

MORAL MESSAGES IN THE FILM IPAR ADALAH MAUT: A CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract : This study examines the moral messages embedded in the Indonesian film *Ipar Adalah Maut* (2024) through the semiotic framework of Charles Sanders Peirce. Film, as a medium of mass communication, fulfills not merely an entertainment function but also serves as a vehicle for the transmission of moral and social values within contemporary society. Through Peirce's triadic model of representamen, object, and interpretant, visual and verbal signs throughout the film were systematically observed and analyzed. The findings reveal a rich constellation of moral messages articulated across three primary dimensions: individual morality, encompassing self-integrity and personal accountability; social morality, addressing fidelity, trust, and the ethics of familial interaction; and religious morality, grounding the narrative in Islamic prescriptions concerning marital sanctity and the prohibition of transgression. The film further dramatizes the destructive consequences of *khalwat* (unsupervised proximity between non-mahram individuals) and the erosion of marital covenant (*mitsaqan ghalizha*). Peirce's analytical framework proves efficacious in unveiling the layered denotative and connotative meanings constructed through the film's cinematic symbolism, ultimately positioning the work as a compelling medium of visual da'wah.

Keywords: Moral Messages, Semiotic Analysis, Charles Sanders Peirce, *Ipar Adalah Maut*, Islamic Ethics, Film Communication

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Introduction

Contemporary cinema occupies a significant and contested position within the moral ecology of modern societies. Scholars of communication and media studies have consistently affirmed that film transcends its status as a purely recreational artifact, functioning instead as a powerful vehicle for the inscription and dissemination of ethical values, social norms, and cultural meaning (Zachra, 2024). The representational capacity of film allows directors to encode complex moral universes within narrative structures, compelling audiences to engage reflexively with the ethical dilemmas and behavioral choices depicted on screen. In this regard, the moral dimension of cinematic production is inseparable from its communicative function, rendering the study of moral messages in film an intellectually urgent and socially consequential enterprise (Diyanto et al., 2023).

The Indonesian film *Ipar Adalah Maut* (2024), directed by Hanung Bramantyo and scripted by Oka Aurora, represents a paradigmatic case study for the examination of moral communication through cinema. Adapted from a viral narrative shared on the TikTok platform by content creator Elizasifaa, the film dramatizes the disintegration of a marital household precipitated by the transgression of interpersonal boundaries between a husband, Aris (portrayed by Deva Mahendra), and his sister-in-law, Rani (portrayed by Davina Karamoy), while the protagonist wife Nisa (portrayed by Michelle Zjudith) navigates the devastation of betrayal. Released in theaters on June 13, 2024, the film garnered 4,775,135 viewers by the end of August 2024 and achieved a single-day record of 253,357 viewers, establishing itself as the eighth highest-grossing Indonesian film of that year. Its recognition as the Favorite Film of 2024 at the Indonesian Movie Actors Awards further corroborates its profound resonance with the national audience.

The film's title draws its moral authority from a well-known prophetic tradition in Islamic jurisprudence. A hadith authenticated by Imam al-Bukhari and Muslim records the following warning from the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "*From 'Uqbah bin 'Amir, the Messenger of Allah said: 'Beware of entering upon women.' A man from the Ansar asked, 'What about the in-laws?' He replied, 'The in-law is death.'*" This prophetic admonition does not invoke physical mortality but rather alludes to the catastrophic moral and social destruction *fitna* that may result from unguarded interactions between a man and his sister-in-law (*al-hamwu*) within the domestic space. The narrative of *Ipar Adalah Maut* thus functions as a cinematic visualization of this theological warning, presenting its moral content not through didactic exposition but through the dramatic unfolding of relational betrayal and its consequences.

The sociological architecture of the film's conflict is grounded in the structural vulnerability created by Nisa's professional commitments as a career woman. Her sustained absences from the domestic sphere, undertaken in the service of the family's economic welfare, inadvertently diminish the frequency and quality of marital interaction (Susanto et al., 2025). This communicative deficit generates a relational

vacuum that is progressively filled by the proximity between Aris and Rani, whose daily commutes to the university facilitated by Aris's status as her lecturer normalize and intensify an intimacy that exceeds the bounds of appropriate familial relations (Prayitno et al., 2025). From a sociological perspective, the film articulates how the structural conditions of modern domestic life, including gendered labor divisions and shared living arrangements among extended family members, can inadvertently cultivate the conditions for moral transgression (Febrina et al., 2025).

The Islamic theological framework foregrounded by the film is further reinforced by the Qur'anic injunction in Surah Al-Isra [17]: 32: "*And do not approach zina (adultery); indeed, it is an abomination and an evil way.*" This verse encodes a preventive moral logic: the prohibition is not merely against the act itself but against the gradual approach toward transgression the incremental dissolution of boundaries, the normalization of proximity, and the erosion of the moral vigilance that collectively constitute the pathway to immorality. The film's narrative arc mirrors this Qur'anic logic by demonstrating that the catastrophic betrayal experienced by Nisa does not emerge from a singular, dramatic rupture but from a succession of seemingly inconsequential moral failures, each of which dissolves the protective boundaries that Islamic ethics prescribes (Istighfarany et al., 2025).

The academic framing of this research is situated within the broader discourse on semiotic analysis of Indonesian cinema. Semiotic analysis, particularly in its Peircean formulation, has been employed by numerous scholars to examine the sign systems through which Indonesian films construct moral, cultural, and ideological meanings (Mareta et al., 2023; Munandar & Riswandi, 2025). However, the specific application of Peirce's triadic model to the analysis of moral messages in a film that explicitly engages Islamic jurisprudential concepts represents a distinctive contribution to this field. The triadic relationship among representamen (the sign vehicle), object (the referent), and interpretant (the meaning produced through interpretation) provides an analytical architecture capable of excavating not merely the surface meanings of cinematic signs but the deeper connotative and ideological layers embedded within them (Aini & Sikumbang, 2024).

The scholarly significance of this investigation is further grounded in the broader phenomenon of moral erosion in contemporary society. Researchers have observed a progressive diminishment of moral values in public discourse and cultural production, a trend that lends urgency to critical studies of media texts that resist or counteract this trajectory (Diyanto et al., 2023). Films that encode substantive moral content particularly those engaging with the ethics of familial relations, marital fidelity, and religious obligation thus warrant rigorous academic examination as sites of moral communication (Juanna & Abidin, 2018). The present study contends that *Ipar Adalah Maut* constitutes precisely such a text: a work of popular cinema that simultaneously operates as a medium of visual da'wah, a vehicle for social criticism, and a dramatic representation of the theological imperatives that govern Islamic family ethics.

Furthermore, the film's engagement with the institution of marriage as a sacred covenant the *mitsaqan ghalizha* referenced in Surah An-Nisa [4]: 21 situates it within a tradition of Islamic moral discourse that assigns profound ethical weight to the obligations of fidelity, trust, and boundary maintenance within the domestic sphere. Marriage in Islamic jurisprudence is constituted not merely by civil contract but by a solemn covenant before the Divine, and its violation carries moral consequences that extend beyond the interpersonal to the spiritual and communal dimensions of human existence (Ningrum et al., 2025). The film's dramatization of this covenant's violation and the suffering that attends its breach thus communicates moral messages of both personal and collective significance.

Given these considerations, this study is motivated by the following research question: What moral messages are constructed and communicated through the semiotic signs present in the film *Ipar Adalah Maut* (2024), and how does Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic semiotic framework illuminate the layered meanings embedded within those signs? The study aims to provide a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the film's moral architecture, contributing to the scholarly literature on semiotic analysis, Islamic communication studies, and the moral dimensions of Indonesian cinema. Through this investigation, the researcher seeks not only to document the specific moral messages encoded within the film but also to demonstrate the analytical utility of Peircean semiotics as a hermeneutic instrument for the critical examination of cinematically constructed meaning.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research paradigm, selected on the basis of its suitability for interpretive inquiry into the layered symbolic meanings constructed within filmic texts. The qualitative approach enables the researcher to engage in deep hermeneutic analysis rather than statistical quantification, thereby facilitating a nuanced excavation of moral messages embedded in the cinematic narrative (Yunus & Aswar, 2024). Within this paradigm, the study employs Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis as its primary methodological framework, operationalizing the triadic model of representamen, object, and interpretant to systematically decode the sign systems operative within the film.

The primary data source for this investigation is the film *Ipar Adalah Maut* (2024), directed by Hanung Bramantyo. Data collection proceeded through systematic, repeated viewing of the film, during which scenes, dialogues, visual compositions, and character behaviors carrying morally significant content were identified and documented. The researcher focused particular analytical attention on sequences involving the three principal characters Nisa (Michelle Ziudith), Aris (Deva Mahendra), and Rani (Davina Karamoy) as the loci of the film's primary moral tensions. Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed academic journals, scholarly monographs, and previous theses engaging with narrative semiotics, moral communication theory, and Islamic ethics in film.

Data analysis was conducted through a three-stage process. In the first stage, relevant scenes were isolated and described in terms of their visual and verbal sign elements (representamen). In the second stage, each sign was related to its referential object the real-world or conceptual entity to which it points. In the third stage, the interpretant the meaning produced through the sign-object relationship within the cultural and religious context of the film was articulated. This triadic analytical process was applied iteratively across all identified scenes to ensure systematic coverage of the film's moral content (Hasanah, 2024). Data validity was ensured through triangulation of primary cinematic observation with secondary scholarly sources.

Results and Discussion

Conceptual Foundations: Moral Messages as Communicative Constructs

Before proceeding to the analysis of specific scenes, it is essential to establish the theoretical and conceptual foundations of moral messages as objects of communication studies. A message, in the broadest communicological sense, constitutes any expression of thought, concept, or intention transmitted from a communicator to a communicant through a system of meaningful symbols linguistic, gestural, visual, or otherwise (Palinoan et al., 2024). The communicative function of messages extends beyond the mere transfer of information; messages carry evaluative dimensions that orient recipients toward particular understandings of reality, value, and appropriate conduct.

The concept of morality, etymologically derived from the Latin *mores* encompassing customs, behavioral norms, and character refers to the system of evaluative principles through which human actions are judged as good or bad, right or wrong (Ridho et al., 2025). Moral awareness, as Ahmad Charris Zubair articulates, represents the fundamental cognitive and affective capacity that enables human beings to align their conduct with ethical norms and essential values. This moral consciousness functions as an internalized regulatory mechanism that governs behavioral choices in relation to prevailing social and religious standards.

In the context of cinematic communication, moral messages constitute those signifying elements scenes, dialogues, symbols, narrative outcomes through which a film constructs and transmits evaluative orientations regarding human conduct. Researchers have demonstrated that films capable of encoding moral messages effectively can exercise a transformative influence upon audience attitudes and behaviors, stimulating ethical reflection and inspiring prosocial change (Kusumaningtyas, 2025). The communicative effectiveness of moral messages in cinema is contingent upon their narrative integration: messages that are organically embedded within compelling dramatic narratives achieve far greater audience impact than those delivered through didactic exposition (Mareta et al., 2023).

For the purposes of this analysis, moral messages in *Ipar Adalah Maut* are categorized across three principal dimensions. Individual moral messages address the

interior ethical life of characters their honesty, self-discipline, and personal accountability. This dimension finds its Qur'anic grounding in the divine injunction of Surah Al-Ahzab [33]: 70: "*O you who believe! Fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.*" Social moral messages govern the ethics of interpersonal and familial relations the maintenance of trust, the preservation of appropriate boundaries, and the consequences of relational betrayal. These are anchored in Surah Al-Anfal [8]: 27: "*O you who believe! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, nor betray your trusts knowingly.*" Religious moral messages constitute the transcendental dimension, linking human conduct to divine obligation and the consciousness of divine observation, as expressed in Surah An-Nur [24]: 30: "*Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their chastity; that is purer for them.*"

Semiotic Analysis of Moral Messages in the Film

The following analysis applies Peirce's triadic semiotic framework to seven key scenes from *Ipar Adalah Maut*, each of which constructs a distinct moral message of communicative and ethical significance.

Figure 1. Scene from the Film Ipar Adalah Maut, Domestic Boundary and Moral Instruction



The first analytical scene (Figure 1) presents Nisa in an act of gentle moral correction directed at a family member. Semiotically, the representamen is constituted by Nisa's composed demeanor, measured speech, and the physical arrangement of the scene, which positions her as a moral authority within the domestic space without recourse to aggression or public humiliation. The object referenced is the Islamic principle of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* the command to enjoin good conduct and prohibit wrong as applied within the intimate sphere of the family. The interpretant constructed through this sign-object relationship communicates that the ethical management of family boundaries requires not merely the articulation of correct principles but the exercise of wisdom, gentleness, and respect for human dignity (Febrina et al., 2025).

The moral message conveyed in this scene thus transcends the immediate narrative context to articulate a broader principle of Islamic ethics: that the preservation of family honor is a collective obligation requiring the active, compassionate engagement of all household members. The scene implicitly challenges purely individualistic conceptions of moral responsibility, positioning the maintenance of household integrity as a communal enterprise premised upon mutual accountability and care. This represents an individual moral message of particular depth, communicating that moral leadership within the family is most effectively exercised not through authority but through the modeling of virtuous conduct (Alfarizi, 2025).

Figure 2. Scene from the Film *Ipar Adalah Maut*, Violation of Boundary Ethics



The second pivotal scene (Figure 2) captures a moment of unsupervised proximity between Aris and Rani within the domestic space a situation emblematic of the Islamic prohibition against *khalwat* (seclusion between non-mahram individuals). The representamen encompasses the physical closeness of the two characters, the absence of other household members, and the visual composition that emphasizes their spatial intimacy. The object is the Islamic injunction against creating conditions conducive to moral transgression, grounded in the Prophetic warning that "the in-law is death." The interpretant produced by this semiotic configuration communicates the profound moral danger encoded within situations that appear trivially innocuous yet violate the prescriptive boundaries of Islamic ethics (Istighfarany et al., 2025).

This scene articulates a social moral message of considerable weight: the protection of household integrity depends not upon the absence of explicit transgression but upon the active, vigilant maintenance of hijab the system of boundaries governing the interactions of non-mahram individuals, even within the ostensibly safe confines of the family home. The film communicates that moral degradation typically unfolds not through dramatic, singular choices but through the incremental normalization of boundary violations that individually appear harmless but collectively constitute a trajectory toward catastrophic moral failure. This message resonates with the Qur'anic logic of prohibiting not merely the act of *zina* but the approach toward it (Ningrum et al., 2025).

Figure 3. Scene from the Film Ipar Adalah Maut, Betrayal of Marital Trust



The third scene (Figure 3) represents the moment of relational rupture the disclosure of betrayal and the collapse of marital trust. The representamen encompasses the emotional register of the characters' interactions: Nisa's visible anguish, Aris's defensive posture, and the spatial dynamics that communicate psychological distance despite physical proximity. The object is the Islamic conceptualization of marriage as *mitsaqan ghalizha* a solemn covenant (Surah An-Nisa [4]: 21) and the devastating consequences that attend its violation. The interpretant communicates that honesty and fidelity constitute not merely interpersonal virtues but fundamental obligations within the covenantal structure of Islamic marriage (Febrina et al., 2025).

The moral message generated by this scene operates on multiple registers simultaneously. At the individual level, it communicates that the betrayal of personal integrity the choice to deceive and manipulate carries irreversible psychological and spiritual consequences. At the social level, it dramatizes the destruction wrought by the violation of familial trust, demonstrating that the relational bonds connecting spouses, siblings, and in-laws constitute a delicate social fabric that, once torn by betrayal, cannot easily be restored. At the religious level, it affirms that the violation of marital fidelity constitutes a transgression against the divine covenant, removing the blessings of Allah from the household (Prayitno et al., 2025).

Figure 4. Scene from the Film Ipar Adalah Maut, Moral Collapse and Covenantal Violation



The fourth scene (Figure 4) provides the most explicit dramatization of Aris's moral collapse, situating his betrayal within the theological framework of the *mitsaqan ghalizha*. Semiotically, the representamen consists of Aris's behavioral choices his concealment, his emotional duplicity, and the gestures that communicate his consciousness of guilt. The object is the Qur'anic passage Surah An-Nisa [4]: 21:

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَىٰ بَعْضُكُمُ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَأَخَذْنَ مِنكُم مِّيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا

"And how could you take it back while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?"

The interpretant constructs a profound moral message about the ontological weight of the marital covenant as a commitment made not merely before human witnesses but before the Divine (Munandar & Riswandi, 2025).

This scene encodes a religious moral message of exceptional gravity, communicating that the violation of marital fidelity constitutes simultaneously a betrayal of one's spouse, one's family, and one's Creator. The film's positioning of Aris's betrayal within the theological discourse of the *mitsaqan ghalizha* elevates the moral stakes of the narrative beyond the realm of interpersonal ethics to the domain of religious obligation and divine accountability. This communicates to audiences that the ethics of marriage are not merely social conventions but divine imperatives whose violation carries consequences in both the temporal and eschatological dimensions of human existence (Aini & Sikumbang, 2024).

Figure 5. Scene from the Film Ipar Adalah Maut, Accountability and the Corruption of Trust



The fifth scene (Figure 5) examines the moral consequences experienced by both Aris and Rani as the perpetrators of betrayal. The representamen consists of behavioral and emotional signs that communicate discomfort, guilt, and the psychological dissonance that accompanies the violation of moral norms. The object is the Islamic concept of *amanah* sacred trust and the *nifaq* (hypocrisy) entailed by its betrayal. The interpretant constructed by this sign-object configuration communicates that moral transgression is not consequence-free: the betrayal of trust inflicts psychological

damage not only upon its victims but upon its perpetrators, destabilizing their integrity and undermining their capacity for authentic self-presentation (Susanto et al., 2025).

The moral message of this scene thus functions on both a deterrent and a diagnostic level. Deterrently, it communicates that those who violate sacred trusts will inevitably experience the psychological and social repercussions of their conduct, undermining the illusion that transgression can be concealed without cost. Diagnostically, it suggests that the evasion of personal responsibility the refusal to confront one's own moral failures honestly constitutes a secondary betrayal that compounds the original transgression. This message is reinforced by the Prophetic hadith recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim, which affirms that truthfulness leads toward righteousness and ultimately toward Paradise, while dishonesty leads toward wickedness and Hellfire (Ningrum et al., 2025).

Figure 6. Scene from the Film Ipar Adalah Maut, Sacrifice, Patience, and Filial Devotion



The sixth scene (Figure 6) shifts the moral analysis from the dimension of transgression to that of virtue, focusing upon Nisa's extraordinary patience and filial devotion in the wake of profound personal suffering. The representamen consists of Nisa's behavioral choices her suppression of visible grief, her protective attentiveness toward her mother, and the physical and emotional effort visible in her performance of care under conditions of extreme personal distress. The object is the Islamic virtue of *sabr* (patience) and the Qur'anic injunction of Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 153:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"O you who believe! Seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with those who are patient."

The interpretant constructed communicates that patience, in the Islamic moral framework, is not a passive resignation to suffering but an active spiritual discipline requiring the continuous exercise of will, faith, and love (Hasanah, 2024).

This scene encodes a multi-dimensional moral message operating at the individual, social, and religious levels simultaneously. Individually, it communicates that the capacity for self-regulation and emotional restraint in the face of devastating personal loss constitutes one of the highest expressions of moral strength. Socially, it dramatizes the profound sacrifices that filial devotion demands, particularly for women who bear the dual burden of personal suffering and familial responsibility. However, the scene also functions as an implicit site of social criticism, suggesting that the societal expectation that women absorb the emotional costs of marital breakdown in silence even when they are the victims of betrayal constitutes a form of structural injustice that demands critical examination in light of the Qur'anic command to "live with them in kindness" (Surah An-Nisa [4]: 19) (Prayitno et al., 2025).

Figure 7. Scene from the Film *Ipar Adalah Maut*, Resolution and the Moral Reckoning



The seventh and culminating scene (Figure 7) presents the moral reckoning that concludes the film's narrative arc. The representamen encompasses the final emotional and behavioral dispositions of the principal characters the consequences of their choices, the damage to familial bonds, and the narrative resolution that the film constructs as morally appropriate. The object is the integrated system of Islamic moral values that the film has cumulatively constructed fidelity, patience, accountability, and divine justice. The interpretant communicates that the moral universe of the film is ultimately coherent and consequential: that betrayal carries costs, that virtue is not without reward, and that the ethical norms inscribed in Islamic teaching are affirmed rather than undermined by the film's narrative resolution (Juanna & Abidin, 2018).

Taken cumulatively, the semiotic analysis of these seven scenes reveals that *Ipar Adalah Maut* constructs a morally coherent and richly layered communicative text. The film's moral messages are delivered not through didactic exposition but through the dramatic and semiotic architecture of its narrative through the signs, symbols, and signifying structures that collectively construct meaning across individual, social, and religious dimensions. Peirce's triadic framework proves exceptionally well-suited to this analytical task, enabling the researcher to trace the complex pathways through

which cinematic signs generate moral meanings and to articulate those meanings with precision and depth (Alfarizi, 2025).

Conclusion

This study has conducted a systematic and comprehensive semiotic analysis of the moral messages embedded in the Indonesian film *Ipar Adalah Maut* (2024), employing Charles Sanders Peirce's triadic model of representamen, object, and interpretant as its primary analytical instrument. The investigation has demonstrated that the film operates as a sophisticated medium of moral communication, encoding messages across three principal dimensions: individual morality (honesty, personal integrity, and accountability), social morality (familial trust, boundary maintenance, and the ethics of interpersonal relations), and religious morality (the sanctity of marital covenant, the prohibition of *khalwat*, and the imperative of divine consciousness).

The religious moral dimension of the film grounded in the Prophetic warning that "the in-law is death" and the Qur'anic prohibition against approaching *zina* is articulated with particular clarity and depth, positioning *Ipar Adalah Maut* as an effective medium of visual *da'wah* capable of communicating Islamic ethical imperatives to contemporary mass audiences through the compelling language of dramatic narrative. The psychological moral dimension dramatizing the destructive consequences of deception, manipulation, and the evasion of responsibility reinforces the film's broader ethical message by demonstrating that moral transgression carries irreversible personal and relational costs.

Furthermore, the film's engagement with the social dimensions of gender, sacrifice, and the unequal distribution of moral burden within the domestic sphere constitutes an implicit but significant form of social criticism, inviting audiences to reflect critically upon the structural conditions that enable and perpetuate marital betrayal. The character of Nisa whose extraordinary patience, filial devotion, and moral resilience constitute the ethical center of the narrative embodies the highest ideals of Islamic virtue while simultaneously exposing the societal pressures that demand excessive sacrifice from women.

In conclusion, this study affirms that Peircean semiotic analysis constitutes a powerful hermeneutic instrument for the examination of morally laden cinematic texts, enabling the systematic excavation of the layered denotative and connotative meanings through which films construct their moral universes. Future research may productively extend this analytical approach to other Indonesian films engaging with Islamic ethics and social values, contributing to the growing literature on semiotic analysis of moral communication in Southeast Asian cinema.

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