

## THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL MESSAGES THROUGH CHARACTERS, CONFLICT, AND SYMBOLISM IN THE FILM 23 DETIK

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### ABSTRACT

Existing film studies commonly examine moral messages, isolated visual signs, or verbal–nonverbal communication separately, leaving limited explanation of how narrative elements jointly construct social messages. This study analyzes how social messages are represented through character, conflict, dialogue, nonverbal expression, and symbolism in 23 Detik. Using a qualitative descriptive design and narrative analysis, data were obtained through repeated observation and documentation of scenes, dialogue, gestures, settings, cinematography, and recurring symbols. The data were reduced, coded, categorized, displayed, and interpreted by linking narrative evidence with representation and semiotic theory. Findings show that Wisnu, Somchai, and Miya embody resilience, social responsibility, and parental love shaped by trauma; internal, interpersonal, and external conflicts dramatize family separation and identity struggles; and the tsunami, beach, fighting arena, training camp, Pencak Silat, and Muay Thai function as symbolic structures of loss, struggle, cultural encounter, and reconciliation. Verbal and nonverbal signs reinforce one another, while narrative coherence and cultural relevance strengthen the film’s communicative potential. The novelty lies in an integrated analytical framework that treats character, conflict, verbal–nonverbal communication, and symbolism as a single meaning-making system. Theoretically, the study extends narrative analysis in communication studies by showing how representation and semiotic processes operate across interconnected audiovisual elements.

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### INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the most influential forms of mass communication because it integrates moving images, dialogue, music, performance, and narrative structure into a unified audiovisual text. This combination enables film to communicate information, values, ideas, and emotional experiences to audiences from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. McQuail (2010) argues that mass media do not merely transmit information but also participate in constructing public knowledge and defining the social issues considered important by society. Accordingly, film cannot be understood solely as entertainment because it also functions as a medium through which particular interpretations of social reality are produced and circulated.

Film can shape audience awareness by presenting social issues through characters, conflicts, settings, and emotionally engaging events (McQuail, 2010).

Film also functions as a medium of representation. According to Hall (1997), representation is the process through which meaning is produced and exchanged by using language, images, and systems of signs. From this perspective, film does not passively reflect an objective reality; instead, it selects, organizes, and reconstructs reality through specific narrative and visual choices. The representation of family, trauma, identity, and reconciliation in a film is therefore influenced by how its characters are developed, how conflicts are structured, and how particular images are repeatedly presented. Consequently, every cinematic representation involves a process of meaning construction that directs audiences toward certain ways of understanding people, events, and social relationships (Hall, 1997).

The construction of meaning in film can be further explained through semiotics. Barthes (1977) distinguishes between denotative meaning, which refers to the most immediate meaning of a sign, and connotative meaning, which develops through cultural associations, emotions, and ideology. A fighting arena, for example, may denote a location for physical competition, but it may connote struggle, sacrifice, confrontation with the past, or the search for identity. Thus, cinematic objects, locations, costumes, gestures, and visual compositions may contain meanings that extend beyond what is directly visible.

Fiske (2011) similarly explains that communication occurs through the production and exchange of signs. Meaning is not located exclusively in the message itself but emerges from the interaction between signs, codes, texts, and their social context. In film analysis, dialogue, facial expressions, body movements, costumes, lighting, sound, and camera composition can be treated as signs that collectively guide audience interpretation. Therefore, verbal and nonverbal elements must be analyzed together because dialogue may communicate explicit information, while visual and performative elements convey emotional, symbolic, and cultural meanings that are not directly stated.

From the perspective of film form, Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith (2020) explain that the meaning of a film is constructed through relationships among its formal elements. Narrative structure, *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, editing, and sound do not operate independently but form an interconnected system. A character's emotional experience, for instance, may be communicated through dialogue, acting, lighting, camera distance, and the arrangement of objects within the same scene. Consequently, the interpretation of a social message requires attention not only to what happens in the story but also to how the event is audiovisually presented.

Monaco (2009) emphasizes that film has its own communicative language, developed through images, movement, sound, editing, and narrative organization. Understanding a film therefore requires the viewer or researcher to "read" the interaction of its visual and narrative elements. Danesi (2010) further argues that signs derive their meanings from cultural conventions and the contexts in which they are used. The same object or action may generate different meanings depending on its placement within the story. Based on these perspectives, character, conflict, and symbolism can be understood as complementary narrative mechanisms through which a film constructs and communicates social messages.

The relationship among character, conflict, and symbolism is particularly important in films addressing trauma, loss, family relationships, and reconciliation. Narrative meaning develops not only from events in the story but also from how those events are ordered, emphasized, and audiovisually presented (Chatman, 1978). Characters provide a human dimension through which social values are embodied, conflict transforms abstract social issues into dramatic struggles, and symbolism condenses complex meanings into memorable objects, settings, actions, and images. When these elements are integrated coherently, the social message emerges from the audience's interpretation of character experience and narrative development rather than from explicit moral instruction.

The development of Indonesian cinema has also demonstrated the ability of national films to combine local cultural identities with themes that can be understood internationally. One example is *23 Detik*, internationally known as *23 Seconds*, directed by Peter Taslim and produced through collaboration involving Indonesian and Thai film workers. The film combines drama, sport, and martial-arts action within a narrative about family separation, trauma, identity, and reconciliation. The film reportedly received Best Action Film at the 2025 Star City Film Festival and Best Martial Arts Film at the Urban Action Showcase in New York, demonstrating its international recognition within the action-film festival circuit (Liputan6, 2025).

The narrative of 23 Detik develops from the consequences of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Phuket, Thailand, which separates members of a family and leaves unresolved psychological wounds. Wisnu Bimantara, an Indonesian martial artist, later encounters Somchai, a Muay Thai fighter living in Thailand, in an international combat-sports setting. They initially meet as competitors without understanding the biological relationship that connects them. Their confrontation in the fighting arena consequently develops beyond an athletic competition and becomes an encounter between two individuals connected by family loss, fragmented identity, and a traumatic past.

Wisnu represents the struggle to develop personal identity while confronting family restrictions rooted in trauma. His pursuit of martial arts creates conflict with Miya, his mother, who associates fighting with danger and the possibility of repeated loss. Meanwhile, Somchai represents endurance, social responsibility, and an identity separated from its family origins. His efforts to maintain a Muay Thai training camp and assist children under his care expand the narrative from an individual family conflict to the issue of community solidarity. Through these characters, the film presents resilience not only as physical endurance but also as the capacity to accept the past, understand the experiences of others, and rebuild social relationships.

The film's conflicts are organized at several levels. Internal conflict emerges through the characters' memories, fears, identity problems, and emotional struggles. Interpersonal conflict is represented through the relationship between Wisnu and Miya, particularly regarding Wisnu's decision to pursue martial arts. External conflict appears through competition, financial pressure, and the physical confrontation between Wisnu and Somchai. These conflicts transform trauma and family separation into visible dramatic action, enabling the social messages to emerge through the characters' decisions and transformations.

Symbolism further reinforces these meanings. The tsunami functions as a symbol of separation and collective trauma. The beach in Phuket represents both the origin of loss and the possibility of reconciliation. The fighting arena represents the characters' struggle against their opponents as well as their confrontation with memory, identity, and unresolved emotional wounds. The final twenty-three seconds symbolize a decisive moment in which physical competition is transformed into recognition and family reconciliation. Pencak Silat and Muay Thai also symbolize the cultural identities of Indonesia and Thailand, which initially encounter one another through competition but are eventually connected through family bonds and shared human values.

Previous studies demonstrate that film research in Indonesia has frequently employed semiotic analysis to examine moral values, social identities, and visual signs. Leliana, Ronda, and Lusianawati (2021), in their study of the film *Tilik*, used Roland Barthes' semiotics to identify moral messages through denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings. Their findings showed that dialogue, character behavior, and social interactions could represent moral criticism and values within everyday community life. However, their analysis was primarily organized around categories of moral meaning rather than the integrated relationship among character development, narrative conflict, and symbolism.

Nurhidayah (2017) examined the representation of social messages in *Bulan Terbelah di Langit Amerika*. The study demonstrated that film could represent tolerance, humanity, religious identity, and intercultural relationships through verbal and visual signs. This research confirms the importance of film as a medium for communicating social values. Nevertheless, its object, cultural context, and thematic emphasis differ from 23 Detik, which combines trauma, family separation, martial-arts culture, and cross-national reconciliation.

Utama, Bo'do, and Lumanauw (2023) analyzed the representation of children in the locally produced films *Halaman Belakang* and *Gula & Pasir*. Using semiotic analysis, the study showed that visual and narrative signs construct particular representations of children and their social environments. The study contributes to understanding film as a system of representation but focuses on the representation of children rather than the interaction of character, conflict, and symbolism in delivering messages about trauma and family reconciliation (Utama et al., 2023).

Research on verbal and nonverbal communication confirms that cinematic meaning emerges from the interaction of dialogue, gesture, facial expression, paralinguistic, spatial relations, and visual composition. Naufaldi et al. (2022) found that nonverbal cues can modify the literal and pragmatic meaning of dialogue, whereas Sabri and Adiprabowo (2022) showed that visual storytelling can communicate information and emotion even when speech is limited. Applied to 23 Detik, these findings suggest that Miya's prohibition, Wisnu's resistance, and Somchai's responsibility must be read through dialogue together



with intonation, silence, bodily movement, costume, lighting, and setting. An analysis limited to spoken language or isolated visual signs would therefore not adequately explain the film's social messages.

Taken together, previous studies establish that films communicate meaning through moral codes, character behavior, verbal–nonverbal interaction, visual signs, and narrative context (Leliana et al., 2021; Naufaldi et al., 2022; Nurhidayah, 2017; Sabri & Adiprabowo, 2022; Utama et al., 2023). However, most studies organize their analysis around a single dominant dimension, such as moral meaning, representation of a social group, dialogue, or visual storytelling. The research gap lies in the limited explanation of how character development, layered conflict, verbal and nonverbal communication, and symbolism operate simultaneously across a film narrative to construct social messages. Within the literature reviewed for this study, no communication research was identified that examines this integrated process specifically in 23 Detik; this claim is limited to the sources accessed by the researchers.

The novelty of this study lies in proposing an integrated analytical framework that combines narrative analysis, Hall's representation theory, and semiotic interpretation to explain how character, conflict, verbal–nonverbal signs, and symbolism collectively construct meaning. Theoretically, the study extends narrative analysis within communication studies by connecting story progression with audiovisual signification. Practically, it offers a replicable matrix for researchers, film educators, and filmmakers to evaluate how social messages are embedded coherently in contemporary Indonesian cinema.

Within this framework, character is examined as the embodiment of social values; conflict as the dramatization of psychological and social problems; verbal communication as the explicit expression of information, emotion, and interpersonal intention; nonverbal communication as the contextual and emotional reinforcement of meaning; and symbolism as the mechanism through which implicit and culturally situated meanings are developed. The framework therefore explains both what messages are represented and how those messages are narratively and audiovisually constructed.

Based on this background, the central question of this study is: how are social messages represented through verbal communication, nonverbal communication, character, conflict, and symbolism in 23 Detik? More specifically, this research aims to analyze the message-delivery strategies employed in the film; identify the verbal and nonverbal forms of its social messages; examine how dialogue, characterization, conflict, and symbolism reinforce the themes of trauma, family, identity, solidarity, and reconciliation; and identify the textual factors that support coherent and emotionally engaging message delivery.

This study is limited to the film text of 23 Detik, including its scenes, dialogue, characters, conflicts, settings, and visual symbols. It does not investigate audience reception, psychological responses, production management, or the commercial performance of the film. Consequently, references to message effectiveness describe the communicative potential of the film's textual and audiovisual construction rather than effects that have been empirically measured among actual viewers.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a narrative analysis approach. A qualitative design was appropriate because the study sought to interpret the construction of social meanings in a film rather than quantify variables or test statistical relationships. Narrative analysis was used to examine how meaning develops through story progression, characterization, conflict, dialogue, setting, and visual symbolism (Creswell, 2014; Moleong, 2017; Riessman, 2008).

The object of this study was the film 23 Detik, directed by Peter Taslim (Taslim, 2025). The film presents a family drama within an action and martial-arts narrative involving characters from Indonesia and Thailand. Its story is connected to the aftermath of the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Phuket, which separates members of a family and creates prolonged psychological trauma. The narrative follows Wisnu Bimantara, an Indonesian martial artist, and Somchai, a Muay Thai fighter living in Thailand, whose encounter in a fighting arena gradually reveals a previously unknown family relationship.

The units of analysis consisted of narrative and audiovisual elements relevant to the representation of social messages. These included scenes, sequences, dialogue, characterization, internal and external conflicts, facial expressions, body movements, settings, cinematographic elements, and visual symbols. The units were selected because each element

contributes to the production of meaning in the film. The analysis focused particularly on three principal categories: character, conflict, and symbolism.

The data consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the film in the form of selected scenes, dialogue, character actions, facial expressions, settings, conflicts, martial-arts choreography, and recurring visual symbols. The selected data were limited to elements that represented the themes of family relationships, trauma, resilience, identity, responsibility, solidarity, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

Secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, film-production documents, relevant reviews, and previous studies concerning film communication, representation, narrative analysis, semiotics, and social messages. The production report of *23 Detik* was also used to understand the development of the characters, narrative structure, setting, costume, lighting, and intended symbolism. Secondary data were not treated as substitutes for the film text but as supporting materials for interpreting the primary data.

The researcher served as the principal research instrument. To support systematic observation, an observation sheet and data-classification matrix were employed. The matrix recorded the scene or sequence, character, narrative context, verbal and nonverbal signs, type of conflict, visual symbol, social value, and preliminary interpretation. Table 1 presents the analytical matrix used to maintain consistency between audiovisual evidence and interpretation.

**Table 1. Data Classification and Film-Scene Analysis Matrix**

| No. | Scene or Sequence                            | Narrative Element                    | Verbal / Nonverbal Sign                                | Social Message                              | Interpretation                                                                    |
|-----|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Tsunami and family separation                | Conflict and setting                 | Disaster imagery, expressions of fear, separation      | Loss and collective trauma                  | The disaster functions as the origin of the characters' psychological conflicts   |
| 2   | Wisnu's disagreement with Miya               | Character and interpersonal conflict | Dialogue, emotional distance, protective behavior      | Parental love and unresolved trauma         | Miya's rejection of Wisnu's fighting career is motivated by fear of repeated loss |
| 3   | Somchai managing the Muay Thai training camp | Character and setting                | Training activities and responsibility toward children | Solidarity and social responsibility        | The training camp represents hope and protection for disadvantaged children       |
| 4   | Wisnu and Somchai in the fighting arena      | External conflict and symbolism      | Martial-arts movements and physical confrontation      | Identity, struggle, and reconciliation      | The arena becomes a metaphor for confronting the past                             |
| 5   | Family recognition and reconciliation        | Resolution and symbolism             | Emotional expressions, physical closeness, reunion     | Forgiveness and restoration of family bonds | The reunion transforms the conflict into a process of emotional recovery          |

As shown in Table 1, each scene was examined by linking observable narrative and audiovisual evidence to the social message and its interpretation. The matrix functioned as an audit trail that kept the analysis connected to specific scenes rather than relying on general impressions of the film.

Data were collected through observation and documentation. Observation was conducted by watching the film repeatedly. The first viewing was conducted to understand the overall plot and narrative structure. The second viewing focused on the development of the main characters and conflicts. The third viewing identified dialogue, gestures, settings,

and visual symbols associated with social messages. During subsequent viewings, the researcher recorded relevant scenes and organized them according to the predetermined analytical categories.

Documentation involved recording scene descriptions, relevant dialogue, character actions, visual compositions, and supporting information from the production report. Where timestamps could be verified, they were recorded to locate scenes accurately. Dialogue was treated as evidence only when it could be checked against the audiovisual text, thereby preventing interpretation from becoming detached from the film data.

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, scenes that did not relate directly to the research questions were excluded. Relevant scenes were selected and classified into character, conflict, symbolism, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication categories.

During data display, the selected data were presented in descriptive narratives and analytical tables. Each scene was examined by connecting its narrative context, verbal and nonverbal signs, and represented social values. Character analysis focused on motivation, behavior, relationships, and transformation. Conflict analysis examined internal, interpersonal, and external conflicts. Symbolic analysis examined the meaning of locations, objects, martial-arts traditions, and recurring visual imagery.

Although the study was not designed as grounded theory, an open-axial-selective sequence was adopted as a transparent coding procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). During open coding, selected scenes were assigned descriptive codes for character action, dialogue, gesture, conflict, setting, and symbol. During axial coding, related codes were connected into broader categories such as trauma, identity, parental protection, social responsibility, solidarity, and reconciliation. During selective coding, these categories were integrated around the core explanatory pattern that social messages emerge through the interaction of character, conflict, verbal-nonverbal communication, and symbolism. Coding decisions were recorded in the classification matrix and repeatedly checked against the film text.

In the conclusion-drawing stage, patterns across the selected scenes were interpreted to determine how the film constructed its principal social messages. The conclusions were continuously reviewed against the film data to ensure that each interpretation was supported by observable narrative or audiovisual evidence.

Data credibility was maintained through source triangulation and repeated observation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing interpretations of the film with theoretical literature, previous studies, and available production documents. Repeated observation was used to confirm the consistency of the identified scenes, dialogue, and symbols. Interpretive adequacy was maintained by distinguishing between elements explicitly presented in the film and meanings inferred by the researcher.

This study was limited to textual and audiovisual analysis of the film. It did not measure audience responses or claim that all viewers interpreted the film in the same way. Therefore, references to emotional engagement and message effectiveness in this study describe the communicative potential of the film's narrative construction rather than empirically measured audience effects.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that 23 Detik constructs social messages through the interaction of character development, layered conflict, verbal and nonverbal communication, and visual symbolism. The discussion below follows a result-interpretation-comparison-implication sequence so that each claim remains connected to film evidence, theory, previous research, and its significance for communication studies.

### Narrative Structure and the Construction of Social Messages

The film organizes its central themes through introduction, confrontation, and resolution. The tsunami establishes family separation and trauma; Wisnu's conflict with Miya and Somchai's responsibility for the training camp intensify the struggle; and the encounter between Wisnu and Somchai transforms physical competition into recognition and reconciliation.

This progression makes trauma a continuing narrative force rather than a closed event in the past. In Chatman's (1978) terms, the arrangement of events directs the audience from loss toward recognition, while Hall's (1997) representation

theory explains how the film selects and organizes family experience into a meaningful account of resilience. The fighting arena consequently functions as the point where story, identity, and memory converge.

Unlike studies that primarily classify moral or social signs in separate scenes (Leliana et al., 2021; Nurhidayah, 2017), the present finding shows that the message becomes intelligible through cumulative narrative development. Meaning is not contained in one dialogue or image but is produced by the relationship among earlier trauma, present conflict, and final resolution.

Narrative analysis of social messages should therefore examine the temporal connection among scenes. For film communication research, this means that message delivery must be evaluated as a process of meaning construction across the whole narrative, not merely as a collection of explicit moral statements.

#### **Character as a Medium for Delivering Social Messages**

Wisnu embodies resilience and the search for identity, Somchai embodies endurance and social responsibility, and Miya embodies parental love shaped by unresolved grief. Their contrasting interpretations of martial arts (as aspiration, survival, and danger, personalize the themes of trauma) responsibility, and family reconciliation.

From Hall's (1997) perspective, these characters do not simply reflect social reality; they construct positions from which the audience is invited to understand it. Miya's restriction of Wisnu, for example, signifies not only authority but also fear of repeated loss. Somchai's care for children converts private trauma into social commitment, while Wisnu's transformation redefines resilience as emotional understanding rather than physical strength alone.

This finding extends Leliana et al. (2021), who identified moral meaning through character behavior, and Utama et al. (2023), who examined how film constructs social subjects. In 23 Detik, characterization is additionally linked to conflict and symbolic settings, showing how social values develop through changing relationships rather than fixed character traits.

Character-based social messages become persuasive when different perspectives are given understandable emotional motives. For filmmakers and educators, this suggests that complex issues such as trauma should be communicated through multidimensional characters whose actions reveal both vulnerability and agency.

#### **Conflict as the Dramatization of Social Problems**

Internal conflict appears in fear, guilt, and uncertainty about identity; interpersonal conflict appears most clearly between Wisnu and Miya; and external conflict appears through financial pressure, martial-arts competition, and the confrontation between Wisnu and Somchai. These conflicts repeatedly connect present decisions with unresolved family loss.

Conflict translates psychological conditions into observable action. Wisnu's resistance and Miya's prohibition are not opposing statements alone; they are signifying practices through which autonomy and protection are negotiated. The final fight externalizes a deeper confrontation with memory and identity, supporting Bordwell et al.'s (2020) view that narrative meaning emerges from the coordinated operation of story and audiovisual form.

Naufaldi et al. (2022) demonstrated that the intended meaning of dialogue changes when gesture, tone, and context are considered. The conflict in 23 Detik confirms this relationship: Miya's words acquire the meaning of anxiety through protective behavior, while Wisnu's resistance signifies a search for identity rather than simple disobedience.

Conflict should be analyzed as a communicative structure that reveals competing meanings and emotional histories. Practically, the film indicates that family recovery requires dialogue, empathy, and recognition of the trauma underlying apparently oppositional behavior.

#### **Symbolism and Visual Meaning**

The tsunami symbolizes separation and collective trauma; the Phuket beach symbolizes both the origin of loss and the possibility of restoration; the fighting arena symbolizes confrontation with the past; the training camp symbolizes protection and solidarity; and Pencak Silat and Muay Thai symbolize distinct cultural identities connected by discipline and shared human values.

Using Barthes' (1977) distinction, these elements have denotative and connotative functions. The arena denotes a location for physical competition but connotes identity struggle and reconciliation. Likewise, the beach denotes a geographic setting yet acquires a transformed connotation when a place associated with loss becomes connected to acceptance. The final twenty-three seconds condense this transformation into a memorable temporal symbol.



Leliana et al. (2021) showed that visual signs can carry moral meanings, while Nurhidayah (2017) demonstrated that film symbols can represent tolerance and humanity. The present analysis adds that symbolic meaning changes through narrative position: the same place or action can signify trauma at one stage and reconciliation at another.

Symbolic analysis should therefore connect signs to character development and narrative timing. For contemporary Indonesian cinema, culturally specific elements such as Pencak Silat can communicate local identity while participating in broader themes of solidarity and reconciliation.

#### **Verbal and Nonverbal Forms of Social Messages**

Verbal messages appear in conversations about fear, aspiration, responsibility, family, and forgiveness. Their meanings are reinforced by facial expression, intonation, silence, physical distance, bodily movement, costume, lighting, and camera composition. In the confrontation between Wisnu and Miya, verbal disagreement is accompanied by emotional distance and protective gestures; in Somchai's scenes, statements of responsibility are supported by physical exhaustion, training activity, and care for the children.

The interaction of channels shows that dialogue provides explicit information while nonverbal signs supply emotional and cultural context. Following Fiske (2011), meaning emerges from the relationship among signs and codes rather than from words alone. Costume and lighting similarly contribute to characterization by distinguishing aspiration, hardship, tension, and emotional safety.

The finding is consistent with Naufaldi et al. (2022), who found that nonverbal behavior can shift the pragmatic meaning of an utterance, and with Sabri and Adiprabowo (2022), who demonstrated that visual storytelling communicates meaning even with limited dialogue. In 23 Detik, the two channels do not merely repeat each other; they clarify, intensify, and occasionally complicate the message.

Empirical film analysis should document both spoken and audiovisual evidence and avoid treating dialogue as self-sufficient. This integrated reading offers a more accountable explanation of how audiences may be guided toward empathy, although actual audience effects require separate reception research.

#### **Factors Supporting Social Message Delivery**

Four textual factors support the film's communicative potential: narrative coherence, emotional construction through family relationships, character relatability, and the cultural relevance created by the encounter between Indonesian and Thai settings and martial-arts traditions.

These factors operate relationally. Narrative coherence links character, conflict, and symbolism to the same thematic core; emotional construction translates disaster into intimate experience; relatability connects the characters' dilemmas with familiar family concerns; and cultural specificity gives the universal themes a concrete social location. This supports Hall's (1997) view that representation actively organizes social reality rather than simply reproducing it.

Previous studies established the importance of moral signs, social representation, verbal–nonverbal interaction, and visual storytelling as separate dimensions. The present finding shows that the communicative potential of 23 Detik depends on their integration within a coherent narrative system rather than on any single element.

The integrated framework provides a practical basis for evaluating whether a film's social message is consistently supported by story, performance, and visual form. Nevertheless, the identified factors describe textual potential, not measured audience response; claims about effectiveness must therefore remain limited until reception data are collected.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that 23 Detik constructs social messages through the integrated operation of character, conflict, verbal and nonverbal expression, and symbolism. Wisnu represents resilience and identity formation, Somchai represents sacrifice and social responsibility, and Miya represents parental love shaped by unresolved grief. Internal, interpersonal, and external conflicts transform trauma and family separation into dramatic action, while the tsunami, beach, fighting arena, training camp, Pencak Silat, and Muay Thai deepen the themes of loss, cultural encounter, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Theoretical implication. The findings extend narrative analysis in communication studies by demonstrating that social messages are not produced by isolated dialogue or symbols. They emerge from the interaction of story progression,



representation, and audiovisual signification. The integrated framework therefore connects Hall's representation theory and Barthes' semiotics with character development and layered conflict.

**Practical implication.** The analytical matrix can be used by film researchers and educators to connect claims with specific narrative and audiovisual evidence. For filmmakers, the findings indicate that social messages become more coherent when dialogue, performance, setting, lighting, conflict, and symbolism consistently support the same thematic direction. **Recommendation.** Because the study is limited to textual and audiovisual analysis, it cannot establish how actual viewers interpret or emotionally respond to the film. Future research should combine the framework with reception analysis, interviews, focus-group discussions, or audience surveys; compare interpretations across Indonesian and Thai audiences; and verify scene-level evidence through systematic timestamped transcription.

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