

---

## Representation Of Mental Health Issues Through Color And Visual Symbols In The Film *Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021)

Nasya Nadifah<sup>1\*</sup>, Agustina Kusuma Dewi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Visual Communication Design, Faculty of Architecture and Design, Institut Teknologi Nasional Bandung, Indonesia

\*Correspondence author: [nasya.nadifah@mhs.itenas.ac.id](mailto:nasya.nadifah@mhs.itenas.ac.id)

---

### Article Info

Received:

April 12, 2026

Revised:

April 18, 2026

Accepted:

April 20, 2026

### Keywords

Mental Health;  
Visual Semiotics;  
Color Symbolism;  
Film Semiotics;  
Bipolar Disorder.



©2025. The Author(s).  
Published by Pusat Penerbitan  
LP2MPP Institut Seni Indonesia  
Bali. This is an open-access  
article under the [CC-BY-4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)  
license.

### Abstract

The film “Kukira Kau Rumah” (2021), directed by Umay Shahab, which premiered in 2021 at the Jogja-NETPAC Asia Film Festival, addresses mental health issues among young people through a visually driven narrative. This study examines how color and visual symbols function as semiotic elements in representing bipolar disorder as experienced by the main character. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed using Roland Barthes’ semiotic framework, focusing on denotative and connotative levels of meaning. Data were collected through visual observation of selected scenes and supported by relevant literature. The findings reveal that each analyzed scene constructs psychological meaning through the interplay of color, gesture, and symbolic action. Cool tones (blue and gray) signify depressive states, emotional isolation, and psychological emptiness, while warm tones (yellow and orange) represent heightened emotional intensity and manic tendencies. Expansive gestures convey euphoria, whereas dim lighting and desaturated colors indicate emotional instability. Aggressive actions and confined spaces further symbolize internal conflict and emotional dysregulation. These findings demonstrate that visual elements function not only as aesthetic components but also as a semiotic system that communicates complex psychological conditions. This study contributes to visual communication and film studies by highlighting the role of cinematic visuals in representing mental health issues in a nuanced and empathetic manner.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Film is a form of mass communication media with a strong ability to convey messages through the integration of visual and narrative elements. Beyond functioning as entertainment, film also serves as a medium for representing social realities, including contemporary issues such as mental health (Husaina et al., 2018) (Wahyuningsih, 2019). In the context of visual communication, cinematic elements such as color, lighting, composition, and visual symbols play a crucial role as signs that carry meaning and are capable of shaping the audience’s emotional experience (Husaina et al., 2018) (Suryantara et al., 2024). Through these visual strategies, film

---

has the potential to influence audience perceptions and attitudes toward various social issues, including adolescent mental health (Silvanari, 2021) (Ramadhani & Wirawanda, 2024).

In recent years, mental health issues have increasingly been represented in films, particularly those portraying the lives of younger generations. This trend reflects growing social awareness of the importance of mental health and opens new discursive spaces within popular media. One Indonesian film that addresses this issue is *Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021), directed by Umay Shahab, which presents the psychological condition of its characters through a poetic and symbolic visual approach (Pahruroji et al., 2023). Therefore, the film provides a relevant context for examining how mental health issues are constructed and communicated through visual elements in cinematic works.

However, previous studies on the representation of mental health in film tend to focus primarily on narrative and dialogue. Analyses of visual elements, particularly color and symbolism, remain relatively limited and underexplored. Moreover, existing studies have not sufficiently examined how these visual elements function as a system of signs that construct layered meanings related to psychological conditions, especially through a semiotic perspective. In fact, visual elements play a significant role in constructing implicit, emotional, and ideological meanings that are not always conveyed verbally. Therefore, an analytical approach is needed to uncover the meanings embedded within these visual signs.

Semiotic analysis, particularly Roland Barthes' theory, provides a relevant framework for examining the relationship between signifier and signified through denotative and connotative levels of meaning. This approach enables researchers to identify meanings embedded in the use of color, gestures, and visual symbols in film (Umami et al., 2024).

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze how color and visual symbols function as semiotic elements in representing mental health issues in *Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021). This research is expected to contribute to the field of visual communication by enhancing the understanding of how visual elements construct meaning in representing social issues in film, as well as providing practical implications for developing more communicative and empathetic cinematic works.

## 2. METHODS AND THEORY

The research methods section provides a comprehensive explanation of how the study was conducted to ensure transparency and scientific rigor. This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore the meaning of visual elements in film. The research focuses on analyzing how color and visual symbols function as representational tools in conveying mental health issues. The object of the study is the film *Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021), particularly selected scenes that depict the psychological condition of the main character.

The unit of analysis consists of visual elements within the film, including color, gestures, facial expressions, and spatial settings. The sampling technique is purposive sampling, where scenes are selected based on specific criteria: the presence of dominant color composition, strong visual symbolism, and significant emotional intensity related to mental health representation.

The data used in this study are divided into primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct visual observation of the film, while secondary data were collected through literature review, including academic journals, books, and relevant scholarly sources. The instruments used in this research include scene documentation (screenshots), observation notes, and classification tables of visual elements.

The research procedure was conducted through several systematic stages. The research procedure is illustrated in a systematic sequence as follows: First, data collection was conducted

by watching the film repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative and visual elements. Second, scene selection was carried out based on predetermined criteria. Third, the selected scenes were classified according to visual components such as color, gesture, and setting. Finally, the data were analyzed using a semiotic approach to interpret the meaning of visual signs.

Data analysis was conducted using Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, which consists of two levels of meaning: denotation and connotation. The denotative level identifies the literal meaning of visual signs, while the connotative level interprets deeper meanings related to emotional, cultural, and ideological contexts. This approach also examines the relationship between the signifier and the signified in constructing visual meaning (Dewi, A. K., 2017).

To ensure the validity of the data, the analysis was conducted through repeated observations and cross-referencing with relevant literature. However, this study has certain limitations, particularly its focus on visual elements without incorporating audio aspects such as dialogue and music, as well as the absence of audience reception analysis.

### **2.1 Methods**

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method focusing on visual semiotic analysis. The method is used to examine how color and visual symbols represent the psychological condition of the main character in *Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021).

### **2.2 Theory**

This study is grounded in semiotic theory as the primary framework for understanding visual meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure defines a sign as consisting of a signifier and a signified, while Charles Sanders Peirce classifies signs into icons, indexes, and symbols (Sobur, 2009 in Dewi, A. K. 2017).

Furthermore, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory is applied to analyze meaning through two levels: denotation and connotation. Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a sign, whereas connotation relates to emotional, cultural, and ideological meanings (Sobur, 2003 in Wahyuningsih et al. 2019).

In addition, this study employs color theory within the context of visual communication. Color functions not only as an aesthetic element but also as a carrier of meaning and a trigger of emotional responses. Blue is generally associated with sadness and calmness, while yellow and orange represent energy and emotional intensity. Meanwhile, gray conveys neutrality and tends to reflect a gloomy atmosphere (Natadjaja, 2002 in Suryantara et al. 2024). The use of color harmony, whether analogous or complementary, strengthens visual messages and supports the emotional tone of the film (Abdurofi, 2017).

Thus, semiotic theory and color theory are used as analytical tools to interpret visual elements in the film, particularly in representing the psychological condition of the characters through color, gestures, and visual symbols.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Results**

This study uses primary data obtained through visual observation of the film *Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021), directed by Umay Shahab. Observations were conducted comprehensively to identify the use of color and visual symbols representing the mental health condition of the main character. Documentation data consist of screenshots from selected scenes relevant to the research focus.

The findings indicate that several scenes consistently display dominant color usage and visual symbols related to emotional dynamics and the psychological condition of the main character. These scenes were analyzed based on visual aspects including color, gestures, expressions, and spatial setting.

### 3.1.1 Film Overview

*Kukira Kau Rumah* (2021) is an Indonesian drama film directed by Umay Shahab and produced by MD Pictures and Sinemaku Pictures. The film has a duration of approximately 90 minutes and was first screened at the Jogja-NETPAC Asian Film Festival in 2021, before being released nationally in February 2022. It stars Prilly Latuconsina, Jourdy Pranata, Shenina Cinnamon, and Raim Laode. The film follows the character Niskala, who is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and explores the dynamics of her relationship with Pram, with a focus on the psychological conflicts and social pressures experienced by the main character (Suparman et al., 2024; Rosli et al., 2023). Visually, the film utilizes color, gestures, and symbols to represent mental conditions in an emotional and implicit manner (Ramadhani & Wirawanda, 2024).

### 3.1.2 Scene Description

This section presents visual descriptions of selected scenes analyzed based on elements such as body gestures, facial expressions, lighting, and dominant colors. Scene selection was conducted purposively, considering emotional intensity, color usage, and visual symbolism representing the character's psychological condition.



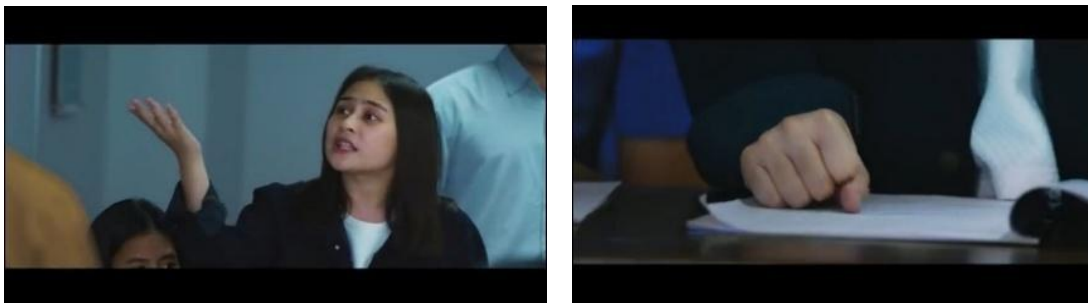
**Figure 1.** *Kukira Kau Rumah* Scene 1 (2021)  
(Source: *Kukira Kau Rumah*; processed by the author, 2026)

The scene depicts Niskala standing on top of a car with both arms outstretched. The shot is captured using a low-medium angle with a gray toned background. The character appears balanced, with a calm facial expression.



**Figure 2 and 3.** *Kukira Kau Rumah* Scene 2 (2021)  
(Source: *Kukira Kau Rumah*; processed by the author, 2026)

The scene depicts Niskala crying in the middle of a birthday celebration with her family. The shot uses a medium shot, highlighting facial expressions and the interaction between the character and her mother. The dominant colors are yellow and gray, accompanied by dim lighting.



**Figure 4 and 5.** *Kukira Kau Rumah* Scene 3 (2021)  
(Source: *Kukira Kau Rumah*; processed by the author, 2026)

The scene shows Niskala in a classroom during a discussion. She is seen hitting the table and pointing at the interlocutor. The shot is captured using medium shot and close-up techniques, with a dominance of blue tones and low lighting.



**Figure 6 and 7.** *Kukira Kau Rumah* Scene 4 (2021)  
(Source: *Kukira Kau Rumah*; processed by the author, 2026)

The scene presents a verbal conflict between Niskala and another character on the roadside. The character displays a tense facial expression with aggressive body gestures. The shot uses a medium shot with dominant blue tones and low lighting.



**Figure 8, 9, and 10.** *Kukira Kau Rumah* Scene 5 (2021)  
(Source: *Kukira Kau Rumah*; processed by the author, 2026)

The scene depicts Niskala in her room in an emotionally unstable state. She is seen throwing items from a drawer, rejecting physical interaction, and displaying expressions of anger and crying. The shot is captured using long shot and medium shot techniques, with dominant yellow and orange tones.



**Figure 11 and 12.** *Kukira Kau Rumah* Scene 6 (2021)  
(Source: *Kukira Kau Rumah*; processed by the author, 2026)

The scene shows a conflict between Niskala and a teacher in a school setting. The character is involved in an argument, displaying defensive gestures and impulsive behavior. The shot uses a long shot with dominant yellow and gray tones.

### 3.1.3 Summary Table

**Table 1.** Summary of Scenes in *Kukira Kau Rumah*  
(Source: Author's analysis, 2026)

No	Scene	Main Visual	Duration	Dominant Color	Dialogue/Action
1	Scene 1	Niskala standing with both arms outstretched	00:47	Grey	"Aku mau terbang"
2	Scene 2	Niskala crying during a birthday celebration	01:00-01:47	Yellow, grey	Sudden crying
3	Scene 3	Niskala hitting the table during a discussion	03:55-04:24	Blue	Raised voice, aggressive tone
4	Scene 4	Verbal conflict on the roadside	45:00-45:40	Blue	Shouting and emotional outbursts
5	Scene 5	Niskala having an emotional outburst in her room	46:10-47:30	Yellow, orange	Refusing to take medication
6	Scene 6	Niskala in conflict with a teacher at school	50:43-51:00	Yellow, grey	Argument with aggressive behavior

#### 3.1.3 Semiotic Analysis of Visual Elements

To strengthen the analytical framework, the selected scenes are interpreted using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, which consists of two levels of meaning: denotation and connotation. This analysis aims to reveal how visual elements construct representations of mental health conditions in the film.

##### Scene 1

At the denotative level, the scene shows Niskala standing on top of a car with both arms outstretched. At the connotative level, this gesture symbolizes a sense of euphoria and an illusion of freedom. This condition reflects a manic phase, characterized by heightened emotions and a distorted perception of reality.

##### Scene 2

Denotatively, the scene depicts Niskala crying during a birthday celebration. Connotatively, the sudden emotional breakdown in a social setting suggests emotional instability and an unmet need for emotional security. The dim lighting and muted color tones reinforce the atmosphere of psychological distress, indicating a depressive tendency.

##### Scene 3

At the denotative level, Niskala is seen hitting the table and pointing during a discussion. Connotatively, these aggressive gestures represent impulsivity and emotional escalation. The dominance of blue tones further emphasizes feelings of tension, frustration, and internal conflict.

##### Scene 4

Denotatively, the scene presents a verbal conflict on the roadside. Connotatively, the aggressive gestures and tense expressions reflect emotional dysregulation and interpersonal conflict. The use of dark blue tones intensifies the sense of isolation and psychological pressure.

##### Scene 5

---

At the denotative level, Niskala is shown throwing objects and rejecting physical contact. Connotatively, these actions symbolize internal chaos and the inability to regulate emotions. The warm colors (yellow and orange) paradoxically convey heightened emotional intensity, aligning with unstable psychological conditions.

#### Scene 6

Denotatively, the scene shows a conflict between Niskala and a teacher. Connotatively, the defensive gestures and impulsive reactions indicate resistance and emotional vulnerability. The combination of yellow and gray tones reflects tension between emotional intensity and psychological emptiness.

### **3.2 Discussion**

Across all scenes, the film consistently utilizes color and visual symbols to construct a layered representation of bipolar disorder. The interplay between cool tones (blue and gray) and warm tones (yellow and orange) reflects the cyclical nature of bipolar disorder, characterized by fluctuations between depressive and manic states (Nugroho, 2022; Lakshmi, 2023). Rather than functioning as static representations, these color schemes operate dynamically, reinforcing shifts in emotional intensity and psychological instability throughout the narrative.

Moreover, the integration of gestures, spatial settings, and lighting extends the semiotic function of visual elements beyond aesthetic composition. These elements collectively construct a system of signs that communicates psychological conditions in an implicit yet structured manner. This finding aligns with previous studies emphasizing that visual communication plays a crucial role in shaping audience perception and emotional engagement with mental health issues (Ramadhani & Wirawanda, 2024; Suryantara et al., 2024).

Importantly, this study reveals that the meaning of color in film is highly context-dependent. For instance, blue, which is commonly associated with calmness, is recontextualized to signify tension and emotional suppression, while warm colors such as yellow and orange shift from representing vitality to expressing emotional overload and instability. This inversion and contextual transformation of color meaning highlight the complexity of visual semiotics in representing psychological conditions.

In this context, this study advances existing scholarship by moving beyond narrative-centric approaches toward a visual semiotic perspective that foregrounds color and symbolic imagery as primary meaning-making systems. By demonstrating how cinematic visual elements function as affective and ideological signifiers, this research provides a more nuanced and theoretically grounded understanding of how mental health is constructed and communicated within filmic representation.

However, this study is limited to visual analysis and does not incorporate multimodal elements such as sound and dialogue, nor does it consider audience reception. Future research is therefore recommended to adopt a multimodal and audience-centered approach to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of meaning construction in film.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that color and visual symbols in *Kukira Kau Rumah* function as a coherent semiotic system representing the psychological condition of the main character. Each scene constructs meaning through the interaction of color, gesture, and symbolic action, reflecting the fluctuating phases of bipolar disorder.

Manic states are represented through expansive gestures, impulsive behavior, and visually intense compositions, while depressive states are depicted through subdued gestures, dim lighting, and desaturated tones that signify emotional withdrawal and psychological emptiness. Transitional states emerge through the combination of warm and neutral tones, indicating instability and emotional fluctuation.

These findings demonstrate that visual elements operate not only as aesthetic features but also as structured sign systems that communicate psychological meaning. This study contributes to visual communication and film studies by offering a more nuanced understanding of how cinematic visual language represents mental health issues.

However, this research is limited to visual analysis and does not incorporate multimodal elements or audience reception. Future studies are therefore recommended to adopt a multimodal and audience-centered approach.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all parties who contributed to the completion of this article. Special appreciation is extended to the academic supervisor for their guidance, valuable feedback, and continuous support throughout the research process. The author also acknowledges previous researchers whose works have served as important references in the development of this study. This research did not receive any specific funding from public, commercial, or non-profit organizations.

In the preparation of this manuscript, the author made limited use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools solely for language editing, sentence structuring, and improving writing consistency. AI was not used to generate data, conduct analysis, or develop the main scientific arguments. All data, results, and interpretations presented in this study are the sole responsibility of the author.

## REFERENCES

- Abdurofi. (2017). *Pengaruh warna, musik, dan aroma terhadap perilaku belanja (Studi kasus pada pusat perbelanjaan)* (Skripsi). UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/11403/>
- Astawa, I. G. N. P., & Trisnowati, R. (2023). Perilaku bunuh diri pada penderita bipolar. *Jurnal Psikologi Humaniora dan Pendidikan*, 4(2), 181–191. <https://jurnalcendekia.id/index.php/jhpp/article/view/159>
- Cahyani, N. P. (2023). *Pola komunikasi perilaku bipolar pada remaja* (Skripsi). Universitas Islam 45 Bekasi. <https://repository.unismabekasi.ac.id/3777/>
- Dewi, A. K. (2017). Analisis ideologi visual pada iklan cetak Adidas “No one gets up when a whole world kicks”. *Jurnal Rekarupa*. <https://ejurnal.itenas.ac.id/index.php/rekarupa/article/view/1700>
- Husaina, A., Haes, P. E., Pratiwi, N. I., & Juwita, P. R. (2018). Analisis film sebagai media komunikasi massa. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*. <https://journal.undiknas.ac.id/index.php/fisip/article/view/1706>
- Lakshmi, V. (2023). Efek psikologis kritis warna. *Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 5, 157. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370411571>

---

Natadjaja, L. (2002). Pengaruh komunikasi visual antar budaya terhadap pemasaran produk pada pasar ekspor ditinjau dari warna dan ilustrasi desain kemasan. *Nirmana: Jurnal Desain Komunikasi Visual*, 4(2).

Nugroho, I. R. (2022). *Bipolar: Seri personality disorder dan berbagai hal tentangnya*. Psikologi Corner.

Pahruraji, M., Azhar, S. F., & Harras, K. A. (2023). Intensitas penggunaan media dan pengaruhnya terhadap persepsi audiens. *Jurnal Desain dan Seni Budaya*, 25(2), 176–183. <https://doi.org/10.26623/jdsb.v25i4.5179>

Ramadhani, N. F., & Wirawanda, Y. (2024). Representation of mental health issues in Indonesian films. *Indonesian Social and Humaniora Journal*, 4(1), 10. <https://doi.org/10.53697/iso.v4i1.1693>

Rosli, I. M., Masdar, M. S., & Lim, B. H. (2024). Understanding emotional responses through cinematic visuals. *Energy Research & Social Science*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360319924000120>

9924000120

Sekarlaranti, A., & Junaedi, S. (2016). Persepsi konsumen terhadap warna: Pendekatan multidimensional scaling. *Jurnal Manajemen Teori dan Terapan*.

Silvanari. (2021). Representasi karakter ayah pada film *Nanti Kita Cerita tentang Hari Ini*. *Jurnal Media dan Komunikasi*, 2(1), 55. <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/jmki/article/view/63311>

Sobur, A. (2003). *Semiotika komunikasi* (Ed. 1). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

Sobur, A. (2009). *Analisis teks media* (Cetakan ke-5). PT Remaja Rosdakarya.

Suryantara, A. N., Sartika, D., Riska, E. A., Wiranty, & Herdiana. (2024). Representasi visual dalam komunikasi massa. *Humanus: Jurnal Sosiohumaniora Nusantara*, 2(2), 186–196. <https://doi.org/10.62180/k80t9521>

Suparman, Marasabessy, R., & Helsa, Y. (2024). Fostering spatial visualization in GeoGebra-assisted geometry lesson: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 20(9). <https://doi.org/10.29333/ejmste/15170>

Umami, S., Efendi, E., & Mawaddah, D. (2024). Semiotika Roland Barthes dalam poster film *The Space Between*. *Visual Heritage: Jurnal Kreasi dan Kajian Desain Visual*, 6(3). <https://jim.unindra.ac.id/index.php/vhdkv/article/view/11147>

Wahyuningsih, S. (2019). *Film dan dakwah: Memahami representasi pesan-pesan dakwah melalui semiotik*. Media Sahabat Cendikia. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336036591>

Wahyuningsih, S., Dida, S., Suminar, J. R., & Setianti, Y. (2019). Terapi telepsikiatri sebagai media baru untuk pengobatan penderita gangguan jiwa: Studi kasus tentang pekerja kesehatan yang menjangkau pasien di lokasi terpencil. *Jurnal Filsafat dan Praktik Perpustakaan*. <https://www.scopus.com/pages/publications/85072826917>