

Deconstructing Bullying in Indonesian Animation: A Semiotic Analysis of Jumbo (2025)

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Bullying Representation; Semiotic Analysis; Roland Barthes; Animated Film; Social Education; Empathy and Solidarity; Indonesian Culture

The film Jumbo (2025) presents a compelling portrayal of bullying through the experiences of the protagonist, Jumbo, a young elephant marginalized by his peers. This study aims to analyze the representation of bullying in Jumbo using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to explore how visual and narrative elements construct bullying behaviors, power dynamics, and moral messages. The research employs a qualitative, descriptive methodology, focusing on key scenes from the film. Through semiotic analysis, this study identifies the various forms of bullying depicted in the film—verbal, physical, and relational—and explores how the film critiques societal norms surrounding physical superiority. The findings highlight the transformative journey of Jumbo, whose personal growth challenges the normalization of bullying and promotes values of empathy, solidarity, and courage. By examining the ideological constructs embedded in the film, this research contributes to the understanding of how media, particularly animated films, can serve as powerful tools for social education and moral development. The study suggests that Jumbo offers important lessons for young audiences and calls for further research on the role of local animated films in addressing social issues in Indonesia.

1. Introduction

Bullying is a significant social issue that affects children and adolescents worldwide. It can manifest in various forms, including verbal, physical, and psychological abuse, and it often results in long-term emotional and psychological damage to its victims UNESCO, (2025). Studies have shown that bullying negatively impacts the development of self-esteem, social relationships, and overall well-being. This issue is particularly concerning in the context of school environments where children spend a significant portion of their lives. While bullying has been extensively studied in real world settings, its portrayal in media, particularly in film, has gained increasing attention due to the power of media in shaping societal norms and influencing public perceptions. Films, as a form of mass communication, hold the potential to either normalize or challenge harmful behaviors like bullying.

The media's representation of bullying can function as both an educational tool and a form of social critique. However, it can also normalize bullying behavior when portrayed as a common or acceptable part of social interactions. This dual role of media in both reflecting and shaping societal attitudes necessitates a closer examination of how bullying is represented in popular culture. In recent years, animated films, which were once primarily considered entertainment, have increasingly become platforms for delivering social messages. These films, through their engaging narratives and visual appeal, have the ability to address complex social issues in a manner that is accessible to younger audiences, especially children and teenagers. One such example is the Indonesian animated

film *Jumbo* (2025), directed by Ryan Adriandhy. This film, while providing entertainment, also serves as a vehicle for addressing the pressing social issue of bullying.

The use of animated films to communicate social issues is not new, and it is widely recognized for its potential to resonate with children. Animation has the unique ability to simplify complex issues, such as bullying, while still delivering a strong moral message. *Jumbo*, in particular, stands out as an example of local Indonesian animation that not only entertains but also addresses issues like self-esteem, social exclusion, and the effects of bullying. The film presents a character, Jumbo, a young elephant who is bullied due to his size and appearance, but ultimately finds strength and courage to overcome adversity. Through its portrayal of bullying and its consequences, *Jumbo* presents a compelling narrative about empathy, self-worth, and resilience. This research seeks to analyze the representation of bullying in *Jumbo* using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to understand the deeper meanings behind the visual and narrative elements of the film.

In line with the increasing focus on media's role in shaping young minds, there has been a growing body of research examining how bullying is depicted in films, especially in animated formats. Previous studies have explored bullying in live-action films, focusing on physical and psychological forms of abuse, and have used semiotic analysis to decode the signs and symbols associated with bullying behavior. For instance, research by Restyadiana & Febriana, (2024) used Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze bullying in the film *The Karate Kid*, highlighting the aggression and symbolism behind physical bullying. Similarly, Ramadhani dkk., t.t. (2024) applied the same approach to *A Silent Voice*, a Japanese animated film, to understand the psychological effects of bullying and the relational dynamics between the victim and the perpetrator. These studies contribute to the understanding of how bullying is represented in film, but they primarily focus on Western or foreign films. Little research has been conducted on the representation of bullying in Indonesian animated films, specifically in the context of local culture and values.

This gap in the literature forms the foundation for this study, which seeks to contribute to the understanding of how bullying is represented in Indonesian animated films. By focusing on *Jumbo*, this study aims to provide insights into how local animation uses signs, symbols, and narratives to depict bullying and its effects, particularly within the context of Indonesian social and cultural values. Furthermore, it will explore how the film conveys moral lessons on empathy, resilience, and solidarity in the face of bullying, offering a unique perspective on the role of animation in addressing social issues.

The primary research question guiding this study is: How is bullying represented in *Jumbo*? This question will be explored through the application of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which provides a framework for analyzing the signs and symbols used in the film. Barthes' theory differentiates between denotative (literal), connotative (emotional and cultural), and mythological (ideological) meanings, allowing for a deeper understanding of how bullying is portrayed and understood. By applying this framework, the study will examine how the visual and narrative elements of *Jumbo* contribute to the construction of bullying as a social issue, the power dynamics between the perpetrator, the victim, and the social environment, and the moral messages that the film seeks to convey.

2. Method

This study applies a qualitative, descriptive methodology to analyze the representation of bullying in the animated film *Jumbo* (2025). The approach is underpinned by Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which provides a framework for decoding the signs, symbols, and narratives employed by the film. The primary aim of this research is to understand how bullying is portrayed visually and narratively in *Jumbo*, as well as to explore the moral messages and social commentary embedded within the film. This section details the methodology employed to analyze the film, including data collection, analytical framework, and the rationale for using semiotics as the guiding approach.

Research Design

The research follows a qualitative, descriptive approach as it seeks to understand and interpret the representation of bullying in *Jumbo*. According to Ma'rifat et al. (2023) qualitative descriptive research is particularly suited for exploring cultural texts, such as films, where the goal is to uncover deeper meanings embedded within visual and narrative elements. This approach does not seek to

quantify data or test hypotheses but rather aims to offer a detailed and systematic interpretation of the subject matter.

In this study, the primary focus is on understanding how the film communicates its anti-bullying message through visual and symbolic representations. As described by (McQuail & Deuze, 2020), qualitative research emphasizes understanding the meanings that media texts hold for their audiences, and how these meanings align with or challenge societal values and norms. By focusing on semiotic analysis, the study aims to dissect the signs and symbols used in the film to reflect and construct the issue of bullying.

Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered through a combination of observational analysis and documentation of key scenes in the film *Jumbo*. The observational analysis focused on identifying scenes that depicted bullying behaviors, such as verbal insults, physical bullying, social exclusion, and symbolic forms of bullying. In addition, the study examined how these scenes were framed visually and narratively to construct meaning around bullying, power dynamics, and moral lessons.

Data was collected in the following manner:

1. Observational Analysis: The researcher watched the film in its entirety, identifying key scenes that featured bullying behaviors. Each scene was examined for its narrative content, visual framing, and emotional tone. The goal was to understand not only what was happening in each scene but also how the bullying was constructed and conveyed through the film's design elements.

2. Documentation: Alongside the observational analysis, the researcher documented key elements of each scene, including dialogue excerpts, visual symbols (such as colors, camera angles, and lighting), and screenshots from the film. These elements were used as evidence to support the analysis of the semiotic meanings embedded in the film's representation of bullying.

3. Literature Review: A comprehensive literature review was conducted to provide theoretical and contextual support for the analysis. The literature helped frame the study within the broader academic discourse on bullying, semiotics, and film analysis. Key works from scholars such as (Barthes, t.t.) (Storey, 2021), and (Törrönen, 2021). Were consulted to guide the analysis of signs and symbols in the film.

The data collection process ensured that the analysis was both systematic and grounded in the film's specific content, while also drawing upon relevant theoretical frameworks from the literature.

Analytical Framework: Semiotics

The primary analytical framework for this study is Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which is particularly effective for dissecting media texts like films. Barthes' semiotics offers a robust methodology for analyzing the relationship between signs (signifiers) and their meanings (signifieds), and how these signs are used to construct ideologies and cultural narratives (Barthes, t.t.). Barthes identifies three levels of meaning in signs: denotation, connotation, and myth.

1. Denotation: The first level of meaning refers to the literal or primary meaning of a sign. In the context of *Jumbo*, this involves the direct actions and events depicted on screen, such as verbal insults or physical bullying.

2. Connotation: The second level refers to the emotional, cultural, and associative meanings that are attached to the signs. For example, the way lighting, camera angles, and character expressions are used to convey the emotional impact of bullying, such as shame or isolation, falls under connotation. This level explores how visual and narrative elements go beyond the literal meaning to evoke emotional responses and cultural associations.

3. Myth: The third level involves the ideological or cultural values that are normalized through the media. In this context, Barthes' concept of myth is crucial for understanding how *Jumbo* constructs cultural narratives around bullying, power dynamics, and morality. Myths are the overarching ideological messages that films communicate, which are often so ingrained in society that they are taken for granted as natural truths. For instance, *Jumbo's* portrayal of bullying as a form of social exclusion or its eventual resolution through the protagonist's bravery may be viewed as reinforcing values like empathy, courage, and the rejection of social conformity.

By applying these three levels of semiotic analysis, the researcher is able to uncover how the film uses signs to communicate complex social messages about bullying, and how these messages resonate with cultural and moral values.

Scene Selection and Coding

To ensure a focused and structured analysis, key scenes from *Jumbo* were selected based on their depiction of bullying behaviors. These scenes were analyzed according to the semiotic levels of denotation, connotation, and myth, with particular attention paid to the following themes:

1. Bullying Types: Verbal, physical, relational, and symbolic bullying were identified and categorized within each scene. This classification helped to organize the analysis and provided insight into the various forms that bullying takes within the film's narrative.

2. Power Dynamics: The study also examined the power relationships between the bully, the victim, and the social environment. Semiotic analysis was used to assess how the film visually and narratively constructs these relationships through the positioning of characters, their actions, and the responses of bystanders or authority figures.

3. Moral Messages: Another crucial aspect of the analysis was the examination of how the film conveys moral messages related to bullying. The researcher identified moments in the film where empathy, solidarity, and personal growth were emphasized, particularly through the transformation of the protagonist, Jumbo. This coding allowed the researcher to trace the development of the film's anti-bullying message and its impact on the audience.

Each scene was carefully analyzed for its visual elements (e.g., camera angles, lighting, color schemes) and its narrative components (e.g., dialogue, character actions) to identify the semiotic signs used to convey these themes. These elements were then coded and categorized, allowing for a systematic comparison across scenes and providing a foundation for the discussion of the film's representation of bullying.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were an essential part of the research design. The study involved observing and documenting scenes from a film, which were then analyzed in detail. As the film is a publicly available media text, ethical concerns related to privacy or confidentiality were minimal. However, the researcher ensured that all data used for analysis, including screenshots and dialogue quotes, were cited appropriately and used exclusively for academic purposes.

In addition, the researcher was mindful of the potential impact that the study could have on the interpretation of the film. By highlighting the ways in which *Jumbo* represents bullying and moral lessons, the study aims to encourage critical thinking and foster empathy among audiences, especially young viewers who may be particularly influenced by media portrayals of social issues.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process followed a systematic approach based on Barthes' semiotics. After the key scenes were selected and documented, the following steps were taken:

1. Denotative Analysis: The first step involved identifying the literal meanings of the signs in each scene. This included noting the specific actions, gestures, and verbal insults that constituted bullying.

2. Connotative Analysis: The second step focused on the emotional and cultural meanings associated with the signs. This involved examining how visual elements (e.g., camera angles, lighting) and narrative components (e.g., tone of voice, music) conveyed emotional responses to bullying.

3. Mythological Analysis: The final step involved analyzing the ideological implications of the signs. This included exploring how the film constructed cultural narratives around bullying, power, and moral values, and how these narratives aligned with or challenged societal norms.

The analysis was conducted in a cyclical manner, where the researcher revisited scenes and refined interpretations as new insights emerged. This iterative process allowed for a deeper understanding of the film's complex representation of bullying and its socio-cultural messages.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Presenting the Result

Overview of Bullying Representation in Jumbo (2025)

This study reveals that the animated film *Jumbo* (2025) presents bullying as a complex and systemic social phenomenon rather than a series of isolated incidents. Through a combination of verbal, physical, and relational forms, bullying is consistently embedded within the narrative structure of the film. The repetition of bullying behaviors aligns with (Barthes, t.t.) notion that repeated signs contribute to the construction of cultural myths, thereby normalizing certain practices within society.

From the initial scenes, the protagonist, Jumbo, is positioned as an “outsider” due to his physical differences. This positioning is not only expressed through direct actions such as mockery and exclusion, but also through subtle visual and narrative cues that reinforce his marginalization. As the story progresses, bullying evolves into a structured pattern supported by peer dynamics and social hierarchies, reflecting what Törrönen, (2021) describes as a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by group norms.

Importantly, the film does not merely depict bullying but critically engages with its normalization. While early scenes suggest that bullying is an accepted part of social interaction among children, later developments challenge this assumption, gradually exposing its harmful consequences. This dual representation underscores the role of media as both a reflection and critique of social reality McQuail & Deuze, (2020).

Denotative Representation: Forms and Patterns of Bullying

At the denotative level, bullying in *Jumbo* is presented through observable actions, dialogues, and interactions. These include verbal insults, physical intimidation, and acts of social exclusion. Each form is clearly identifiable within specific scenes, allowing for a systematic classification of bullying types.

Verbal bullying is prominently displayed through repeated insults directed at Jumbo’s physical appearance. Dialogues such as derogatory remarks about his size function as explicit indicators of humiliation. These actions correspond with definitions of verbal bullying outlined by (Duan & Chiang, 2024). Which emphasize the use of language as a tool for aggression.

Physical bullying, although less frequent, is represented through gestures of intimidation and dominance, particularly in competitive settings such as games. For example, scenes where stronger characters use their physical presence to assert superiority highlight the imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This aligns with classical definitions of bullying that emphasize repeated aggression and power asymmetry Budirahayu & Mawardi, (2025).

Relational bullying emerges as one of the most dominant forms in the film. Jumbo is repeatedly excluded from group activities, ignored in social interactions, and positioned as an undesirable participant. These acts of exclusion illustrate how social relationships can be manipulated to marginalize individuals, reinforcing the idea that bullying extends beyond direct aggression to include subtle forms of social control Törrönen, (2021)

The denotative analysis demonstrates that bullying in *Jumbo* is multifaceted and recurrent, reflecting real-world patterns where victims experience overlapping forms of aggression. These representations provide a concrete foundation for further analysis at the connotative and mythological levels.

Connotative Representation: Emotional and Cultural Meanings

At the connotative level, the film employs various visual and narrative techniques to construct emotional and cultural meanings associated with bullying. Elements such as lighting, color, camera angles, character expressions, and sound design play a crucial role in shaping audience interpretation.

Jumbo is frequently depicted using visual cues that emphasize vulnerability. Close-up shots of his facial expressions highlight feelings of sadness, shame, and isolation. The use of dim lighting and subdued color palettes in scenes of exclusion further reinforces his emotional state, creating an atmosphere of discomfort and empathy. These techniques align with (Kurniawan & Amin, 2025) assertion that visual symbols in film contribute significantly to the construction of connotative meaning.

In contrast, the perpetrators are often framed using angles and compositions that emphasize dominance. Low-angle shots and confident body language position them as powerful figures within the social hierarchy. This visual contrast between Jumbo and the bullies reinforces the imbalance of power, making the dynamics of bullying more perceptible to the audience.

Additionally, the reactions of bystanders play a significant role in shaping the connotative meaning of bullying. The presence of silent observers who neither intervene nor challenge the perpetrators contributes to the normalization of bullying behavior. This phenomenon reflects what (Vita, 2025) identifies as the psychological impact of bystanders, where inaction can implicitly validate harmful actions.

Culturally, the film associates physical ability and conformity with social acceptance. Jumbo's exclusion is not only based on his physical differences but also on his failure to meet group expectations. This reflects broader societal norms that prioritize conformity over individuality, as discussed by Storey, (2021)

Thus, the connotative analysis reveals how Jumbo constructs bullying as an emotionally charged experience that is deeply embedded in cultural expectations and social norms.

Mythological Representation: Ideology and Social Critique

At the mythological level, the film constructs and simultaneously deconstructs dominant ideologies surrounding bullying. (Barthes, t.t.) defines myth as a system of meaning that naturalizes cultural values, making them appear as common sense.

In the early stages of the narrative, the film establishes the myth of physical superiority. Characters who possess strength and confidence are portrayed as more valuable and deserving of social acceptance. This ideology is reinforced through repeated acts of exclusion and ridicule directed at Jumbo, suggesting that physical differences justify marginalization.

However, the film gradually dismantles this myth through the transformation of the protagonist. Jumbo's journey from a marginalized victim to a heroic figure challenges the assumption that worth is determined by physical ability. His success in resolving the central conflict demonstrates that courage, empathy, and intelligence are equally important qualities.

Another significant myth addressed in the film is the normalization of bullying as a natural part of childhood. Initially, bullying is depicted as an ordinary aspect of social interaction, supported by peer acceptance and the absence of intervention. This reflects the societal tendency to trivialize bullying as harmless behavior.

As the narrative progresses, this myth is critically challenged. The emotional and social consequences of bullying become increasingly evident, leading to a shift in group dynamics. The eventual rejection of bullying behavior by other characters signifies a broader ideological transformation, emphasizing the importance of empathy and inclusivity.

Therefore, the mythological analysis highlights the film's role in both reproducing and critiquing dominant social ideologies, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and empathetic perspective.

Power Relations and Social Environment

The representation of power relations is central to understanding bullying in Jumbo. Power is depicted as a multidimensional construct influenced by physical strength, social status, and group dynamics. As McQuail & Deuze, (2020) argue, media representations often reflect dominant social hierarchies, where certain individuals or groups hold authority over others.

In the film, the character Atta embodies the dominant group, using physical strength and social influence to assert control over Jumbo. His actions are not only supported by his personal abilities but also reinforced by the collective behavior of his peers. This illustrates how power in social settings is often sustained through group consensus.

The role of bystanders is particularly significant in maintaining these power structures. The lack of intervention from other characters allows bullying to persist, demonstrating what can be described as a “bystander effect.” This aligns with Ventsel et al., (2021) who highlight how collective silence can legitimize harmful behavior.

Furthermore, authority figures in the film initially fail to challenge the existing power dynamics, contributing to the normalization of bullying. However, as the narrative develops, these dynamics begin to shift. The crisis faced by the group disrupts the established hierarchy, creating opportunities for new forms of leadership and cooperation.

Jumbo’s eventual rise as a central figure represents a redistribution of power. His actions challenge the existing hierarchy, demonstrating that authority can be derived from moral courage rather than physical dominance. This shift underscores the film’s critique of traditional power structures and its advocacy for more equitable social relations.

Moral Messages and Anti-Bullying Education

One of the most significant findings of this study is the film’s emphasis on moral education and its potential as a tool for social change. Jumbo conveys a clear anti-bullying message through its narrative and character development, aligning with UNESCO, (2025) emphasis on creating supportive and empathetic environments for children.

The transformation of Jumbo serves as a central narrative device for conveying moral values. His journey illustrates the importance of self-acceptance, resilience, and courage in overcoming adversity. By presenting a protagonist who ultimately succeeds despite being marginalized, the film encourages viewers to challenge negative stereotypes and believe in their own potential.

Equally important is the transformation of the bully, Atta. His character development highlights the possibility of change, suggesting that individuals who engage in bullying behavior can learn empathy and take responsibility for their actions. This reinforces the idea that anti-bullying efforts should address both victims and perpetrators.

The film also emphasizes the role of collective responsibility in addressing bullying. The shift in group dynamics demonstrates that social change is possible when individuals choose to reject harmful behavior and support one another. This aligns with (Fahmy et al., (2022) who argue that media can function as a catalyst for social awareness and change. who argue that media can function as a catalyst for social awareness and change.

From an educational perspective, Jumbo utilizes narrative engagement and emotional resonance to convey its message. The audience is encouraged to empathize with the protagonist, fostering a deeper understanding of the impact of bullying. As Lee (2022) suggests, such emotional engagement is crucial for effective moral education.

In conclusion, the results indicate that Jumbo not only represents bullying in a realistic and multifaceted manner but also actively promotes values of empathy, solidarity, and moral courage. Through its semiotic construction, the film serves as a powerful educational tool that challenges harmful social norms and encourages positive behavioral change.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the representation of bullying in Jumbo operates across multiple levels of meaning. At the denotative level, bullying is depicted through explicit actions and interactions. At the connotative level, emotional and cultural meanings are constructed through visual and narrative techniques. At the mythological level, dominant ideologies are both reinforced and challenged.

The integration of these levels reveals a comprehensive portrayal of bullying as a socially constructed phenomenon influenced by power relations, cultural norms, and collective behavior. By combining critique with moral messaging, the film effectively bridges entertainment and education, contributing to broader discussions on the role of media in addressing social issues.

These findings confirm that animated films, particularly those rooted in local cultural contexts, have significant potential to function as tools for social education and moral development.

3.2 Create a Discussion

Representation of Bullying in Jumbo

The film *Jumbo* effectively captures the essence of bullying through a multifaceted portrayal of aggression, social exclusion, and ridicule. Each form of bullying—verbal, physical, and relational—is intricately woven into the film's narrative, serving as a reflection of societal issues that children and adolescents encounter in everyday life. The key scenes depicting bullying, such as *Jumbo*'s humiliation during physical games or the verbal insults he endures, illustrate how bullying is normalized within peer groups, particularly among children. These scenes are pivotal in communicating the impact of bullying, not only on the victim but also on the social dynamics within the group.

One of the significant findings is that bullying in *Jumbo* is not merely a set of isolated actions but a recurring and systemic issue that affects the protagonist's social life. As (Barthes, t.t.) argues, the repetition of signs or actions contributes to the myth-making process, normalizing certain behaviors in society. In the case of *Jumbo*, the bullying is represented as something almost inevitable due to *Jumbo*'s physical appearance, reinforcing the stereotype that physical differences can be grounds for exclusion. However, as the film progresses, these representations are challenged, with *Jumbo* ultimately overcoming the stigma attached to him, which will be discussed further in the mythological analysis.

Power Dynamics and Social Exclusion

Barthes' concept of "power" and the way it manifests in media representations is crucial in understanding the dynamics of bullying in *Jumbo*. The power structures in the film are based on physicality, social status, and group conformity. In the early stages, the bully, Atta, uses his physical dominance and social influence within the group to exert control over *Jumbo*. This portrayal aligns with what McQuail & Deuze, (2020) refer to as the "dominant group" in media representations, where the majority exerts power over the individual. The film depicts how this power is not only maintained through direct intimidation but also through the complicity of bystanders who allow the bullying to persist.

The exclusion of *Jumbo* from group activities is a direct manifestation of the social hierarchy that prioritizes physical strength and conformity over individuality. This is consistent with the findings of Storey, (2021), who discusses how media narratives often reproduce societal norms that dictate who is "worthy" of acceptance. The exclusionary behavior seen in *Jumbo* resonates with the idea that power in social settings is often linked to collective acceptance, and those who are seen as different—whether through physical appearance, abilities, or interests—are marginalized.

The film also critiques this power structure by illustrating how these social norms can be upended. *Jumbo*'s eventual triumph is symbolic of how societal expectations and norms around physical strength and dominance can be challenged, ultimately making room for empathy and solidarity. This reversal of power is crucial for understanding the film's broader social message about the importance of inclusivity.

Mythological Representations and Ideological Constructs

Barthes' notion of "myth" is central to understanding how *Jumbo* constructs and deconstructs the ideological frameworks that support bullying. In the early stages of the film, the myth of physical superiority is firmly established. Atta's behavior reflects the societal myth that strength, size, and physical prowess are the markers of worth and success. This myth is further reinforced by the

reactions of the other animals, who conform to the idea that Jumbo's small size makes him unfit to participate in social or physical activities.

However, Jumbo ultimately challenges this myth by showing that courage, intelligence, and empathy are equally valuable traits. The transformation of Jumbo from a marginalized victim to a heroic figure who saves the forest is a deliberate subversion of the myth that only the physically strong can succeed. (Barthes, t.t.) suggests that myths are not inherently true but are social constructs that can be critiqued and dismantled. The film effectively critiques the myth of physical superiority, replacing it with a narrative that values inner strength and personal growth.

Furthermore, the film deconstructs the myth of bullying as a normal part of social interaction. Initially, the bullying is presented as something that everyone in the group accepts, even if they are not directly participating. This normalization of bullying reflects how social behaviors, when unchallenged, can be seen as natural parts of social life. However, as Jumbo begins to challenge the stigma surrounding him and the bullying escalates to a crisis point, the film gradually unveils the damaging effects of such normalized behaviors. The shift in the narrative from acceptance of bullying to rejection of it signifies a critical turning point, where the myth of bullying as a "natural" part of childhood is dismantled.

Moral Messages and Educational Implications

A significant contribution of Jumbo is its moral message about empathy, courage, and the value of standing up against bullying. The film does not only depict the effects of bullying but also offers a pathway for overcoming it through personal transformation and social solidarity. The depiction of Jumbo's internal journey—from a socially awkward and ridiculed figure to a brave and respected hero—offers a powerful lesson about the importance of self-acceptance and the courage to defy societal expectations.

The film's portrayal of the transformation of the bully, Atta, further underscores the importance of empathy and personal growth. Atta, who initially uses his physical dominance to bully Jumbo, ultimately learns the value of friendship and empathy. This shift in his character arc is a critical element of the film's message, as it suggests that even those who perpetuate bullying behaviors can change and grow, provided they are given the opportunity to understand the consequences of their actions.

The educational implications of Jumbo are significant. The film uses visual and narrative tools to promote anti-bullying messages that are accessible and meaningful to young audiences. By showcasing how bullying can affect both the victim and the perpetrator, the film teaches important values such as respect for differences, empathy for others, and the courage to stand up against injustice. These values align with those outlined in the UNESCO, (2025) guidelines for addressing bullying in educational contexts, which emphasize the need for a supportive and empathetic environment in schools.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the representation of bullying in the Indonesian animated film Jumbo (2025) through the lens of Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The findings reveal that the film effectively portrays various forms of bullying—verbal, physical, and relational—while simultaneously challenging the societal norms that perpetuate these behaviors. The analysis demonstrated how power dynamics are constructed within the social groups of the film, with the bully, Atta, using his physical strength and status to dominate and exclude the protagonist, Jumbo. Additionally, the film critiques the myth of physical superiority by allowing Jumbo to transform from a marginalized victim into a heroic figure who saves the forest, thereby emphasizing the importance of empathy, solidarity, and moral courage.

Jumbo contributes significantly to the discussion of bullying in media, especially within the context of Indonesian culture. By employing semiotic analysis, this study uncovered how the film utilizes visual, narrative, and symbolic elements to convey anti-bullying messages. The implications of this study suggest that animated films can serve as powerful educational tools to challenge harmful social behaviors and promote inclusivity. Further research could explore how other Indonesian films

address social issues through semiotic analysis, particularly focusing on the intersection of media representation and cultural values.

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