnerability, calmness, and independence. This reinforces the theory that masculine identity is flexible and adaptable to evolving social discourses. Third, the study successfully integrates Roland Barthes' semiotic framework with gender studies perspectives, particularly
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Connell's theory of masculinity. This combined approach enables a more comprehensive reading, in which visual and verbal signs are understood not merely as carriers of meaning, but also as agents that shape, reinforce, or challenge cultural understandings of gender. Consequently, this research opens the possibility of applying similar methods to critically and contextually analyse other identity representations in media.

- b. *Socio-Cultural Implications.* This study highlights the issue of Indonesian men's mental health through the lens of popular media. Jonathan's emotional transformation from anxiety to calmness invites audiences to reconsider the psychological pressures often hidden behind masculine figures. This portrayal opens space for public discourse on the importance of acknowledging vulnerability as a natural part of being human, rather than assuming toughness must always be displayed. Thus, the film not only tells a story of individual change but also encourages society to be more sensitive to the emotional burdens quietly borne by many men.

Furthermore, analysing gender representation in this film enhances the critical media literacy of younger generations. When viewers learn to interpret meanings behind scenes, dialogues, and gestures, they move beyond passive consumption toward active interpretation and critical questioning of the values conveyed. Such literacy is essential in fostering awareness of gender stereotypes often reinforced by films and advertisements, while also encouraging acceptance of more inclusive expressions of identity. The final scene depicting Jonathan exercising regularly also conveys an implicit message about holistic healthy living. The film subtly connects physical discipline with emotional stability, emphasising that bodily and mental health are mutually supportive. This message has the potential to develop into more humane educational material that addresses not only exercise and nutrition but also internal balance as the foundation of everyday well-being.

- c. *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research.* Although this study successfully reveals the construction of masculine meaning through visual text analysis, it has a primary limitation in that it does not incorporate direct audience responses. The interpretations presented are entirely derived from the researcher's reading of the film text, and therefore cannot yet assess how these representations are understood, accepted, or even contested by audiences from diverse cultural, gender, and generational backgrounds. Without incorporating audience perspectives, the analysis may not fully capture the complexity of the film's fluid masculinity discourse's societal reception.

Future research is therefore strongly encouraged to adopt a more comprehensive approach. First, comparative studies could be conducted with other Indonesian films that address themes of masculine transformation or men's mental health. Such a comparative analysis would help determine whether the representation identified is specific to a single work or part of a broader pattern in contemporary Indonesian film production. Second, future studies could address this gap by conducting audience reception research through in-depth interviews, structured surveys, or focus group discussions. This would allow researchers to examine how different audience groups interpret key scenes, whether they

identify with the character's journey, or whether they reject the representation offered. Such reception studies would not only enrich textual analysis findings but also provide a more concrete picture of the media's role in shaping or reflecting societal understandings of gender, mental health, and masculine identity in Indonesia. Through methodological expansion and a broader research scope, academic discussions of gender representation in media can continue to evolve from textual readings toward more dynamic dialogues among text, context, and audience.

This study contributes to film semiotics by demonstrating how Barthes' myth theory can be applied to Indonesian cinema to uncover ideological constructions of masculinity [6]. It also enriches gender studies by offering empirical insight into alternative masculine identities that resonate with contemporary social realities [17]. Socio-culturally, the film promotes awareness of men's mental health and challenges stigmas surrounding emotional expression [24]. Methodologically, integrating semiotics and masculinity theory provides a comprehensive framework for analysing identity representation in media [25].

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the semiotic reading of *Sore: Istri dari Masa Depan* reveals a meaningful shift in the cultural construction of masculinity in Indonesian cinema. Rather than reinforcing dominant ideals of masculinity, the film articulates an alternative masculine framework that values emotional awareness, self-reflection, and personal responsibility. The findings highlight how masculinity can be represented as a dynamic and transformative process shaped by inner struggle and conscious self-care, rather than by control, emotional suppression, or dominance.

The implications of this research are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to gender and film studies by extending Roland Barthes' semiotic framework into contemporary Indonesian cinema, demonstrating how myths of masculinity are negotiated and redefined through popular media. In practice, the study offers insights for filmmakers, educators, and cultural observers on the potential of film as a medium for promoting healthier, more inclusive gender narratives, particularly for younger audiences navigating identity formation.

This research is limited to a single film text and focuses exclusively on the representation of a single male character, using a qualitative semiotic approach. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalised to all Indonesian films or broader audience interpretations, as viewer reception and socio-cultural backgrounds were not examined in this study.

Future research is encouraged to explore audience reception of alternative masculinity representations, comparative analyses across multiple films or genres, and intersections between masculinity, class, and generational identity in Indonesian media. This study contributes to the general public by fostering critical awareness of gender representations in film and encouraging broader acceptance of vulnerability as a legitimate and constructive dimension of masculine identity in contemporary Indonesian society.

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