

The Meaning of the Green Color in the Film Photocopier by Wregas Bhanuteja

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ABSTRACT

Film is one of the most effective media for communicating information to audiences. Every element used in a film has a specific meaning and function in constructing the message to be conveyed, including the use of color tone in a scene. In cinematography, color tone not only functions as a visual element, but can also represent the mood, emotions, and psychological condition of the characters in the story. This study aims to analyze the meaning of green color tones in the film photocopier and how their use represents the psychological condition of the main character, Suryani. This study uses a qualitative method with a visual analysis approach to several scenes that feature a predominance of green color tones. The analysis was conducted by observing the appearance of color in the visual composition, lighting, and context of the scenes in the film. The results of the study show that green tones create a gloomy atmosphere and emotional pressure, as well as depict the psychological condition of the main character who is in a situation of injustice. Thus, the use of green serves as a visual symbol that reinforces the delivery of emotions and narrative messages in the film.

Keywords: *film photocopier, visual meaning, cinematography, symbolism, color tone*

INTRODUCTION

Film is a mass communication medium that conveys messages through a combination of visual and audio elements, such as images, sounds, dialogue, and settings. As a communication medium, film not only serves as a means of entertainment, but also has the ability to convey certain ideas, values, and messages to the public. Bordwell and Thompson (2010) state that film is an art form that has its own language and communication system, with characteristics that distinguish it from other communication media. Film provides viewers with many experiences and emotions beyond those of image and audio media. Through its elements, film is able to convey meaning through other media such as clothing colors, sound effects, and color tones. Each of these elements has its own meaning that cannot be represented by dialogue. This view is reinforced by Block (2008), who explains that visual structure serves to direct the audience's attention and shape emotional experiences through the conscious and deliberate processing of visual elements. This means that in film, dialogue is not the only way to convey a message, but it can also be conveyed through the supporting elements mentioned above. Several techniques in film greatly support the conveyance of emotions through visual, auditory, and narrative methods that are capable of shaping the audience's perception so that they enter the world of the story. The use of the right elements is not only a matter of aesthetics, but also how to invite the audience to feel the atmosphere in the film (Shaping Viewer Perception and Emotion, 2025). One important

element is the use of colors that can represent many emotions. In general, green is often associated with nature, balance, and tranquility.

However, green also has very different meanings it can signify pain, being stuck in one zone, or the moral decay of a character (Kovsh & Dziuba, 2022). Hendrix (2018) explains that in visual language, green can convey gloom, alienation, and emotional pressure. In line with this, Putu (2022) states that the use of color tones plays a role in building atmosphere and representing the psychological condition of characters. This is clearly seen in the film *Photocopier* by Wregas Bhanuteja (2021). This film, which won 12 Citra Awards, raises issues that are very relevant to the lives of students, especially women. Through the character of Suryani, we are shown a student who is treated unfairly and becomes a victim of abuse of power on campus, where Suryani also becomes a symbol of resistance against it all.

In the film *Photocopier*, the use of green tones appears repeatedly and quite dominantly in various scenes, although not the entire film is dominated by this color. Green often appears at moments when the main character is under pressure, cornered, or experiencing injustice. The presence of green creates a gloomy and oppressive atmosphere that is in harmony with the main character's emotional state without having to be explained through dialogue. Although the film *Photocopier* has been widely studied in terms of its narrative and the social issues it raises, studies that specifically discuss the meaning of green tones as a visual symbol are still limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to analyze the meaning of green tones in the film *photocopier* and their role in representing the psychological condition and emotional pressure of the main character.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The film *Photocopier* is a successful work that has been extensively researched from various aspects, including how it narratively raises the issue of sexual violence (Permatasari & Amalia, 2022) and analyzes the level of abuse that often occurs around us (Tuhepaly & Mazaid, 2022). Although there have been many studies analyzing the film's narrative, studies related to the use of colors that have important meanings or roles in the psychology of the main character are still very limited. In fact, color is an important aspect that can represent or shape the emotions of the audience (Block, 2008). One of these is the color green, which often appears in various scenes and has a deep meaning. Hendrix (2018) explains that green can represent gloom, isolation, and inner pressure, where the color tone in the film is used as a symbol of the character's psychological condition (Putu, 2022).

Several scenes in the film *Photocopier* are dominated by green, which often appears when the character Suryani is cornered, depressed, and experiencing injustice. The color green is able to evoke emotions in the audience without having to be explained through dialogue. Therefore, the use of color grading with a green tone is a sign of pain and moral decay in the characters surrounding the main character (Kovsh & Dziuba, 2022), and is not merely used for aesthetic purposes. This study aims to analyze how the color green is used to represent the trauma and emotional distress experienced by Suryani, as well as her psychological condition, which has rarely been discussed in previous studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research method with a visual analysis approach to dissect the cinematic elements in the film *Photocopier*. The research data was obtained through systematic observation by displaying scenes dominated by green tones in the film. The data collection technique was carried out by conducting purposive sampling of stills that repetitively used green tones when the main character, Suryani, was under emotional pressure. Furthermore, the data was reanalyzed by observing how the visual composition, lighting techniques, and narrative context of the scenes revealed how color elements were constructed as psychological symbols. This approach was chosen so that the researcher could interpret the meaning behind the visual aesthetics in depth in accordance with the film semiotics theory used.

DISCUSSION

The film *Photocopier* is one of the most successful films directed by Wregas Bhanuteja. He is one of the best directors in Indonesia because several of his films have often won awards at the Indonesian Film Festival and been entered in international festivals, such as *Budi Pekerti*, *Para Perasuk*, and *Photocopier* itself. This film is a mystery drama and thriller, starring several top actors, including Shenina Cinnamon, Chicco Kurniawan, Jerome Kurnia, Lutesha, Giulio Parengkuan, Ruth Marini, Rukman Rosadi, Landung Simatupang, Dea Panendra, and Sita Nursanti, with a duration of 2 hours and 10 minutes.

The film was released globally on the Netflix streaming platform on January 13, 2022. *Photocopier* was very successful and attracted a lot of attention because it won 12 Citra Awards at the 2021 FFI from a total of 17 nominations, including Best Feature Film, Best Director, and Best Male Lead. In addition to its national achievements, the film had its world premiere at the 2021 Busan International Film Festival and won the Best Asian Film Award. Overall, the film was watched for approximately 6.92 million hours globally, reached the number one spot in Indonesia, and made it into the Top 10 Netflix list in 26 countries.

This award is inseparable from the story it tells, which raises issues of violence on campus, abuse of power, harassment, and seniority. In this film, we are introduced to Suryani, an innocent computer science student who is the main character who suffers a lot of violence from both her peers and her family. Suryani, played by Shenina, is an accomplished scholarship student who is active in a theater community called *Matahari* to add to her portfolio, despite her father's opposition.

One day, *Matahari* Theater qualifies for a theater program in Japan, and they organize an event to celebrate. This is where Suryani's conflict begins; after the event, she faces many problems, including having her scholarship revoked and being kicked out of her home due to drunk photos of her circulating online, even though she claims she did not upload them to social media. The film portrays Suryani as a symbol of resistance against the injustice she experiences.

However, the director does not want to explicitly show Suryani's psychological condition or inner turmoil. Through visual elements such as color grading and shades of green, this is conveyed without dialogue. Several scenes often use green when Suryani is under emotional pressure. Through in-depth analysis, there are several key scenes in this film that show these shades or tones of green.

Analysis of Scene 1: Scholarship Hearing

This scene shows Suryani applying for a scholarship. However, unexpectedly, photos of her drunk at the Matahari Theater victory party were circulated and ended up in the hands of her lecturer and examiners. Suryani was intimidated because of these photos. Due to these photos, Suryani's scholarship was threatened with revocation because she was considered to have violated the scholarship recipient code of ethics. At this point, Suryani is still unaware of the photo.



Figure 1. SEQ Figure * ARABIC 1 The green kebaya as a visual representation of the "lingering trauma" that envelops the protagonist throughout the conflict. (Source: Photocopier, Netflix, 2021).

- 1) Image Description (Visual): This scene depicts a cold and tense atmosphere. The main light source comes from a projector screen showing photos of Suryani while she is drunk. Suryani appears to be surrounded by dark, ominous shadows.
- 2) Composition Analysis: Compositionally, Suryani is in the center and becomes the point center (center of attention), because here she is the target or object of the scattered photos. Suryani's position with her back to the camera shows the power of the examiners; Suryani seems cornered because she is surrounded by people interrogating her.
- 3) Psychological Meaning (Interpretation): The combination of dull green colors and the composition of the characters' positions seems to imply that Suryani is depressed and confused. The gloomy green tones depict Suryani's helplessness because her scholarship is threatened with unilateral revocation in a situation she does not understand.
- 4) Journal Citation (Validation): Kovsh & Dziuba (2022) mention that the green color spectrum in cinematography is often used to create feelings of anxiety, unease, and depression, as well as to represent the mental condition of characters who are suffering.

Analysis of Scene 2: Expulsion and Domestic Conflict

Suryani is expelled from her home by her father. Her scholarship is revoked, which greatly angers her father. He feels ashamed because Suryani is considered to have broken her promise not drink alcohol at her theater party. Additionally, her father feels humiliated because Suryani was brought home by an unknown person at 3 a.m., who woke up the neighbors just to ask for the address.



Figure 2 SEQ Figure | * ARABIC 2 The green kebaya as a visual representation of the "lingering trauma" that envelops the protagonist throughout the conflict. (Source: Photocopier, Netflix, 2021).

- 1) Image Description (Visual): This scene shows Suryani in pain after her father hits her in the mouth. Although this scene takes place during the day, the atmosphere is kept gloomy with minimal lighting in the room. This visual shows Suryani's disappointment towards her father and her feeling that she is the victim in this situation.
- 2) Composition Analysis: The shot is taken from behind her father's shoulder (over the shoulder shot), showing Suryani's expression of still not accepting being kicked out. Here, Suryani is again portrayed as cornered and helpless because her own family does not provide support or seek a solution. The framing between Suryani and her father is made very intimate in a narrow room, which puts even more psychological pressure on Suryani.
- 3) Psychological Meaning (Interpretation): The camera angle, color tone, and atmosphere vividly illustrate how depressed Suryani is. The physical abuse she receives from her father makes her even more disappointed and angry because the family that should be her support has instead turned against her. The medium close-up shot focuses entirely on Suryani's anxious face. The angle from behind her father's shoulder emphasizes that he is the source of tension and threat for Suryani at that moment.
- 4) Journal Citation : This relates to Mercado's (2010) theory in his book *The Filmmaker's Eye*, which states that the use of the over-the-shoulder shot technique with tight framing is very suitable when one character is intimidating another, or when there is a difference between a dominant and a weak character.

Analysis of Scene 3: Clarification and Public Pressure

The third scene shows Suryani feeling tense as she has to clarify the defamation allegations against Rama. Here, she feels very disappointed because no one believes her. Finally, Suryani is forced to clarify and admit that she spread false news about Rama. In this scene, Suryani looks very sad and tense because she feels like she is fighting alone



Figure 3 SEQ Figure * ARABIC 3 The green kebaya as a visual representation of the "lingering trauma" that envelops the protagonist throughout the conflict. (Source: Photocopier, Netflix, 2021).

- 1) Image Description (Visual): The atmosphere in this image appears very tense. Suryani's expression shows tension, confusion, and sadness. She seems unsure of what to do as she is confronted by people who consider her guilty, even though she only wants to uphold justice. The visuals are still dominated by a gloomy green color, indicating a tense atmosphere (Matbouly, 2020).
- 2) Composition Analysis: Compositionally, Suryani is in the center of the frame as the center point. The use of depth of field technique with a bokeh background depicts Suryani as the main focus or target of the people in front of her who are recording and watching her clarification (Street, 2013). The medium close-up shooting technique (from the chest to the top of the head) clearly shows Suryani's disappointment and anger at feeling betrayed by her campus environment, which did not support her.
- 3) Psychological Meaning (Interpretation): Psychologically, Suryani feels betrayed by both her family and friends because no one believes her. She feels sad and angry because the university seems to be making her look guilty in order to protect the perpetrator. Her gaze in this scene also begins to show a deep hatred towards Rama.
- 4) Journal Citation (Validation): The shallow depth of field technique (bokeh background) that focuses on Suryani's face amid the pressure of the crowd is in line with Brown's (2016) theory, which states that this technique is effective for isolating characters from their environment and emphasizing the emotional intensity experienced by the subject. In addition, Lestari (2020) mentions in her research that the dominance of gloomy green colors in situations of visual conflict serves to build an atmosphere of injustice and the main character's alienation from the social system around them.

Analysis of Scene 4: Despair and the Symbolism of the Photocopier

The fourth scene shows Suryani, who is exhausted because the evidence she has gathered is not strong enough to report Rama to the authorities. The video evidence she had has been destroyed by Rama. Here, Suryani shows a flat expression but hides her deep anger. This scene visually shows Suryani's face being scanned by a photocopier.



Figure 4 SEQ Figure * ARABIC 4 The green kebaya as a visual representation of the "lingering trauma" that envelops the protagonist throughout the conflict. (Source: Photocopier, Netflix, 2021).

- 1) Image Description (Visual): The description of the image in this scene is very unique because Suryani's face is directly exposed to the green LED light from the photocopier. The surrounding atmosphere appears very dark (pitch black), so that only Suryani's face and the green glow stand out, creating a cold and mechanical impression.
- 2) Composition Analysis: Compositionally, Suryani's face is once again the point of center. The shot uses a very intimate close-up technique, so that her emotions and empty gaze are very clear. This technique uses the point of view (POV) of the photocopier, as if the audience is positioned as the machine recording Suryani's suffering. The use of close-ups aims to show the trauma and pent-up emotions caused by the injustice she has experienced (Plantinga, 2009).
- 3) Psychological Meaning (Interpretation): The subtle dominance of green in the midst of darkness shows the character's unstable emotions. She feels disappointed, angry, hopeless, and resigned because her struggle to gather evidence has ended in vain. The green color from the photocopier lamp no longer feels like "nature," but rather feels like something "painful," representing Suryani's mental state, which is beginning to crumble but still has the desire to continue copying (documenting) the truth. Light can influence the emotional mood of a character (Matbouly, 2020).
- 4) Journal Citation (Validation): This is in line with international research by Kovsh & Dziuba (2022), which states that in modern cinematography, intense and unnatural green colors are often used to symbolize psychological disorientation, trauma, and feelings of alienation. Additionally, Patti Bellantoni (2013) explains in her book that the exposure of green light on a character's face can create an impression of "lifelessness" or deep despair, which accurately describes Suryani's mental state at her lowest point.

In addition to the lighting and color grading of the background, the emotional emphasis in this film is reinforced through the use of a green kebaya costume worn by Suryani in every scene of the research sample. The use of this green kebaya is not merely a visual aesthetic element or fashion accessory, but a deliberate visual statement (repetition) to emphasize the character's mental state.

The green color attached to Suryani's body serves as a symbol of the "burden" or pressure that constantly accompanies her character. By harmonizing the color of the main character's costume with the gloomy tone of the environment, the director wants to give the audience an implied message that Suryani is in an unstable emotional state, trapped in mental pressure, and experiencing deep alienation. This green kebaya becomes a visual representation of the trauma that Suryani "wears" (Buckland, 2015). It shows that wherever she goes, whether in the courtroom, at home, or in public spaces, this pressure and injustice always envelops her completely.

Table 1. Summary of Visual and Symbolic Analysis of the Film Photocopier

Figure	Time Code	Scene Context	Visual and Symbloic Meaning
Figure 1	00:20:23	Scholarship Hearing	Institutional pressure and early conflicts
Figure 2	00:25:03	Expulsion and Domestic Conflict	A visual representation of high tension and intimidation.
Figure 3	01:36:27	Clarification and Public Pressure	The remaining trauma and social alienation of the victims.
Figure 4	02:06:07	Despair and the Symbolism of the Photocopier	The isolation of the peak and the cold reality of injustice.

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that the dominant use of the color green in these four key scenes represents the protagonist's journey from initial confusion to the peak of social isolation. The change in the intensity of the green color reinforces the narrative of trauma and the cold reality of the injustice depicted throughout the film.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that the use of green color dominance in the film *Penyalin Cahaya* is a crucial narrative element that symbolizes the protagonist's psychological pressure and social isolation. The synchronization between the pale green color, costume use, and certain cinematographic techniques such as close-ups and over-the-shoulder shots effectively emphasizes Suryani's position as an intimidated victim. Ultimately, the changes in green color intensity in those four key scenes reflect the character's journey from initial confusion to the cold reality of injustice. This visual language successfully conveys the deep suffering of sexual violence victims without having to rely entirely on verbal dialogue.

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