

**THE CULTURE OF TOLERANCE IN THE SHORT FILM "WEI"**

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**Submitted: 18-12-2023; Revised: 08-02-2024; Accepted: 01-03-2024**

**ABSTRACT**

*"Wei" is a family-style short film released in 2020. This research will discuss religious tolerance in diverse societies like Indonesia. The film "WEI" is the subject of research that describes the values of religious tolerance through family relations in the film story. This research aims to know the meaning of tolerance in this film. The method used is narrative analysis; this film will identify the meaning, character development, and tolerance values in the story's beginning, middle, and end. The values of tolerance include recognition of family rights and mutual understanding between the film characters. This film illustrates that religious tolerance can grow through the appreciation of individual rights and understanding between different religious beliefs. This study concludes that tolerance is essential in social life, especially in the family, because tolerance itself is one of the reasons for the harmony of families with differences or religious convictions. As a family film, this film differs from some family films in Indonesia, where the main character, from the beginning to the end, has no dialogue. Still, the expression and character can explain the character's purpose to the audience in the film; this is the distinction between the Film Wei and the other family films.*

**Keywords:** *Tolerance, Religion, Short Film, "WEI"*

**ABSTRAK**

Film Wei merupakan film pendek yang bergenre keluarga yang rilis pada tahun 2020. Penelitian ini akan membahas mengenai toleransi beragama dalam masyarakat yang beragam seperti Indonesia. Film "WEI" menjadi subjek penelitian yang menggambarkan nilai-nilai toleransi beragama melalui hubungan keluarga dalam cerita film. Tujuan penelitian ini ialah untuk dapat mengetahui makna toleransi dalam film ini. Metode yang digunakan yaitu analisis naratif, film ini akan mengidentifikasi makna, perkembangan karakter dan nilai toleransi dalam bagian awal, tengah, dan akhir cerita. Hasil penelitian ini akan diketahui makna yang akan ditemukan potongan gambar adegan dalam film yang akan menggambarkan makna toleransinya. Nilai-nilai toleransi mencakup pengakuan hak keluarga dan saling pengertian antara karakter-karakter film. Film ini mengilustrasikan bahwa toleransi beragama dapat tumbuh melalui proses penghargaan hak individu dan pemahaman antara berbagai keyakinan agama. Kesimpulan dalam penelitian ini yaitu toleransi penting adanya dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat, khususnya dalam keluarga, dikarenakan toleransi sendiri hal yang menjadi salah satu sebab keharmonisan keluarga yang memiliki

perbedaan atau keyakinan agama. Sebagai film keluarga, film ini memiliki perbedaan dari beberapa film keluarga yang ada di Indonesia, yang mana karakter utamanya dari awal hingga akhir tidak berdialog apapun namun ekspresi dan karakternya dapat menjelaskan maksud dan tujuan karakternya pada penonton dalam film tersebut, hal tersebut menjadi pembeda antara film Wei dari film yang bergenre keluarga lain.

**Kata kunci:** Toleransi, Agama, Film Pendek, "WEI"

## INTRODUCTION

The common tolerance problem is related to a significant problem in human diversity: our self-awareness of religion and the inevitability of plurality (Yohandi, 2018). Tolerance is a concept that reflects mutual respect and acceptance of differences and allows different beliefs or views to exist without conflict or rejection (Widiyanto et al., 2023). Many people assume that disputes in the world often arise because of differences in beliefs between individuals or groups. Religion is usually considered one of the main drivers of conflict and tension (Zaini, 2020). This view indicates that religious teachings from different traditions tend to contradict each other, and societal conflicts are often considered to directly result from different interpretations of these religions and beliefs (Alhab, 2019). Every religion aims to bring peace and harmony in life, hence the existence of religious tolerance.

Religious tolerance has had a significant impact on bringing about harmony (Rahmawati et al., 2023). The methods used to make this happen have the obstacle that differences in ethnicity, culture, and religion are often very significant, triggering conflicts between religious believers that can potentially divide the country (Sofinadya & Warsono, 2022). Usually, crises in

religious tolerance can start national divisions, especially in Indonesia, which has diverse religions such as Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Religion is expected to be a moral guideline that is adhered to with respect, but the reality is often different (Siti, 2018). Religion no longer serves as a good and faithful spiritual guide, resulting in conflicts between religions claiming the only truth while considering other faiths to be heretics, extremists, or even terrorists (R. W. Sari & Nugroho, 2022). This hurts the unity and stability of the nation and the relations between religious believers.

The culture of tolerance is now widely manifested in Indonesian cinema (Surastio, 2018). Film is one of the communication media in the form of audio-visual media used to convey messages to a group of people (Setiani & Hermawan, 2021). Film professionals' ability to optimize cutting-edge technology and develop compelling storylines is crucial in influencing society through Film (Ariq, 2021). Today's audience is not only looking for entertainment when watching films but also using it as a source of information, education, and even a tool of persuasion (Costa et al., 2021). With globalization and technological advancements proliferating, Indonesia has seen significant developments in cinema.

Reflecting on several predecessor articles, such as "Toleransi Beragama dalam Film Bajrangi Bhaijan (2015)", the film is one of the media used to encourage religious tolerance in Malaysia's diverse society. Religious tolerance is a critical issue on a global scale, and the use of film as a means of communication is very effective in spreading essential messages to today's society. The film "Bajrangi Bhaijaan" is an exciting phenomenon involving two countries in conflict, and this film has succeeded in increasing the understanding of religious tolerance in the eyes of the public (Adnan et al., 2020). Furthermore, there is a previous study entitled "Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama dalam Film "?" (Question mark) dan Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2", whose research results show that at the text level, the film "?" (Question Mark) raised various themes related to inter-religious harmony, cultural diversity, and tolerance. Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2 also explores the lives of religious people in Europe. In terms of social understanding, the screenwriter and director "?" (Question Mark) seeks to portray the diversity of religions, cultures, and traditions in Indonesia as well as relations between religious communities openly (Zaini, 2020).

Meanwhile, Ayat-Ayat Cinta 2 presents a more subtle message. At the level of social context, filmmaking "?" (Question Mark) was influenced by a series of bombings at places of worship a few years earlier. The film is also a sequel to Ayat-Ayat Cinta, and it aims to show that Islam can be a guide to life wherever one lives, including in Western countries.

Film is integral to mass media facilitating communication (Wastuti & Ramadhani, 2022). A film can be considered a visual representation displayed on a large screen. More broadly, visual impressions broadcast on television can also be considered a form of Film (Shalekhah & Martandi, 2020). In addition, the film plays a vital role in recording various events, making it one of the community's most valuable historical and cultural archives (Ariqqa et al., 2023). The many types of films that are now emerging, including religious dramas, comedies, action films, biographies, and life stories of people, make people more interested in watching. Many also take inspiration from true stories or have messages about religious tolerance (Fitriani, 2020). So, with short films that are pretty popular with the public today.

The short film "WEI" is one of the short films selected by researchers as the research subject. This film has various elements of culture, ethnicity, and religion. With a duration of 21 minutes, this film raises the importance of tolerance between religious communities, where minorities (Confucian/ethnic Chinese) who initially closed themselves from the majority (Muslims) slowly began to accept differences. This story tells the struggle of Mei, a woman of Chinese descent who has converted to Islam, to ask for the blessing of her father, who is still challenging to accept this change. Although her father does not get Mei's change and even considers him no longer a child, Mei still finds him to be the parent

she loves. This study specifically aims to identify the problem whose question is "How is the narrative in the storyline and the value of religious tolerance in the film "WEI" (Azizaty & Putri, 2018). Based on these problems, this study aims to describe the narrative in the WEI film's beginning, middle, and end storylines and the elements of religious tolerance in the film "WEI." The research method used is the theory of narrative analysis, which is an analysis that discusses the devices and conventions of a story; the story in question can be classified into the category of fiction or fact that has been arranged systematically, allowing the audience to engage in the narrative (Kristianto et al., 2022). Tzvetan Todorov argues that every story begins with a "balance," which some potential conflict seeks to balance at any given point (Yohandi, 2018). The object used in this study is the WEI film. The part of the object to be discussed in this article is the narration or storyline in the WEI film, which lasts 21:40 minutes.

## DISCUSSION

### Religious Tolerance in *WEI* Short Films

Regarding the issue of tolerance culture between religious people in the film, Wei links the value of tolerance with the family relationships built in the film's story (Adiprabowo & Widodo, 2023). Tzvetan Todorov divides the narrative analysis of the film into three essential parts: the beginning, the middle of the story, and the end, which are interconnected and complementary. The entire narrative has been thoroughly

detailed in the film analyzed to illustrate how the storyline of "WEI" within the framework of Tzvetan Todorov's model focuses on the value of tolerance between religious communities (Mukraf & Arifianto, 2023). Several visuals can explain the meaning of tolerance in the film WEI.



**Figure 1.** Mei's father is worshipping  
(Source: Rustandi, 2020)



**Figure 2.** Mei's father is cooking soup for her sale  
(Source: Rustandi, 2020)

In the first part of the story, the audience is given an overview of the initial situation that depicts the daily life of a reasonably old father (Hengky Solaiman, a famous pork soup seller in his area) who carries out his daily activities (Maulana & Nugroho, 2018). The initial narrative begins with a normal state, in which everything seems orderly and according to the concept expressed by Todorov (Sani, 2021). This situation



is reflected through stories about a good and peaceful life; the close relationship between Hengky Solaiman and his employees looks perfect, and he is also diligent in worship.

In the early development of this story, the main character is carefully introduced (Susianti et al., 2022). Hengky is described as a diligent, hardworking, and diligent individual. Mei plays a persistent and determined convert to Islam in her efforts to mend relations with her father (Putra et al., 2021). Both characters are pretty different and strive to live each other's lives (Devanie & Santyaputri, 2020). In other words, the story's beginning describes the appropriate initial circumstances. It introduces the main characters and their backgrounds, including their concept of life, which creates the basis for the further development of the story.



**Figure 3.** Mei looks sad to learn that the food she gave her father has never eaten (Source: Rustandi, 2020)

In the middle of the story, the audience is given an idea of a situation that is not good to appear. This is depicted when Mei tries to meet her father at her father's restaurant with food, but her father never meets Mei (K. W.

Sari & Haryono, 2018). A narrative with problems emerged, and the situation of Mei and her father, who was not good, emerged; this is shown through stories that have demonstrated the destructive relationship between Mei and her father because her father has not been able to accept Mei, who has embraced Islam. The middle of the story also shows Mei's persistence to mend her relationship with her father (Raharjo & Februansyah, 2019). She comes to her father's food stall with food for him even though her father never appreciated his efforts by never showing up to meet Mei and never accepting the food Mei brought. Therefore, Mei felt sad because her father behaved like that to her, even though she had done it almost daily during Ramadan.



**Figure 4.** Mei's father looked sad, because he remembered his late wife (Source: Rustandi, 2020)

At the end of the story, there is a scene of Mei's father finally wanting to eat the food Mei gave and crying because he remembers his wife's message that he has died; he also remembers his wife's message to be able to forgive everyone who has wronged us in the holy month (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Then Mei's father cooks the opor that he cooks

following what his wife does to forgive people, and delivers the opor to the house of the person they want to apologize for or want to apologize to. Therefore, Mei's father sends opor to Mei's house on Eid day through the intermediary of his employees; the opor is a symbol of Mei's father being able to accept and forgive Mei, who chooses to convert (K. M. Sari & Rahman, 2023). Then, the next day, Mei took her husband and son to see her father; Mei smiled broadly and cried tears of joy because she could meet her father, who had accepted her with his faith.



**Figure 5.** Mei and her husband and son looks happy to meet her father  
(Source: Rustandi, 2020)

When she meets her father with her husband and child, happiness radiates from Mei's face, and she knows that her father can accept the trust she believes in. In this discussion, a narrative analysis will be carried out in the short film "WEI" on the issue of tolerance between religious communities according to Tzvetan Todorov, related to the value of tolerance in films with family relationships built in the story of this Film (Adiprabowo & Sanofi, 2023). *Here are the tolerance values contained in the WEI film.*

## **The Value of Religious Tolerance in WEI Films**

### ***Recognizing Family Rights***

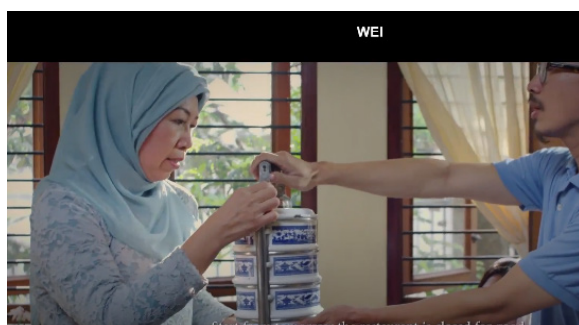
Umar Hashim argued that respecting the rights of every individual is an act and attitude that must be practised without violating the rights of others (Adiprabowo, 2018). The rights referred to here include rights owned by everyone, such as religious rights, as one example. In this WEI film, the value of recognizing family rights is seen in Mei's father, who can already confess his beliefs (Setyabudi, 2020). It took a long time for Mei's father to accept his son's faith, acknowledging his son's rights in the film as a form of value in religious tolerance (Sa'diyah et al., 2022). It was hard enough for Mei's father to accept his son choosing another faith because he was a devout worshipper of his faith. But in the end, his father realized and could get what his son chose. From this, we can see that a person can accept things they may consider unacceptable. Still, over time, they will realize that a culture of tolerance is necessary because it is essential in family or community life.

### ***Understand Each Other***

Harmony, mutual respect, and mutual understanding should be instilled and used as a basis for all parties to establish relationships to create harmony between various religious beliefs (Mukraf & Arifianto, 2023). Conflicts and conflicts related to religious affairs will not arise if these qualities continue to receive respect from all parties (Digdoyo, 2018). The mutual understanding in WEI's film

can be seen when Mei's father sends opor through his employees. Mei understands that her father cannot meet her in person even though he can accept and forgive Mei (Sayekti et al., 2022). Mei felt very happy that day and rushed to see her father tomorrow with her son and husband.

From some of these cultural values of tolerance, we know that there are several meanings in the images of this scene. Like the scene of Mei's father's shop employee giving a loud opor entrusted by Mei's father to Mei's family, in this film opor food itself becomes the meaning that someone who has accepted our forgiveness. So from then opor, Mei's father has forgiven and received the trust that his son has believed in.



**Figure 6.** With the theme of tolerance, Mei's father asked his store employees to deliver opor to Mei's house (Source: Rustandi, 2020)



**Figure 7.** Family Theme: Mei came to see her father with her son and husband (Source: Rustandi, 2020)

The next day, Mei and her small family meet her father; it is seen that Mei's father is sweeping in front of a food stall that will be closed that day. Mei greeted her father with a greeting that startled Mei's father and looked at them with eyes that looked happy because after not seeing and seeing her child for so long, Mei was also happy to see her father again after a long time. From some figures of scenes in this film, there is this meaning.

## **CONCLUSION**

In this article, it can be concluded that religious tolerance is an essential issue in a society as diverse as Indonesia's. Conflicts between religions often arise from an inability to accept differences in beliefs. However, religious tolerance is essential in creating harmony and stability in society. As an audio-visual communication medium, film has become an effective tool in spreading messages of religious tolerance to the public. The film "WEI" became the subject of research that depicted the values of religious tolerance through family relationships built in the film's story. The film's narrative analysis identifies the story's beginning, middle, and end, depicting character development and the value of tolerance. In the context of the film "WEI," the values of religious tolerance include recognition of family rights and mutual understanding between the film's characters, especially between Mei and her father. The film illustrates that tolerance.

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