

The Semiotic Analysis of the Collisions Between Dominant Myths and Counter-Myths in Three Indonesian Horror Movies

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has a new sociological trend about dialectical reconciliations between counter-myths and dominant myths and vice versa (macro-level), and it is reflected semiotically in scenes in three Indonesian horror movies, like *Pengabdi Setan*, *Suzanna Bernapas Dalam Kubur*, and *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput* (micro-level). Sometimes the scenes (in horror movies) contain the collisions between counter-myths and dominant myths (and vice versa), or the scenes show the dialectical reconciliations between both myths. Therefore, this study aims to analyse how the collisions between dominant myths and counter-myths and vice versa are described in three Indonesian horror movies. Sociologically, the semiotic examination shows the trend of the last two types of dialectical reconciliations between Islamic teachings and adultery and between Islamic teachings and corrupt practices, since the first two reconciliations have been explained in another manuscript. Also, there are four motives why people adopt counter-myths, like (1) the treasure (*harta*), (2) the political position (*takhta*), (3) the romance (*asmara*), and (4) the sexual pleasure (*kesenangan seksual*). In contrast, there are two motives why people go back to re-adopting dominant myths, like (1) regret (*penyesalan*) and (2) safety (*keamanan*). Moreover, the study discusses the draft of the new Postmillennial Gothic, which rehabilitates and beautifies Indonesian demonic characters to fight criminals who practice the dialectical reconciliation between dominant myth and counter-myth. Finally, it is possible to apply this idea in Indonesia because there are cultural and sociological situations that support its implementation.

Keywords: *Counter-myth, dominant myth, dialectical reconciliations, film model, semiotics.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has many unexplored counter-myths and ghost stories based on Indonesian demonology that are rarely investigated by foreign scientists (Frolova, 2021). Moreover, they are scarier and varied compared to foreign demons and ghosts (Islamiyah, 2019). The first counter-myth is the belief that one can become rich quickly by making a pact with the demon for the sake of money (*pesugihan*) in the Kemukus area of Sragen, Middle Java Province, Indonesia. They believe that in order to become wealthy, worshippers must engage in sex with strangers who are not their legal husband or wife (Gottowick, 2018).

The second example is the belief that someone can achieve specific purposes if they visit the sanctuary of Puri Cepuri in Parang Kusumo, Middle Java Province, Indonesia. It is believed to be the place where Panembahan Senopati, one of the Javanese kings in the past married *Kanjeng Ratu Kidul* (one of the Javanese goddesses who ruled the southern Javanese Sea) for the sake of political power, not only for himself but also for his successors. Many visitors would go into the place with their spouses to have sexual intercourse as part of their worship of *Kanjeng Ratu Kidul* (Gottowick, 2018).

The third example is the belief that demons can harm people. For instance, there was a story about a person named Tanto who lived on Borneo Island. He tells his story of when he felt the presence of *Wok*, a ghost-like spirit, in 2015 when he rode a motorcycle from his village to a neighbouring one at night. At the time, he saw female spirits hovering in the air, dressed in white robes (like a corpse). Fortunately, he was able to escape from that sinister moment. However, he was shocked to read the news about several people who passed the same spot three days later, and one of them was killed (Herrmans, 2020).

At the same time, Indonesian people still adopt dominant myths, such as Islamic values, because Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world (Sutandio, 2019). Islamic teachings forbid its adherents to commit sins like corruption, adultery, witchcraft, and idolatrous practices. It seems there is a deep dynamic and interplay between the counter-myths and the dominant myths, specifically between something that is ordered by Islamic teaching and something forbidden by Islamic teachings.

The first example is the line between pious people and supernatural practitioners that is blurred by social phenomena that go viral on social media channels. Sometimes those people exhibit attitudes that contradict Islamic teachings, such as looking for specific amulets in specific sacred places (Master Mata Hantu, 2021) and telling patients that they can contact angels and prophets (including Rasulullah SAW) (Hayati, 2020). In contrast, these people sometimes show the attitudes that correspond with the Islamic values (the dominant myths), like eradicating the *dukun santet* (the shaman who practices black magic to attack people) vehemently (Master Mata Hantu, 2020), saying the Islamic prayers to treat the patients and wearing the Islamic dress code (Chanel Drawart, 2020), and Islamising people in the neighbouring country (Firmansyah, 2021). In other words, it is the manifestation of dialectical reconciliations between counter-myths and dominant myths.

A second example is a corruption case in Indonesia, namely the “beef gate scandal” (*skandal daging sapi*), perpetrated by two politicians from one of Indonesia’s well-known Islamic political parties (Umam et al., 2020). According to the study done by Kramer (2014), the corruption eradication commission (*KPK*) arrested an Indonesian politician in 2013 at a five-star hotel with a naked college student with whom he had sexual relations. At that time, the Indonesian politician brought money in a suitcase, which the nominal value is IDR 1 billion (approximately 103,000 USD). The next day, the friend of the politician was arrested by *KPK*. Both of them are suspects in the beef gate scandal. They play a prominent role in licensing import quotas of beef from the Ministry of Agriculture, Republic of Indonesia. What made the case interesting is that one of the suspects was connected to 45 attractive women whom he gave expensive gifts in return for the sexual services and the intimate relationships, although he already had two wives.

That Islamic political party struggles for the Islamic ideology in a militant and solid manner (Yuniarto, 2022), wants to build an Islamic civilization in Indonesia (CNN Indonesia, 2020), and several political party members could speak Arabic fluently (Muhammad, 2013). In this case, the counter-myths (adultery and corruption practices) reconcile with the dominant myth (the Islamic teachings) dialectically.

With that said, these tendencies show the dynamic interplay between dominant myths and counter-myths in specific scenes of three Indonesian horror movies, particularly *Pengabdian Setan* (Anwar, 2017), *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur* (Umbara, 2018), and *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput Ayat 1* (Tjahjanto, 2018). However, the tendency is not only the

reconciliation between the counter-myths and the dominant myths, but also collisions between both of them simultaneously in each horror movie.

In *Pengabdi Setan*, one of the scenes showed the pious person blood stained, and he loses a battle with the demons (the counter-myth breaks the dominant myth) (Anwar 2017). In the same way, in *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur*, some scenes showed Suzanna, who was already murdered, transforming into *Sundel Bolong* the next morning, and the soul doesn't go to the *Barzakh* realm (the counter-myths break the dominant myths) (Umbara, 2018). However, in *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput Ayat 1*, Lesmana saves Alfie (his daughter) from the demon by killing the priestess brutally (the dominant myth breaks the counter-myth) (Tjahjanto, 2018).

In fact, most of the interplay between dominant myths and counter-myths in these three Indonesian horror movies are collisions between them. Also, they reflect the sociological phenomena that happen in contemporary Indonesian society. For instance, the manifestation of the dominant myth that breaks the counter-myth is the repentance of one of the Indonesian shamans, who became a puritan Muslim before he died (Nugroho, 2022). In contrast, there are some Indonesians who still defend and preserve their ancestral religions, although they face discrimination in society, and this can be categorized as the counter-myth that breaks dominant myths (Gandhawangi, 2021). These phenomena happen in Indonesia, although they are rare.

In other words, by understanding this phenomenon (the collision between dominant myths and counter-myths and the dialectical reconciliation between dominant myths and counter-myths), a more comprehensive picture of the latest sociological trend in Indonesian society can be mapped academically. Then, the formulation of the practical film model that can create tolerance in a society can be done.

Until this point, a movie can become a tool to enlighten society in terms of culture, history, politics, and social issues in order to build a pluralistic and progressive society (Selvaraj et al., 2023), since a movie is the medium that is loved by audiences (Abdullah et al., 2022).

In the same way, there are several examples of the reconciliation between dominant myths and counter-myths in those three horror movies. In *Pengabdi Setan*, there are scenes that showed Hendra (the only son of the pious person) admitting to Rini that he believes in supernatural things (Anwar, 2017). Similarly, in *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur*, some scenes had shown Satria, a pious husband, who still believes that his wife is the *Sundel Bolong* (Umbara, 2018). Similarly, in *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput Ayat 1*, there are several scenes that showed although Alfie hated Lesmana so much, he still loves him by visiting him at the hospital (Tjahjanto, 2018).

There is so much sociological information that can be explored by examining art texts like movies, including the contemporary condition of society in one nation (Kim, 2019). In other words, the scenes in movies can reflect sociological reality semiotically. There is a study that shows how it can reveal the demonisation of "people of color" in movies such as a Disney cartoon, which is entitled *Frankenweenie* (Burton & Abbate, 2012), that contains several scenes that portray some demonising actions that aggravate the image of "people of color" by using scenes that contain confrontation, wickedness, blackmail, frightful/violent tone or words, mischievous gesture and laughter, arrogance, intrusion, and selfishness (Uzuegbunam & Ononiwu, 2018). In contrast, semiotic analysis can be utilised to study intertextuality across media, like a novel to a movie. In other words, the study discusses how a multimodal semiotic

approach can transform a novel into a movie by maintaining the suspense and tense in some of its scenes comprehensively (Tan et al., 2016).

This research tries to observe the sociological reflection that happens in contemporary Indonesian society and proposes the new film model afterward. In addition, the authors believe that the existence of the counter-myths and the dominant myths that coexist side by side and the dynamic interplay between them can beautify and exoticize Indonesian film products, including film scripts. Varda made similar efforts successfully in France by integrating several aspects, including history, photography, and cinematography, to create magnificent arts opuses (Felleman, 2019).

Therefore, the research questions can be formulated such as the following: in what ways do the counter-myths break the dominant myths described in three Indonesian horror movies; and, in what ways do the dominant myths break the counter-myths described in the three Indonesian horror movies?

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Since the semiotics has gained a big momentum in other fields (other than semiotic) since the 1950s onwards (Reifman, 2020) and Barthes's semiotic theory has been used successfully in some film studies that contain the opposition between two things (Bergman, 2020), this study combines Barthes's semiotic theory with other theories such as Berger (the concreteness of signifiers and signified, the camera shooting, and the motion of the camera), Barker (the color theories), Darmaprawira (the Indonesian color theory), and the semiotic thought from Reid about the counter-myth and the dominant myth.

In other words, Barthes's semiotic theory is positioned as the theoretical container that accommodates those theories, since the production of meanings is always influenced by different elementary structures of signification (Lima et al., 2019).

Furthermore, there are two kinds of levels in Barthes's semiotic theory: denotative and connotative (Nugroho et al., 2019). Specifically, the connotative level contains the hidden meaning of the signs that correlate with socio-cultural factors and personal associations. The denotative level contains the observable meanings of the signs (Mendoza, 2019), whereas the connotative level (indirect sign) contains another sign that needs a process of definition to decipher it (Manan et al., 2023).

Furthermore, there are two kinds of levels in Barthes's semiotic theory: denotative and connotative (Nugroho et al., 2019). Specifically, the connotative level contains the hidden meaning of the signs that correlate with the socio-cultural factors and the personal associations. The denotative level contains the observable meanings of the signs (Mendoza, 2019).

Also, the connotative meanings correlate with myth as the product, seen as the dominant ideologies or sets of beliefs. The myth is beneficial for people since it helps people make sense of the world (Mendoza, 2019).

Several theories, like the concreteness of signifiers and signified, the camera shooting, the motion of the camera (from Berger), the color theories from Barker, the Indonesian color theory from Darmaprawira, and the semiotic thought from Reid, guide the connotative analysis, so the interpretation will be more accurate.

However, Barthes's semiotic theory (*per se*) has a weakness since it always deciphers the dominant ideology (Griffin et al., 2019). In fact, not all myths can be considered the dominant ideology or the dominant myths. Therefore, Reid perfects Barthes's semiotic

theory's weakness by conceptualizing two kinds of myths, namely the dominant myth and the counter-myth, that are opposite each other (Reid, 2012).

Moreover, the dominant myth is the kind of myth that operates in the dominant section of the society, and it functions to naturalize the social structures that support the dominant group. Yet, the counter-myth is the kind of myth whose function is to denaturalize the dominant myth and replace it with an alternative worldview (Reid, 2012).

From this definition, the system of beliefs that is adopted by some groups of people who still experience discrimination in society can be classified as the counter-myth.

The counter or dominant myths can be gathered after finishing the two-level semiotic analysis (denotative and connotative levels).

This study doesn't want to do the decolonial project Reid proposes to liberate society by countering the dominant myth (Reid, 2012). However, it intends to balance and equalize the dominant myths and counter-myths in Indonesian society because both are useful in beautifying the narratives in the film script.

There are the dialectics between counter-myths and dominant myths in reality, which form the mix between them. Yet, the dialectic process doesn't fit with the Hegelian way on several occasions, which is called negative dialectics (Simson, 2020).

In other words, this syntagmatic relationship between dominant myths and counter-myths (Bahruddin et al., 2021) can find its new way outside the Hegelian way.

Since Barthes believes that semiotics is the sociology of sign, symbol, and representation, and he always reads signs socially or sociologically (Varga, 2019), the discussion will expand into the sociological reflection of movies. In other words, there is a two-way connection between signs (micro-level) and society in a broader context (macro-level) (Machtly, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research done by a researcher or artist (Lin, 2019) who uses qualitative content analysis as the data analysis method. By definition, content analysis is one of the data analysis methods that can examine cultural artefacts (including movies) to find out the messages that are being communicated (Call, 2019). Content analysis is essential for film studies because it enables the researcher to reveal subjective interpretations of the content of the text by classifying the specific codes and identifying the specific patterns and themes (Prasad, 2019). It is also a very popular research method that can examine, categorize, compare, and contrast texts (Kernagaran & Abdullah, 2022). Therefore, qualitative content analysis is appropriate to be used in this study (Venkatasubramanian, 2021) in order to achieve scientific knowledge by obtaining the information rationally and systematically (Bayram, 2021).

There are three kinds of Indonesian contemporary horror movies used academically as units of analysis. Specifically, they are *Pengabdi Setan*, *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur*, and *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput Ayat 1*. In particular, there are several reasons why these three movies were selected.

As their compulsory prerequisites, those three Indonesian horror movies contain scenes that show the collisions between counter-myths and dominant myths and vice versa. Particularly, *Pengabdi Setan* has gained more than 4,000,000 audiences, and it has won the best film category (*Overlook Film Festivals*), and the scariest movie nomination at *Popcorn Fright Film Festival 2018* (Darmawan, 2022). Similarly, *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur* has

gained more than 3,000,000 audiences (Kintoko, 2020), even though it doesn't win any categories in international film festivals.

In like manner, *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput Ayat 1* has won the best film category for the Midnight Xtreme at the International Fantastic Film Festival of Catalonia 2018 (Asrianti, 2019). However, it only gets fewer than 2,000,000 audiences (Persatuan Artis Filem Indonesia, 2021). For the authors, those movies are very good since they portray the current sociological trend that happens in contemporary Indonesian society,

Also, this study uses three kinds of coding to process the data comprehensively from the semiotic analysis, namely (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding. First of all, open coding is the first phase of the coding that classifies every general category of the data completely. Then, axial coding is the phase of coding that collects similar general categories into the core categories. Lastly, selective coding is the phase of coding in which categories whose triangulation scores are insufficient are deleted in order to obtain the final categories (Sukur, 2021).

The coding stages will be applied from data which describes scenes (in three horror movies) that contain counter-myths that break dominant myths and vice versa. After the selective coding results have been gathered, they will be sent to the research supervisor by email to be checked through "the expert review" (Bandur, 2019). Lastly, the study will use *NVivo 12 Plus* computer software to process the data correctly (Llinas et al., 2020).

In conclusion, by studying the existing language and structure of these three Indonesian horror movies (Basit, 2017), the sociological trend can be mapped and the new film model can be built.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the first research question (RQ 1), it's impossible to discuss all of the ways of the collisions between the counter-myths and the dominant myths in three Indonesian horror movies since there are too many. Therefore, this part only discusses two ways of collisions (which are the most important) for each horror movie. So, the total of the modes is four examples.

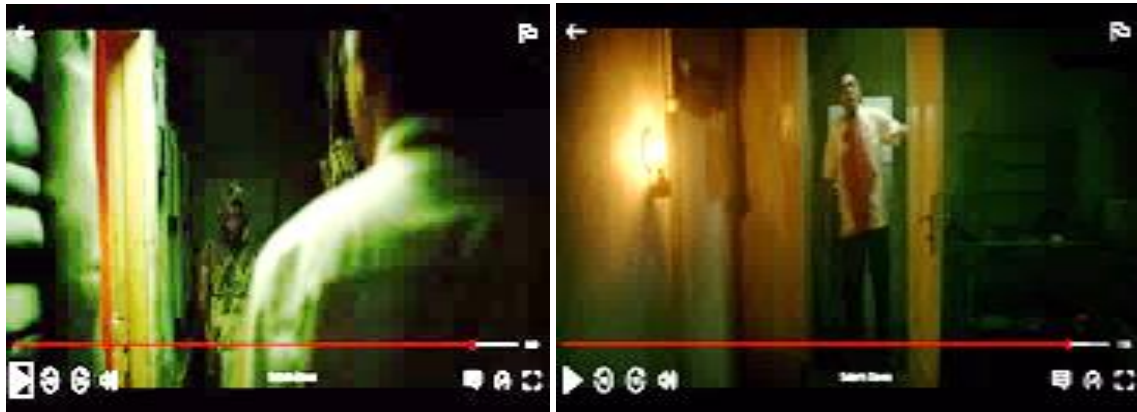
In *Pengabdi Setan*, there are two kinds of collision modes presented in this study: the supernatural belief breaks the Islamic teaching, and the contra-family value breaks the family value.

For the first way, some scenes depict denotatively that the pious person is surprised when he faces the zombie of Hendra. In addition, suddenly, he is surrounded by other zombies, and one of them holds the knife and stabs the pious person. Consequently, the pious person is bloodstained and killed (Anwar, 2017).

Connotatively, the size of figures 1 are medium shots, which means there is a personal relationship between Hendra and the pious person. In addition, both pictures are covered in darkness, which means there is a dark power surrounding the zombies. In the second picture, the pious person is bloodstained, which means the pious person is dying after the machete has stabbed him. Therefore, they produce the counter-myth that pious people can't be relied on as the savior for the poltergeist problem.

Moreover, the scenes show the dialectical reconciliation between Islamic teachings and supernatural beliefs since a pious person (as a good Muslim) still thinks that the zombie is Hendra, who resurrects from the dead, and it absolutely contradicts Islamic teachings.

These are scenes that show the brutal murder of a pious person (Anwar, 2017).



Figures 1: The pious person is murdered sadistically

Surely, these scenes break the dominant myth that the pious people always become the hero for the poltergeist problems. That myth is in the scenes that show denotatively (in the way) that the pious person, accompanied by Hendra, tells Rini and Tony to apply five-time prayers to get rid of the grandmother ghost (Anwar, 2017).

Connotatively, the white color in the pious person's costume symbolizes his purity, innocence, and honesty. It means the pious person honestly wants to help Rini's family. The camera's size is medium shot, which means there is a personal relationship between the pious person and Rini.

These scenes show that the pious person helps the family from the poltergeist problem (Anwar, 2017).



Figures 2: The pious person asks the family to do the praying activities

For the second way, some scenes show denotatively that Ian can speak suddenly, and he is very happy when many dead bodies attack the house. Ian calls those dead bodies friends, and this situation makes Bondi confused. Afterward, Ian goes outside the house to gather all the dead bodies (zombies). Interestingly, Ian still calls other family members to join him (Anwar, 2017).

Connotatively, Ian's giggles (in the first picture) show that he mocks the inability of the family to identify him as the demon's child. Moreover, the long shot (in the second picture) shows the scenes that show the real character of Ian as the demon's son. In addition, the scenes show Ian right now has become part of the bunch of zombies, together with the mother's dead body (zombies). Therefore, the scenes produce the counter-myth that the

family bond can't be strong enough to hold the demon to take the sacrifice if the pact has been made.

These are scenes that show Ian joining the zombies (Anwar, 2017).



Figures 3: Ian joins the zombies

Surely, the scenes break the dominant myth that family unity can hold the demon to take one of the family members as the victim. Indeed, that myth is portrayed in the scenes that show denotatively (in the way) that Budiman tells Rini that to tackle the demons or the Satanist sect attacks, the family members must love each other (Anwar, 2017).

Connotatively, the medium shot in both pictures shows a personal relationship between Budiman, Rini, and Hendra. Also, Budiman is depicted as bigger than Rini and Hendra (in the second picture), which means Budiman's statement is more important than Rini's or Hendra's.

These scenes show the conversation among Budiman, Hendra, and Rini (Anwar, 2017).



Figures 4: Budiman warns Rini and Hendra

The second example that shows the mode of the supernatural beliefs breaking the Islamic teachings is the scene that shows denotatively (in the way) that Suzanna chases Jonal and stabs him several times by using the wooden sticks, particularly at his leg and at his stomach. To save his life, Jonal tries to negotiate with Suzanna by telling her if she kills him, she can't meet Satria anymore because she must go back to the spirit realm if her business is over. Unfortunately, the negotiation fails, and finally, Suzanna kills Jonal by burying him alive (Umbara, 2018).

Connotatively, the scenes signify the bad situation that happened to Jonal. Also, the white costume and the shabby hair of Suzanna describe that she is a pure demon. In addition, the full shot (in the first and second pictures) shows there is a personal problem between Jonal and Suzanna. Therefore, the scenes produce the counter-myth that the dead woman's soul, who bears the double deaths, can come back to the human realm and become *Sundel Bolong*, although she must go back to the *Barzakh* realm after the business is over.

These are scenes that show the conversation between Suzanna and Jonal (Umbara, 2018).



Figures 5: Suzanna buries Jonal alive

Surely, the scenes break the dominant myth that (according to the Islamic teachings), the soul will go to the *Barzakh* realm directly after someone is dead. Indeed, that myth is portrayed denotatively by the scenes showing (in a way) the morning prayer congregation at the mosque (Umbara, 2018). Connotatively, the scenes show Islamic teachings as the dominant myth in this movie.

These scenes show the morning prayer congregation at the mosque (Umbara, 2018).



Figures 6: The morning prayer

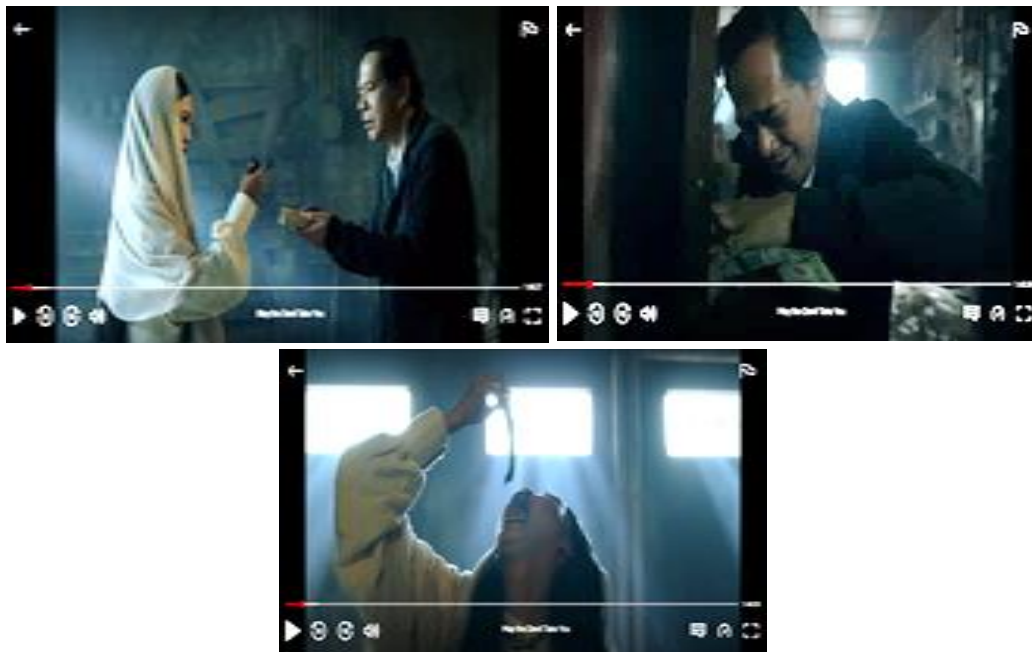
In the same way, the mode of contra-family values breaks the family values that exist in *Sebelum Iblis Menjemput Ayat 1*.

The first scenes that describe the mode portray denotatively (in a way) that Lesmana invites the priestess into his villa. When the priestess comes, she asks Lesmana to do the supernatural ceremony at the wardrobe. Immediately, the priestess asks Lesmana to give her the bundle of Indonesian money and Intan's hair. Suddenly, the wind blows strongly, and the

priestess hovers at the sky. Seeing this supernatural miracle, Lesmana kneels and says: “*I am your worshipper*”. Then, the money flies all around (Tjahjanto, 2018).

Connotatively, the medium shot in the first, second, and third scenes shows an intimate relationship between Lesmana and the priestess. In addition, the scenes show the priestess as pure as the demon’s worshipper. Intan’s hair signifies the sacrifice to the demon, and the money symbolizes economic success gained by Lesmana after he sacrifices his wife to the demon. Therefore, the scenes produce the counter-myth that the father has the heart to sacrifice the family members to the demon to be rich.

These scenes show Lesmana sacrificing Intan to the demon (Tjahjanto, 2018).



Figures 7: Lesmana gives his wife’s hair to the priestess

Surely, the scenes break the dominant myth that the father always loves and cares for his family so much, which is depicted in the scene that shows denotatively (in the way) that Lesmana hugs his wife (Intan) and his daughter (Alfie) (Tjahjanto, 2018).

Connotatively, the medium shot shows the intimate relationship between Intan, Lesmana, and Alfie. Also, the blue dress worn by Lesmana shows she is a quiet, powerful character, and the black dress worn by Intan is the powerful mother.

This is the scene that shows the portrait of the Lesmana family (Tjahjanto, 2018).



Figure 8: The family photo

Therefore, it is the chart that answers the first research question (RQ 1) semiotically.

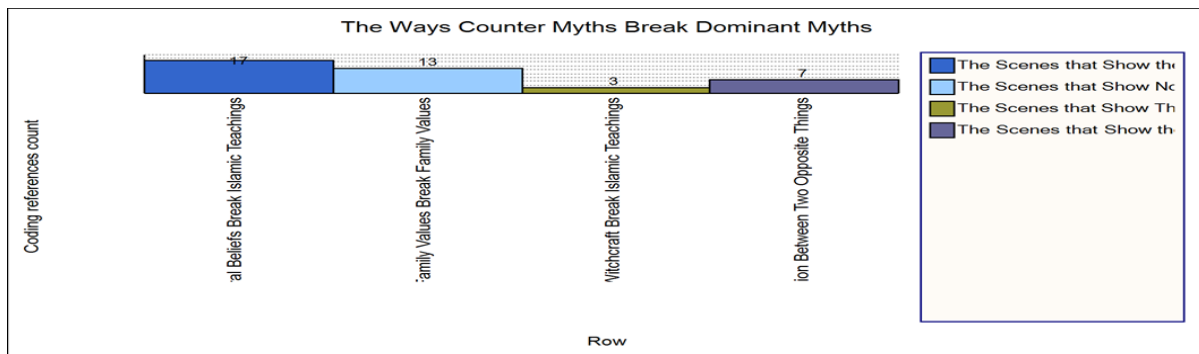


Figure 9: The ways of counter-myths break dominant myths

Circumstantially, the first position is occupied by scenes that show the supernatural beliefs break Islamic teachings, gaining 17 references. Second, the scenes that show non-family values break family values by 13 references. Third, the scenes that show the dialectical reconciliation between two opposite things get seven references. Lastly, the scenes that portray witchcraft break Islamic teachings get 3 references.

Similarly, for the second research question (RQ 2), this part only informs us of one mode of the most important collision for each horror movie. So, the total of the modes is two examples.

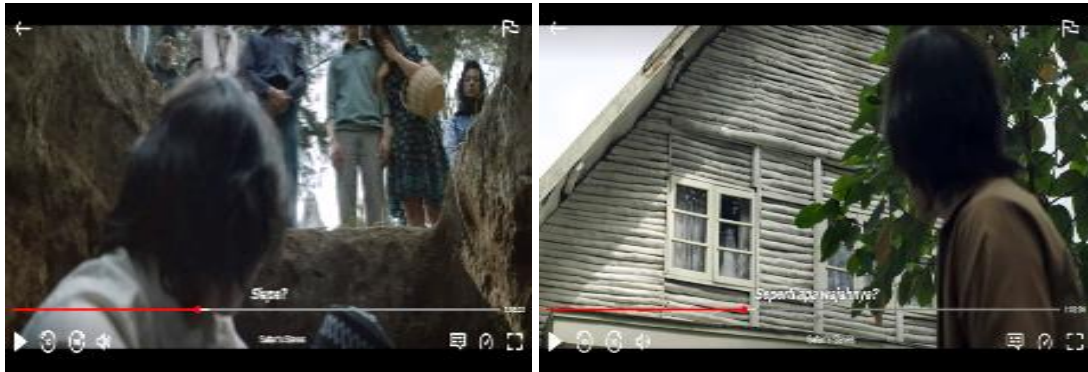
Specifically, two modes appear for the collisions between the dominant myths and the counter-myths in three Indonesian horror movies: (1) the mode of the collisions between the Islamic teachings that break the supernatural beliefs, that is shown in *Pengabdian Setan* and *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur*; (2) the mode of the dialectical reconciliation between Islamic teachings and supernatural beliefs is shown in the same movies

In *Pengabdian Setan*, one mode will be discussed in this part. In particular, the first mode shows denotatively (in the way) that Hendra sees the woman who is not a mother but very similar to a mother attending the burial. Moreover, Hendra also sees the ghost mother at Rini's house, particularly at the windows in Rini's room (Anwar, 2017).

Connotatively, Hendra's appearances are bigger than the mother demon's, which means Hendra's action is more significant than the mother's demon (in the first picture). Furthermore, the ghost mother is depicted as the pure demon that haunts Rini's family and masquerades as the mother completely (since she wears the white dress). Those scenes produce the dominant myth that the soul of the dead person cannot interfere with the human realm even if there is unfinished business because the soul is already in the *Barzakh* realm, but the demon (not the soul of the dead person) can masquerade similarly with the dead person.

Furthermore, these scenes show the dialectical reconciliation between Islamic teachings and supernatural beliefs since they show Hendra (the son of a pious person) as a good Muslim but still believes in supernatural beliefs that contradict Islamic teachings.

These are scenes that show the first appearance of the mother ghost (Anwar 2017).

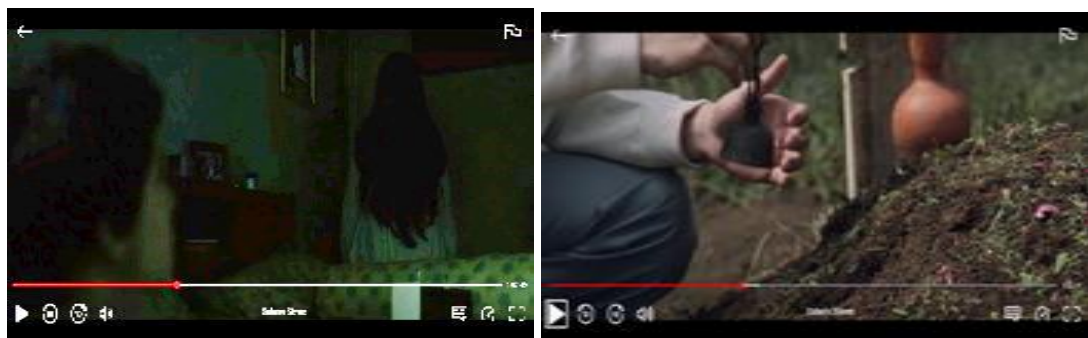


Figures 10: Hendra encounters the demon

These scenes break the counter-myth that the soul of the dead can go back to the human realm and haunt people if there is unfinished business after someone is dead. That myth is depicted denotatively (in the way) when Tony hears the bell ringing, he immediately checks at the mother's room, and surprisingly, he discovers that the bell rings by itself (Anwar, 2017).

Connotatively, the medium shot in the first picture shows a personal relationship between Tony and his mother. Besides that, the appearance of Tony is bigger than mother, which means Tony's actions are more significant than mother's appearance. Also, the clear/sharp scene (that depicts Tony's activity at the mother's grave) shows that Tony believes that it's his mother who haunts him.

These scenes show Bondi panicking when the ghost mother disturbs him (Anwar, 2017).



Figures 11: Bondi is visited by the demon, and he buries the bell

In the same way, there is that kind of mode in *Suzanna: Bernapas Dalam Kubur*. Moreover, the mode tells denotatively (in the way) that Suzanna screams and revolts when Satria reads the scriptures of Al-Quran in front of her (Umbara, 2018).

Connotatively, the full shot in the first picture shows a personal relationship between Suzanna and Satria. Also, in the scene that shows Suzanna screaming signifies that she is a pure demon. Also, "the brown koko shirt" and the cap, worn by Satria, describe that he is a good Moslem and has the personality to protect and defend. Therefore, the scenes produce the dominant myth that reading the Alquran scripture can defeat even the strongest demon.

These are scenes that show Suzanna shrieks when Satria reads the scriptures of Alquran (Umbara, 2018).



Figures 12: Suzanna screams because Satria reads the scriptures of Al-Quran

Those scenes break the counter-myth that *Sundel Bolong* is one of the strongest demons that can interfere and manipulate the human world. In addition, that myth is depicted in the scenes that show denotatively (in the way) that Mbah Turu explains to Umar, Gino, and Jonal that *Sundel Bolong* is one of the strongest demons because that demon bears the tragic double death: the death of herself and the death of her baby in the womb (Umbara, 2018).

Connotatively, the scene is surrounded by darkness (including the black costume worn by Mbah Turu), which describes the dark power that Mbah Turu possesses (Mbah Turu is the black magic shaman). Also, the full shot (in the first picture) shows a close relationship among Mbah Turu and Gino, Jonal, and Umar.

Also, these scenes show there is a dialectical reconciliation between Islamic teachings and supernatural beliefs since they show the existence of the soul of the dead woman in the human realm.

These scenes show the conversation among Mbah Turu, Umar, Gino, and Jonal about *Sundel Bolong* (Umbara, 2018).



Figures 13: Mbah Turu thoroughly explains the *Sundel Bolong*

Semiotically, the scenes that show the dialectical reconciliation between two opposite things gain 4 references, and the scenes that show Islamic teachings break supernatural beliefs obtain 3 references. It is the chart that answers the second research question (RQ 2) completely.

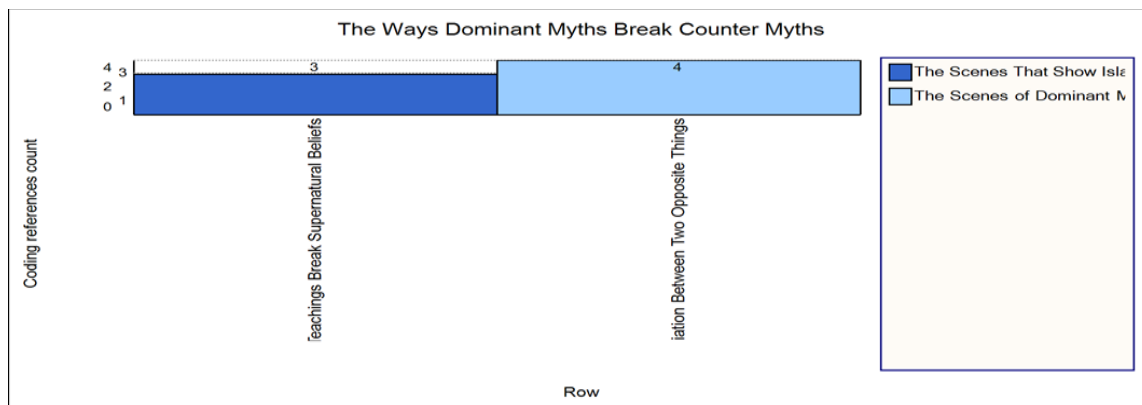


Figure 14: The ways of dominant myths break counter-myths

Absolutely, there is a micro-macro integration in this study. At the micro-level, several scenes portray the collisions between the dominant myths and counter-myths and vice versa, and several scenes depict the dialectical reconciliation between two contradictory things.

The authors believe that the opposite scenes break each other, and that the scenes that show the dialectical reconciliation between two opposing beliefs reflect the macro trends of reconciliations between dominant myths and counter-myths in Indonesian society, such as (1) the reconciliation between Islamic teachings and witchcraft (reconciliation type 1), and (2) the reconciliation between Islamic teachings and supernatural belief (reconciliation type 2). (3) the reconciliation of Islamic teachings with adultery (reconciliation type 3), and (4) the reconciliation of Islamic teachings with corruption practices (reconciliation type 4). Although they aren't the same, they are similar.

Scientifically, the semiotic analysis (counter-myths break dominant myths) has shown the dialectical reconciliations between dominant myths and counter-myths, specifically (1) between Islamic teachings and adultery (10 references), (2) between Islamic teachings and corrupt practices (10 references), (3) between Islamic teachings and witchcraft practices (14 references), and between Islamic teachings and supernatural beliefs (26 references). This is a chart that shows the dialectical reconciliations between dominant myths and counter-myths.

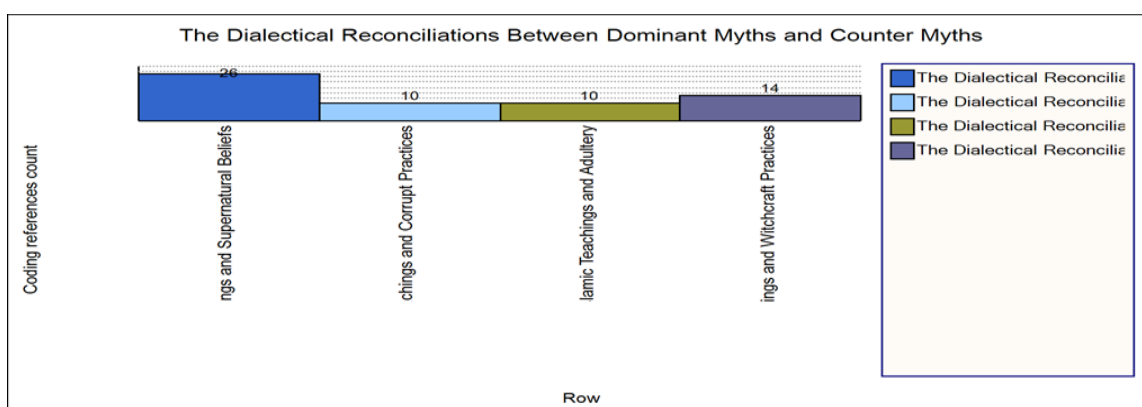


Figure 15: Dialectical reconciliations between dominant myths and counter-myths

Moreover, these trends only happen to several Indonesian Muslims, not to all of them completely.

However, this study only explains the last two reconciliations in this study. At the same time, the first two reconciliations have been explained in another international journal.

In practice, these reconciliations represent the trends of *Ibadah Terus Maksiat Jalan* (constant prayer while engaging in behaviours that contradict Islamic values) in Indonesia, abbreviated as *ITMJ*.

Therefore, I believe these three Indonesian horror movies are amazing since they represent semiotically the contemporary sociological condition in Indonesian society.

There is an example of the relationship between the counter-myths and the dominant myths that break each other in Indonesian society, like the repentance of one of the famous Indonesian shamans from shamanism recently, and he becomes a pious person (the dominant myth breaks the counter-myth). Yet, it's rare.

Speaking about the reconciliation between Islamic teachings and adultery (reconciliation type 3), it happens at the national and lower levels of society.

The case of adultery, as done by well-known Indonesian Moslem politicians in the previous discussion (Kramer, 2014), is only one of the phenomena that appear from the surface. Yet, there are more interesting cases hidden beneath the surface.

Indeed, it is common in Indonesia to hear some pious people worship the Almighty God diligently, possess a deep knowledge of the religion, (sometimes) have a degree in the Islamic religion, and always persuade others to follow the Islamic ways. At the same time, he practices adultery. Furthermore, the victims can be anyone, including his female students (*santriwati*), his female servants, etc. Sometimes, pious people marry the women or (after several years) divorce them for several reasons.

It does not, for example, imply that the term "pious people" refers to specific groups in Indonesian society, because a religious figure in *Pengabdian Setan* is just a regular pious person (Sutandio, 2019). Furthermore, it can be anyone who acts Islamically and piously while also committing sins.

For example, there is the case where several female massage therapists pray five-time a day and read the scriptures of Al-Quran at their workplace or post religious postings on their social media. However, if the clients ask them to satisfy them sexually, sometimes they agree to do it as long as they pay the prices that both sides have agreed to. Unfortunately, their clients are sometimes pious people who work at prominent government religious institutes and reserve massage services at the hotel after meetings with their colleagues.

On the contrary, their consumers have economic access and (sometimes) have good educational degrees. At least they can pay a sufficient amount of money to the therapists to do "the additional services" to satisfy their momentary sexual desires.

The fourth reconciliation is between the Islamic teachings and the corruption practices (reconciliation type 4). The social phenomenon of corruption practised by two Indonesian Moslem politicians from the Islamic Indonesian political party was similar to the third reconciliation. This is the only case that appears nationally at the surface, and there are more interesting facts buried beneath the surface at the lower level of society.

As a matter of fact, in Indonesian people's everyday lives, sometimes they must face the unwanted situation they must undergo to run their lives, even though they don't like it completely. For instance, every Indonesian knows that several formal procedures must be followed if people want to get a driving license for every motor vehicle, like coming to the police station to register, taking a photo, paying the formal fee, following the online test, following the practical test, and (lastly) taking the driving license.

Sometimes the reality is crueler than the text since there is "the hidden back game" that several officers implement to obtain more money from the candidates. There was a case

in one of the small cities in Indonesia where the candidate had passed the online test with a good score, and the officer had decided to tell the candidate to come back at a specific date. Unfortunately, the practical test (by riding the real motor vehicles and driving them according to several routes) was accidentally cancelled for several reasons until the next several weeks. Then, one of the officers told the candidate to pay several amounts of money (which isn't cheap) if the candidate wanted to get the driving license instantly. Finally, the candidate agreed to pay the illegal fees, and he was given a driving license next week.

This sociological case is interesting because it happens not only in one city but also in several cities in Indonesia.

Uniquely, those officers act piously and religiously in other phases of their lives. Moreover, several of them pray diligently to the Almighty God and regularly visit the recitation (*pengajian*).

In fact, there is a compulsory and formal prerequisite that must be obeyed if someone wants to be accepted as "those kinds of officer" which sounds like: "have faith and be pious with the Almighty God (*Beriman dan bertakwa terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*)".

Also, the trend of reconciliation between the Islamic teachings and corruption practices happens if the people deal with bureaucracy and daily life among neighbours in Indonesian kampongs. However, the trend doesn't happen at the elite housing complexes that have a better social system than kampongs.

For the people who live in kampongs (in Indonesia), it is common to see several people who feel that they are the native inhabitants who are free to act at will. For instance, they will be very angry if the newcomers (*pendatang*) rebuke them for their mistakes, like when their son-in-law parks his car in someone else's yard, although it isn't their yard. These kinds of people sometimes do bad things during the regular social gathering (*arisan*) by taking more food from the food stalls even though it has been regulated by the house owner about the food portion that can be taken for every visitor in that *Arisan*. Those bad acts can be classified as small corruption (*korupsi kecil-kecilan*) since they have taken portions that don't belong to them, from the meals during *Arisan* to the parking lot at someone else's yard.

Uniquely, several of them are good Muslims who regularly pray to the Almighty God and attend the Friday prayers at the nearby mosques.

The point is that "seeds" of reconciliation between Islamic teachings and corrupt practices have sprouted even at the most basic level of the Indonesian social system, including daily social interactions in Indonesian kampongs.

Moreover, there are several motives because people prioritize adultery over Islamic teachings. They are (1) the economic motive, (2) the romance motive, and (3) the sexual pleasure motive. On the other hand, regret and health concerns cause people to re-prioritize Islamic teachings.

In the same way, there are several motives why people prioritize corrupt practices over Islamic teachings. They are the economic motive. In contrast, the safety motive can push people to re-prioritize Islamic teachings comprehensively because (perhaps) the authorities have figured out the corruption practices, and this situation threatens the safety of the corruptors.

Overall, those cases show that several Indonesian people pray to the Almighty God diligently after they hear the prayer's call (*adzan*); afterward, they commit sins (like adultery and corruption) regularly.

In the bigger picture, there are four motives that stimulate several Indonesian people (who adopt the dialectical reconciliation between dominant myths and counter-myths) to prioritize counter-myths over dominant myths, like the romance motive (4 references), the sexual pleasure motive (7 references), the economic motive (9 references), and the political motive (19 references). It is the chart that shows the sociological tendency.

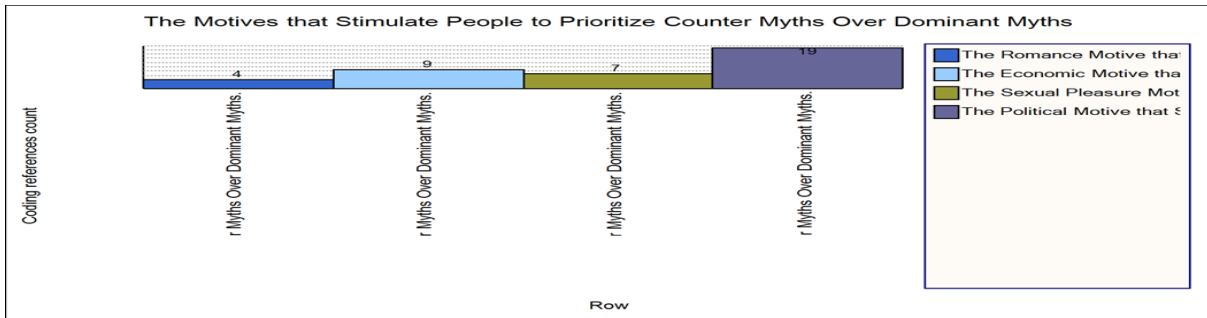


Figure 16: The motives that stimulate people to prioritize counter-myths over dominant myths

On the contrary, several Indonesians (who adhere to the dialectical reconciliation of dominant myths and counter-myths) prioritise dominant myths over counter-myths for two reasons. They are the safety motive (7 references) and the regret motive (2 references). It is the chart that shows the sociological reflection.

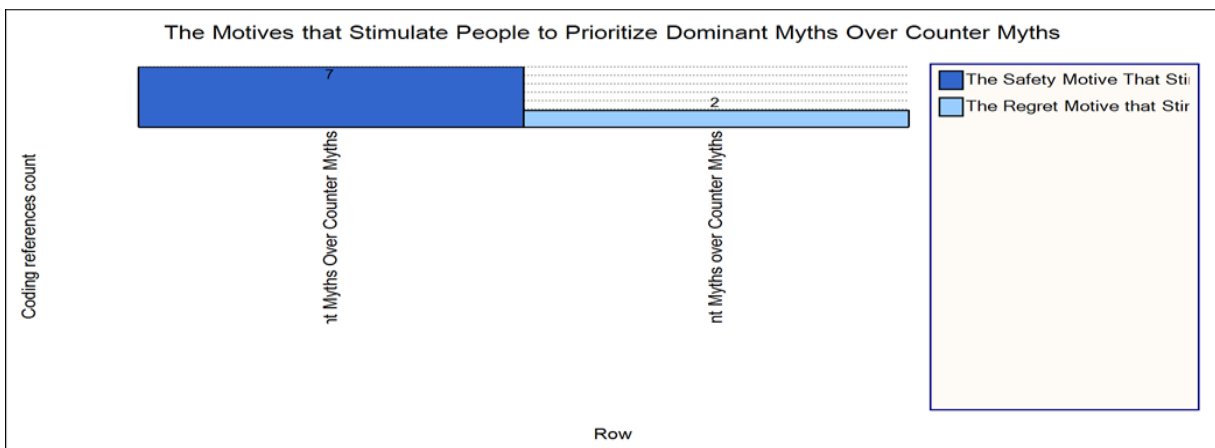


Figure 17: The motives that stimulate people to prioritize dominant myths over counter-myths

Overall, there are several Indonesian Muslims (not all Indonesian Muslims) who undergo the sociological condition where worship (*ibadah*) and immoral things (*maksiat*) can “walk together,” and these trends happen from the lowest sociological level to the highest sociological level in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

If Indonesia is seen through the sociological perspective, this country is unique since everything that has the opposition can be absorbed completely, and this can create reconciliation.

Furthermore, the authors don't judge the reconciliations between the dominant myths and the counter-myths as bad or good things since we are sure that it is the assignment for the authorized religion agencies in Indonesia.

From all four reconciliations between the dominant myths and the counter-myths, one type of reconciliation creates mass destruction for the social structure and the social system of Indonesian society, and it is the reconciliation of the Islamic teachings and the corruption practices. These “concept maps” (Maker & Zimmerman, 2020) are obtained by using inductive reasoning (Vo & Csapo, 2020).

In addition, the first two reconciliations (the reconciliation between Islamic teachings and supernatural beliefs and the reconciliation between Islamic teachings and witchcraft) show that there is a tendency that some Indonesian people can accept supernatural ideas completely since their ancestors inherit them from generation to generation. Therefore, the authors believe that it is a precise treatment to engineer those facts to fight the corrupt practices that have recently mushroomed in this country. Also, the tendency gives the positive possibility that the idea of the new Postmillennial Gothic (in horror movies) can be accepted comprehensively by Indonesian audiences.

It's true that Indonesia applies democracy, but it doesn't guarantee that the system can eradicate the corrupt practice effectively (Azwar & Subekan, 2022).

Therefore, it's necessary to propose an innovation that can give insights to the audience about the desire to reduce corruption practices in Indonesia.

It's such a good idea to use the Postmillennial Gothic as the tool to smooth this effort by rehabilitating and beautifying the demon characters as the heroes or heroines who fight the crimes vehemently (Browning, 2018). Furthermore, it's possible to rehabilitate local demons beautifully (Halim et al., 2019). The next problem is, who are the enemies of those demons?

Although the existence of people who adopt the reconciliation type 3 is monitored sociologically, there's a need to broaden the context of the reconciliation between Islamic teachings and corruption practices to include the reconciliation between the general religious teachings and corruption practices because this sociological trend can happen to religions other than Islam.

Therefore, it's also good to position them as enemies to the demons formulated as heroes or heroines. In other words, the idea disenchant the audiences that corruptors can act piously and religiously to cover their crimes from the public. It's the film model that can be recommended from this study since the different (communication) models will produce various results (Onate et al., 2019).

Finally, the effort to make a new film model (by adopting the idea of the Postmillennial Gothic) can shorten the gap between research and practice (Wahlgren & Aarkrog, 2019), and give the maximum contribution theoretically and practically (Korgaonkar et al., 2020). More importantly, it can preserve the local culture in society comprehensively (Latif & Hassan, 2020).

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors want to declare that the findings in this manuscript are based on the semiotic analysis of three Indonesian horror movies. There are no conflicting interests with the publication of this study in the international journal.

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