Jurnal Dakwah*: Media Komunikasi dan Dakwah* – ISSN : 1411-5905 (p) 2614-1418 (e)
Vol. 27, No. 1 (June 2026), hlm. 54-78, doi: https//doi.1014421/jd.2026.27103
https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/dakwah/jurnaldakwah/index

THE VISUAL LANGUAGE OF DA'WAH

A Cinematographic Analysis Of The Representation Of Optimism

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Abstract

This article examines how cinematographic elements communicate optimism as a value within the visual language of da'wah in the film Merry Riana: Mimpi Sejuta Dolar. It addresses how abstract dimensions of optimism are translated into audiovisual representations and interpreted through Islamic communication perspectives. Adopting a qualitative interpretive approach, the study analyses shot size, camera angles, camera movement, and visual composition in relation to five dimensions of optimism: high expectations, self-motivation, goal attainment strategies, self-confidence, and the refusal to remain passive. The analysis demonstrates that variations in shot size, supported by camera movement and composition, contribute to representing perseverance and agency. The predominance of eye-level framing also suggests visual equality among characters. These findings position cinematography as more than a technical device; it functions as a visual medium through which values of ikhtiar, perseverance, and hope can be communicated within da'wah discourse.

Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana unsur sinematografi mengomunikasikan optimisme sebagai nilai dalam bahasa visual dakwah pada film Merry Riana: Mimpi Sejuta Dolar. Kajian ini berangkat dari pertanyaan tentang bagaimana dimensi optimisme yang bersifat abstrak direpresentasikan melalui unsur audiovisual dan dimaknai dalam perspektif komunikasi Islam. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif interpretatif, penelitian menganalisis ukuran gambar, sudut kamera, pergerakan kamera, dan komposisi visual berdasarkan lima dimensi optimisme, yaitu pengharapan tinggi, motivasi diri, kemampuan menemukan cara mencapai tujuan, kepercayaan diri, dan sikap tidak pasrah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa variasi ukuran gambar yang didukung pergerakan kamera dan komposisi berkontribusi dalam merepresentasikan ketekunan dan daya bertindak tokoh. Dominasi sudut eye level juga mengisyaratkan kesetaraan visual antartokoh. Temuan ini menempatkan sinematografi bukan sekadar perangkat teknis, melainkan medium visual untuk mengomunikasikan nilai ikhtiar, ketekunan, dan harapan dalam wacana dakwah.

Keywords: Visual Da'wah; Cinematographic Representation; Optimism; Islamic Communication; Visual Framing.

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A. Introduction

Film is an audiovisual medium that combines moving images, sound, dialogue, and narrative structure to shape the viewer's experience.[1] As both an art form and a medium of mass communication, film does more than present a story: it organizes how viewers see characters, understand conflicts, and experience emotional change.[2] The meaning of a scene is therefore not determined by dialogue alone.[3] Camera distance, shot size, camera angle, movement, and composition also influence how an event is perceived.[4] Within the context of film analysis, these visual decisions form a language of their own, one that operates alongside dialogue and narrative to guide interpretation of the characters' motivations and struggles.[5] Within religious media, such visual conventions also carry da'wah meaning, since the manner in which a message is staged can be as influential as the message itself in reaching a general audience.[6] Accordingly, the visual strategies used in *Merry Riana: Mimpi Sejuta Dolar* deserve examination as a means of conveying an optimistic outlook, since cinematographic techniques are essential for ensuring that a film's message is received by viewers.[7] Accordingly, this study situates the analysis within the broader concern of how visual grammar shapes the reception of optimistic and religiously inflected values in Indonesian film, drawing on prior studies that have examined similar questions in

[1] Zarifa Sadiqzade, "Language, Multimodality, and Narrative Meaning in English-Language Film Discourse: A Critical Review," EuroGlobal Journal of Linguistics and Language Education. 3, no. 4 (October 2, 2026): 61, https://doi.org/10.69760/egjlle.2604005.

[2] Syamsul Bahri et al., "Big Five Personality (OCEAN) : An Analysis in J.K. Rowling's Movie Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone," International Journal of Educational Development 1, no. 4 (July 23, 2024): 1, https://doi.org/10.61132/ijed.v1i4.71.

[3] Sadiqzade, "Language, Multimodality, and Narrative Meaning in English-Language Film Discourse: A Critical Review," 63.

[4] Paul Messaris, "Visual Aspects of Media Literacy," Journal of Communication 48, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 72, https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/48.1.70.

[5] Zahra Shafa Ramadhani, Purnawarman Musa, and Cholidah Astri Pertiwi, "Meaning Visualization: A Saussurean Semiotic Analysis of the Film Merry Riana," COMMUSTY Journal of Communication Studies and Society 2, no. 1 (March 27, 2024): 12, https://doi.org/10.38043/commusty.v2i1.4806.

[6] Nurulita Danty Intan Pratiwi, Ida Afidah, and Hendi Suhendi, "Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes Pesan Dakwah Dalam Film Merindu Cahaya de Amstel," Bandung Conference Series Islamic Broadcast Communication 2, no. 2 (August 7, 2022), https://doi.org/10.29313/bcsibc.v2i2.3987.

[7] Bakhtiar Nugraha Hadi Prasetya, "PESAN OPTIMISME DALAM FILM MERRY RIANA 'MIMPI SEJUTADOLAR' (KAJIAN TEKNIK SINEMATOGRAFI)" (2016), https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/21092/.

local productions.[8] Previous studies on the Indonesian film "99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa" have shown that spiritual elements are woven into popular culture and shape audience engagement with Islamic concepts through narrative structure, character development, and visual language.[9]

Within Islamic communication and broadcasting studies, film can be examined as a medium through which values are communicated.[10] The messages conveyed by film do not always take the form of verbal exhortations or explicit moral statements.[11] Values may emerge through characters' actions, narrative choices, the consequences of decisions, and the visual presentation of struggle. An analysis of a film's message should therefore consider the relationship between its narrative content and the audiovisual form through which that content is communicated. In the case of Indonesian religious films, this relationship is especially significant, since visual conventions such as framing and movement can reinforce the moral and spiritual dimensions of a story without relying solely on explicit preaching.[12]

Reading film as a medium of da'wah requires an understanding that communication takes place through more than spoken language.[13] Colour, camera distance, spatial arrangement, facial expression, editing rhythm, music, and silence all

[8] Cut Roza Aprilizia, Trisfayani Trisfayani, and Maulidawati Maulidawati, "REPRESENTASI SIKAP OPTIMISME DALAM FILM CAHAYA CINTA PESANTREN KARYA IRA MADAN," KANDE Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia 4, no. 2 (January 11, 2024): 189, https://doi.org/10.29103/jk.v4i2.13443; Prasetya, "PESAN OPTIMISME DALAM FILM MERRY RIANA 'MIMPI SEJUTADOLAR' (KAJIAN TEKNIK SINEMATOGRAFI)."

[9] Fadhillah Sri Meutia et al., "Faith and Fantasy: The Interplay of Islam and Pop Culture in '99 Cahaya Di Langit Eropa,'" SIMULACRA JURNAL SOSIOLOGI 7, no. 1 (June 24, 2024): 70, https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v7i1.23359.

[10] Siti Fadilla et al., "Film Islami: Antara Spiritual Dan Komersialisasi Di Industri Film Indonesia," Journal of Religion and Film 3, no. 2 (December 30, 2024): 65–74, https://doi.org/10.30631/jrf.v3i2.36.

[11] Sakila Karnefa, "Examining the Values of Patience and Sincerity in the Film Tenggelamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck in the Context of Islamic Character Education," Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter, October 1, 2026, 1, https://doi.org/10.21831/jpka.v17i1.102301.

[12] Arni Ernawati, "THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN ROMANCE AND FAITH: STUDY OF THE DA'WAH MESSAGE IN THE MOVIE 'AJARI AKU ISLAM,'" Profetik Jurnal Komunikasi 15, no. 1 (July 4, 2022): 127, https://doi.org/10.14421/pjk.v15i1.2411.

[13] Muhammad Randicha Hamandia, Sri Hertimi, and Afriyanti Umariani, "Dakwah Di Media Digital Sebuah Analisis Representasi Nilai-Nilai Islam Pada Film Merindu Cahaya De Amstel," Kirana. 2, no. 3 (May 19, 2025): 87–99, https://doi.org/10.61579/kirana.v2i3.483.

contribute to the construction of meaning.[14] These elements operate together; consequently, the meaning viewers may derive from a film emerges from the interaction between the story and the way it is presented. Cinematographic analysis thus offers a means of examining how particular values are made perceptible and meaningful, rather than merely stated.[15] Such an approach is particularly useful for religious films, where the representation of values such as perseverance and optimism often depends on how characters are framed and how their struggles are visually emphasised rather than on explicit moral instruction.[16] In this sense, the visual grammar of the film becomes a site where da'wah values are negotiated, since viewers are invited to infer the moral significance of a character's perseverance from the way the camera positions them within the frame.[17]

At the same time, not every story about struggle should automatically be classified as da'wah in a normative sense.[18] In this article, the term visual language of da'wah is used as an analytical perspective for examining the possible communication of values consistent with Islamic ethical principles, including striving (ikhtiar), responsibility, patience, and hope. Such an assessment requires caution: filmic meaning remains open to multiple interpretations, and the presence of positive values does not preclude critical examination of other aspects of the narrative.

This framework is important because popular media often communicate values through characters' experiences rather than through direct preaching.[19] Viewers follow the difficulties characters encounter, the choices they make, and the consequences they

[14] Hajar Opir et al., "Da'wah Approach in Creative Work: Analysis of Munafik Film 1," International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science 9, no. 10 (November 21, 2025): 8668–82, https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.910000706.

[15] Sadiqzade, "Language, Multimodality, and Narrative Meaning in English-Language Film Discourse: A Critical Review," 63.

[16] Ferdinanda Ferdinanda, Guntur Guntur, and Ranang Agung Sugihartono, "Visual Style and the Cultural Representation of Islam in Penginyongan Film: An Analysis of Banyumas Raya Indonesia Cultural Expression," FIKRI Jurnal Kajian Agama Sosial Dan Budaya 10, no. 2 (December 16, 2025): 847–66, https://doi.org/10.25217/jf.v10i2.6854.

[17] Iklima Fath Azizah and Maman Chatamallah, "Representasi Nilai-Nilai Keislaman dalam Film 99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa," Prosiding Hubungan Masyarakat, June 2, 2015, 149–56, https://doi.org/10.29313/.v0i0.1992.

[18] Ernawati, "THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN ROMANCE AND FAITH: STUDY OF THE DA'WAH MESSAGE IN THE MOVIE 'AJARI AKU ISLAM,'" 122.

[19] Sarah Jayne Hitt and Thomas Taro Lennerfors, "Fictional Film in Engineering Ethics Education: With Miyazaki's The Wind Rises as Exemplar," Science and Engineering Ethics 28, no. 5 (September 13, 2022): 49, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-022-00399-w.

face, and may then relate these experiences to their own lives. In the context of da'wah, this form of communication can create space for dialogue and reflection. A message need not be presented as a one-way instruction; it may instead emerge from situations that invite viewers to consider the meaning of characters' actions and responsibilities.

The film Merry Riana: Mimpi Sejuta Dolar is examined because it portrays an Indonesian woman who migrates to Singapore under difficult circumstances and attempts to build a future for herself. The protagonist faces a range of challenges, including adapting to a new environment, seeking employment, overcoming educational and economic obstacles, and identifying opportunities. In the study on which this article draws, these experiences are interpreted as representations of optimism rather than simply as a story of financial success.[20]

Optimism in that study is described through five characteristics: maintaining high expectations, motivating oneself, finding ways to achieve goals, possessing self-confidence, and refusing to remain passive.[21] These dimensions suggest that optimism is more than a positive feeling or an abstract belief that circumstances will improve. It is also associated with action: individuals sustain their goals, adjust their strategies when they encounter failure, and continue making efforts despite constraints. In the conceptual framework used by the earlier study, hope is also associated with the Islamic concept of raja' hope for goodness accompanied by sincere and sustained effort.[22]

A central question, therefore, is how an abstract quality such as optimism can be represented visually.[23] Viewers cannot see optimism as they see a physical object. Instead, they infer it from characters' actions and expressions, the context of a scene,

[20] Camilla Modesti et al., "Social and Psychological Capital for the Start-Up of Social Enterprises With a Migratory Background," Frontiers in Psychology 11 (June 23, 2020): 1183, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01177.

[21] Hong Nguyen Thi Minh et al., "The Relationship between Psychological Capital and Work Commitment: A Study among Gen Z Workers in Vietnam," Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management 15, no. 3 (May 27, 2024): 2, https://doi.org/10.47297/wspchrmwsp2040-800503.20241503.

[22] Abdenbi El Harrath, "Is Positive Psychology New to Muslims? A Thematic Analysis of Well-Being Concepts in Islamic Teachings," Journal of Psychology and Behavior Studies 6, no. 2 (August 15, 2026): 23, https://doi.org/10.32996/jpbs.2026.6.2.2.

[23] Ikhsan Prasetyo and Ira Suryani, "Development of the 'Optimism Bridge' Game Based on Learned Optimism from an Islamic Educational Perspective: A Design and Validation Study," International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities 5, no. 2 (September 30, 2026): 369, https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v5i2.1175.

and visual choices that foreground or restrict particular information.[24] A close-up, for example, can draw attention to facial expression, while a long shot can show a character in relation to a broader environment.[25] Camera angles may also shape impressions of characters' positions and relationships. The meanings of these techniques, however, are not automatic; they must be interpreted in relation to the narrative context and the overall visual structure.

This question also concerns the distinction between theme and form. Optimism is a theme or psychological quality that has no directly visible form. Cinematography, by contrast, offers formal choices through which viewers can observe actions, interpret expressions, and perceive changes in circumstances. An analysis should therefore do more than state that a character is optimistic. It should examine how the action is positioned within the frame, how the surrounding space is represented, and how one scene is connected to another.

This article proceeds from the position that cinematographic techniques do not have entirely fixed meanings. A close-up, for instance, does not invariably signify emotional intimacy; its meaning depends on the narrative context, expression, duration, sound, and its relationship to preceding and subsequent images. Similarly, a low angle does not automatically make a character appear powerful, since visual meaning is produced through the interaction of multiple elements. A careful reading should avoid simplistic formulas that assign one definitive message to a single technique.

Previous analysis of the film indicates that variations in shot size, supported by camera angles, camera movement, and composition, can contribute to the communication of optimism. The reported prominence of eye-level angles may also create an impression of equality among characters. These observations provide a basis

[24] Dhiyaa Haaniya Nahda Erba, "NILAI OPTIMISME DI FILM ALI DAN RATU-RATU QUEENS," Al-Ulum Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Penelitian Ke Islaman 11, no. 3 (July 24, 2024): 335–46, https://doi.org/10.31102/alulum.11.3.2024.335-346.

[25] Michele Svanera et al., "Who Is the Film's Director? Authorship Recognition Based on Shot Features," arXiv (Cornell University) 26, no. 4 (September 6, 2019): 45, https://doi.org/10.1109/mmul.2019.2940004.

for examining cinematography as a visual language that not only depicts actions but also shapes how struggle and opportunity are interpreted.[26]

The aim of this article is to explain the relationship between dimensions of optimism and cinematographic elements in the representation of the protagonist's struggle. It does not assess whether the character's success can be directly replicated in real life. Rather, it examines how the film frames perseverance, effort, self-confidence, and the search for solutions as messages that viewers may interpret. The article's contribution lies in connecting psychological categories of optimism with the formal devices of cinema while keeping its claims within the limits of the available research material. Future research could extend this approach by comparing how other Indonesian and regional films represent optimism across different social and religious contexts, thereby testing whether the relationship between cinematographic choices and optimistic values holds beyond a single case.[27] Such a comparative approach would also help clarify whether the interpretive links identified here reflect general features of visual storytelling or are specific to the narrative conventions of this particular film.

This article adopts a qualitative approach based on the analysis of visual material. The primary source used in the original study was the DVD version of Merry Riana: Mimpi Sejuta Dolar, while secondary sources consisted of books and scholarly literature on optimism, film, and cinematographic techniques. The original research documented selected scenes and examined them in terms of shot size, camera angle, camera movement, and visual composition. The unit of analysis was therefore a scene or sequence of images considered relevant to the representation of optimism.

The visual framework encompasses shot sizes such as extreme long shot, long shot, medium shot, close-up, big close-up, and extreme close-up; camera angles such as high angle, low angle, and eye level; camera movements such as pan, tilt, zoom, and truck; and compositional principles including the rule of thirds, golden mean area,

[26] Sana Hussan, "A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI FILM POSTERS: A CULTURAL AND NARRATIVE EXPLORATION," Policy Journal of Social Science Review, June 25, 2026, 5, https://policyjssr.com/index.php/PJSSR/article/view/1095.

[27] Faras Bagas Indratha Indratha and Dewi Candraningrum, "Analysis of Optimism Values in Hazel's Grace the Fault in Our Stars Movie," English Teaching Journal A Journal of English Literature Language and Education 12, no. 2 (December 24, 2024), https://doi.org/10.25273/etj.v12i2.21604.

diagonal depth, and cinematic continuity. Each element can direct viewers' attention in a different way. Its meaning, however, must be interpreted in the context of the scene rather than inferred from a technical definition alone.

The analysis follows descriptive and interpretive stages. The descriptive stage identifies observable features, including camera distance, viewing angle, camera movement, the position of characters within the frame, and the relationship between characters and their surroundings. The interpretive stage then considers how these features may contribute to viewers' understanding of optimism. This distinction helps prevent interpretation from being presented as visual fact: description specifies what is visible, whereas interpretation explains the possible meaning of those features in their narrative context.

Relevant scenes include the protagonist's attempts to find employment, participation in an educational selection process, work undertaken to meet her needs, the promotion of products or services, the development of professional relationships, and decisions concerning economic opportunities. These sequences are treated as clusters of actions related to the dimensions of optimism. Because the available material does not provide complete technical notes for every shot, this article does not assign a specific shot size, camera movement, or compositional pattern to an individual scene unless adequate evidence is available.

To improve analytical traceability, future research could use a scene-coding sheet containing timecodes, descriptions of actions, significant dialogue, shot size, camera angle, camera movement, composition, the relevant dimension of optimism, and the rationale for each interpretation. Such documentation would enable readers to distinguish primary visual data from the researcher's interpretation. It would also facilitate comparisons across scenes and reduce the risk of selecting examples solely because they support an initial conclusion.

The five dimensions of optimism used in this article follow the classification adopted in the original discussion: high expectations, the ability to motivate oneself, the ability to find ways to achieve goals, self-confidence, and the refusal to remain passive. This article relates these dimensions to the general functions of cinematography and to findings explicitly reported in the abstract and conclusion of the earlier study. The scenes identified in that study include Merry's arrival in

Singapore, her request for Alfa to act as a guarantor, her search for employment, a student admission test, distributing brochures, working in a factory, selling a laptop, joining a multi-level marketing (MLM) business, investing in the stock market, communicating with prospective clients, and monitoring the stock market while attending classes.

An important limitation concerns the source material. The earlier study available for the preparation of this article contains its introduction, theoretical discussion, methodology, conclusion, and bibliography, but does not include the complete scene-by-scene analysis from its findings chapter. Accordingly, this article does not specify shot sizes, camera movements, or compositional choices for individual scenes when those details cannot be verified from the available material. The scene descriptions are used as a thematic map drawn from the earlier study's contents, while the conclusions concerning the predominance of eye-level framing and the contribution of varied shots are based on that study's stated conclusions. This limitation is made explicit to avoid presenting unverifiable reconstruction as empirical observation.

B. Cinematography as a Visual Language for Da'wah

In this article, the term visual language of da'wah functions as an analytical framework, not as a claim that every inspirational film automatically constitutes Islamic da'wah. A message can be interpreted from a da'wah perspective when the researcher demonstrates a defensible relationship between audiovisual form, the values represented, and their relevance to the communication of values.[28] In the film examined here, optimism is interpreted in terms of perseverance, ikhtiar , the capacity to organize goals, and the willingness to continue acting in the face of obstacles. This is an analytical interpretation of the earlier study's findings, not evidence that the filmmakers deliberately designed every camera technique as a symbol of da'wah.[29]

[28] Eti Efrina et al., "DAKWAH DAN SINEMA: INTERPRETASI NILAI-NILAI ISLAM DALAM FILM MIMPI ANANDA RAIH SEMESTA," JOISCOM (Journal of Islamic Communication) 6, no. 1 (April 30, 2025): 17–26, https://doi.org/10.36085/joiscom.v6i1.8100.

[29] Ahmad Jum'a Khatib Nur Ali and Mohammad Siddiq, "Narrative and Semiotic Analysis on Hajj and Social Issues in Mecca I'm Coming Movie," Lingua Cultura 17, no. 2 (November 20, 2023): 210, https://doi.org/10.21512/lc.v17i2.10202.

Instead, the visual choices examined here are read as contributing to the film's overall communicative effect, whose religious significance depends on how viewers connect the portrayed actions with values such as tawakkal and perseverance.[30] Such an interpretation remains provisional, because the visual evidence is read through the scenes described in the earlier study rather than through a complete shot-by-shot record, and it therefore depends on the viewer's interpretive engagement with the narrative as much as on the cinematic technique itself. Accordingly, the analysis treats cinematography not as an independent source of religious meaning but as one component of a broader communicative process in which narrative, characterization, and dialogue jointly shape how viewers perceive the values being portrayed.[31]

1. Optimism as a Narrative Process

Optimism in film can be understood as a narrative process that develops through a sequence of problems, decisions, efforts, and changing circumstances. In Merry Riana's story, hope does not arise in a vacuum. The protagonist moves to a new environment and must find ways to sustain herself. The scenes identified in the earlier discussion show this struggle through several kinds of activity: seeking employment, taking part in an educational selection process, distributing brochures, trying different kinds of work, selling a laptop, exploring investment opportunities, and contacting prospective clients. This sequence presents optimism as an active process rather than merely an inner attitude expressed through dialogue.[32] Within this sequence, each setback and each attempt to respond to it contributes to a gradual construction of the protagonist's resilience, so that optimism is shown through what she does across time rather than through declarations of confidence alone. Each episode therefore functions as a small test of the protagonist's commitment, and the accumulation of

[30] Adib Joko Mahendro, "TEKNIK SINEMATOGRAFI DALAM MENGGAMBARKAN PESAN TAWAKKAL PADA FILM DOKUMENTER "DOLANAN KEHIDUPAN" (2018), https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/32655/.

[31] Fauziah Hassan et al., "Portraying Islamic Values in 'Bisik Pada Langit' and 'Adiwiraku Films,'" MIMBAR Jurnal Sosial Dan Pembangunan 36, no. 2 (December 21, 2020): 8, https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v36i2.6317.

[32] Dimo Dimov, "From 'Opportunity' to Opportunity: The Design Space for Entrepreneurial Action," Journal of Business Venturing Design 1 (July 1, 2021): 100006, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbvd.2021.100002.

these tests gives the film its sense of gradual, earned hope rather than sudden or unexplained optimism. This pattern of incremental effort also clarifies why the five dimensions of optimism can be treated as analytically distinct yet narratively interlinked, since high expectations, self-motivation, goal-directed planning, self-confidence, and the refusal to remain passive tend to surface in different scenes but reinforce one another across the film's sequence of events.

Narrative arrangement matters because a single scene may not be sufficient to establish a message of optimism. A job-search scene, for example, acquires fuller meaning when placed within a sequence of attempts, obstacles, and subsequent efforts. At the narrative level, repeated attempts can signify perseverance. At the visual level, variations in framing can distinguish situations, clarify the protagonist's relationship with her environment, and organize the viewer's attention. It is the relationship between narrative and visual form that enables viewers to interpret struggle as a process. In the same way, the cumulative arrangement of shots allows the audience to recognize that each attempt builds upon the last, so that the protagonist's persistence becomes legible as a sustained moral commitment rather than a series of isolated events. In this sense, the film's optimism is not presented as a finished state of mind but as an ongoing practice that the protagonist must renew each time circumstances threaten to undermine her resolve.

Optimism should not, however, be equated with a guarantee that every effort will result in success. A more cautious interpretation understands it as the capacity to keep directing one's actions towards a goal while confronting uncertainty. A film may communicate this value through a character's decision to try again, consider alternatives, or accept responsibility. In communication terms, the message of optimism becomes more persuasive when supported by concrete actions within the narrative rather than by motivational dialogue alone.

2. Shot Size: Directing Attention to Effort and Emotion

Shot size determines how close viewers are positioned to a subject or character. A long shot allows viewers to see the character's body and the space in which the character is situated. It can establish the surrounding environment, distance, or the

character's position within a particular situation. In a migration narrative, the relationship between the protagonist and her surroundings may be significant because an unfamiliar environment forms part of the challenge she must confront.[33] Without examining the relevant film frames, however, it would be inappropriate to claim that a particular scene uses a long shot for a specific purpose.

A medium shot balances a character's gestures with the surrounding context, whereas a close-up places the face or a reaction at the centre of attention. Close-ups and big close-ups can generally intensify attention to expressions of uncertainty, tension, determination, or other emotional states. Shot selection can therefore influence how viewers engage with a character's experience. When a sequence depicts failure followed by renewed effort, changes in shot size may help distinguish shifts in mood and emotional response.

The earlier study indicates that variation in shot size is one of the elements that contributes to the communication of optimism. This finding is significant because it suggests that a film's message depends not only on what happens in the story but also on how events are presented. Variations in framing can sustain visual dynamism and help viewers identify relevant details. Nevertheless, shot size does not have a single, invariant meaning. A close-up does not automatically signify optimism; its meaning depends on the character's expression, the scene's context, and its position within the larger narrative. Accordingly, the communicative force of a given framing choice must be assessed in relation to the surrounding sequence, since the same shot scale may reinforce perseverance in one scene and heighten vulnerability in another.[34]

3. Camera Angle and the Impression of Equality

Camera angle shapes the viewing position from which audiences encounter characters. A high angle places the camera above the subject, whereas a low angle frames the subject from below. An eye-level angle positions the camera approximately in line with the character's eyes. These are not merely technical variations; they can

[33] Olli Hellmann, "Difficult Public History and National Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand: A Narrative Approach to Museum Analysis," Nationalities Papers 54, no. 1 (May 23, 2025): 211, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2025.22.

[34] Katalin Bálint, Thomas Klausch, and Tibor Pólya, "Watching Closely," Pure Amsterdam UMC 30, no. 3 (August 26, 2016): 158, https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000189.

influence impressions of relationships, pressure, authority, and proximity. Such effects remain context-dependent: camera angles must be interpreted alongside facial expressions, movement, dialogue, and relationships among characters. Within this framework, an eye-level angle tends to suggest a relationship of parity between viewer and character, while a low angle can lend the subject an air of authority or power, as sources on formal film features indicate that shooting actors from a lower angle conveys that they appear powerful.[35] Conversely, a high angle tends to diminish the subject, creating an impression of vulnerability or subordination, which may be useful for depicting moments in which the protagonist's confidence is strained. Such a framing therefore operates less as a neutral record of events than as an interpretive cue that shapes how viewers judge the protagonist's standing at a given point in the narrative.[36]

One finding explicitly reported in the earlier study's conclusion is the predominance of eye-level angles. The earlier researcher interpreted this tendency as creating an impression of equality among the characters, allowing viewers to encounter the idea that everyone has an equal right to pursue success. This finding offers an interesting reading: the protagonist is not consistently presented from an angle that places her above or below others, but rather from a relatively level viewing position.

This impression of equality may support the message that success is not reserved exclusively for people who already occupy privileged positions. A character facing hardship can still be represented as an agent capable of acting and making decisions. This interpretation should not, however, be extended into a claim that the film entirely eliminates social or economic inequalities. Eye-level framing is a visual strategy; broader claims about social meaning must be assessed against the narrative as a whole and its wider context.

[35] Hui-Yin Wu et al., "Thinking Like a Director," Institutional Research Information System (University of Udine) 14, no. 4 (October 23, 2018): 4, https://doi.org/10.1145/3241057.

[36] Hui-Yin Wu, "Propriétés du discours de la caméra virtuelle," HAL (Le Centre pour la Communication Scientifique Directe) (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, October 7, 2016), 28, https://theses.hal.science/tel-01491029.

4. Camera Movement and Visual Continuity

Camera movement can direct the viewer's gaze, follow an action, or connect objects and spaces. A pan moves the camera horizontally, a tilt moves it vertically, a zoom changes the lens's field of view, and a truck shot involves the lateral movement of the camera itself. Purposeful movement can connect visual information and help viewers follow the progression of an action. In a film depicting a protagonist who continually searches for opportunities, visual continuity can help present a series of activities as parts of a single journey rather than as disconnected fragments.

Camera movement does not need to be frequent or conspicuous to communicate meaning. A relatively static camera can also focus attention on a character's actions and expressions. What matters is the relationship between the chosen movement and the requirements of the scene. Movement without a narrative motivation may instead distract viewers. The earlier study's conclusion treats camera movement as one supporting element alongside shot size, camera angle, and composition. This indicates that no single technique operates in isolation.

The concept of cinematic continuity is also relevant to the interpretation of optimism. Clear continuity helps viewers understand the relationships among actions, changes in circumstances, and transitions from one stage of effort to the next. In a story about struggle, the legibility of a sequence of actions is important: perseverance should not appear as a series of disconnected incidents. Viewers need to be able to follow what the protagonist does, what obstacles she encounters, and how she responds to them. Such continuity allows the sequence of efforts to be read as a coherent narrative of persistence, in which each setback is connected to the next attempt rather than standing alone. In this sense, the sequence functions as an argument about endurance, since the visual grammar of the film makes continuity itself a vehicle for conveying that persistence is meaningful rather than merely repetitive. Such an approach also reflects the broader view that continuity editing conventions were developed so that viewers could integrate separate shots into a single, uninterrupted spatial and temporal experience.[37] In this respect, the POV shot

[37] Tim J. Smith, Daniel T. Levin, and James E. Cutting, "A Window on Reality," Current Directions in Psychological Science 21, no. 2 (March 20, 2012): 109, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721412437407.

illustrates how viewers bridge discontinuous images, since they infer a shared moment from two separate views of a character and an object.[38] Such inferences rely on the schema-based integration that allows viewers to perceive separate shots as parts of a single scene, since the meaning of the second image depends on what the first has already established. [39]

5. Composition: Organizing the Viewer's Attention

Composition organizes the placement of visual elements within the frame. The rule of thirds can position points of interest in particular areas of the image; the golden mean area can be used to emphasize a face or detail; diagonal depth can create a sense of spatial depth; and visual continuity can maintain relationships across successive images. Composition makes an image more than a mere recording of an event. It determines which elements become prominent, which remain in the background, and how viewers relate characters to their surroundings. Within this arrangement, the same compositional choices that establish spatial relations also shape the viewer's sense of which gaze, action, or expression deserves attention, so that a character's eyeline and position in the frame can direct inference about what she is thinking or feeling.[40]

In the communication of optimism, composition can be interpreted as a means of directing attention towards actions that matter to the protagonist's journey. Viewers may be guided to notice an expression, an object involved in an action, or the relationship between a character and the surrounding environment. Such interpretations must, however, be grounded in an examination of the actual frames in the film. This article therefore does not claim that the rule of thirds or diagonal depth is used in a particular scene without verifiable visual evidence. Likewise, the analysis of composition in this study is limited to the framing and placement of elements that can be identified across the sampled sequences, and any generalization beyond those

[38] Sermin Ildırar and Louise Ewing, "Revisiting the Kuleshov Effect with First-Time Viewers," Projections 12, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 7, https://doi.org/10.3167/proj.2018.120103.

[39] Ed S. Tan, "A Psychology of the Film," Palgrave Communications 4, no. 1 (June 28, 2018): 5, https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0111-y.

[40] Samuel Cumming et al., "Showing Seeing in Film," Ergo an Open Access Journal of Philosophy 7, no. 0 (October 22, 2021): 1, https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.1124.

sequences is treated as a hypothesis for further testing rather than as a established finding.

Composition is also related to negative space and visual density. A character positioned within a large open space may appear small in relation to the environment, but this impression does not necessarily indicate weakness. In some contexts, the space may emphasize the scale of the challenge the character faces. Conversely, a crowded frame may suggest pressure, restricted options, or the number of demands requiring a response. The meaning of composition must therefore be related to the narrative's development rather than determined by a single visual feature.

The relationship between characters and surrounding objects can also generate meaning. Work materials, documents, telephones, computer screens, and study spaces may function as markers of activity and purpose. Objects should not, however, be assigned excessive symbolic meaning when the narrative provides insufficient support. Responsible compositional analysis connects what is visible to the context of the scene and presents interpretation as a plausible reading that can be examined, rather than as an exclusive or definitive meaning.

The discussion indicates that image composition is among the supporting elements that help viewers recognize the message of optimism. This finding confirms that visual form contributes to the process of meaning-making. Deliberate composition can make a scene easier to read and guide viewers' attention, but the communication of a message is also influenced by plot, acting, editing, dialogue, and viewers' knowledge and experience. Adequate cinematographic analysis must therefore avoid isolating one element from the film's overall structure.

C. Five Dimensions of Optimism and Their Audiovisual Communication

1. High Expectations: Keeping a Future in View

High expectations refer to the ability to maintain a desired goal even when present circumstances are unfavourable. In the earlier study's contents, this dimension is examined through scenes depicting Merry's arrival in Singapore, her request for Alfa to act as a guarantor, and her attempts to find employment and secure new work.

These scenes place hope within conditions of uncertainty: the protagonist must establish a life in a new environment and seek access to the resources she needs.

At the audiovisual level, hope may emerge from the relationship between a character's actions and the direction of the narrative. Viewers see that the protagonist does not simply remain within her present circumstances but acts towards a desired future. Variations in shot size and the organization of space may help connect the initial situation with the efforts that follow. Claims about the specific techniques used in each scene, however, require detailed visual data. On the basis of the earlier study's conclusion, the defensible general finding is that variations in shot framing contribute to the communication of hope. Such findings suggest that hope in cinema is conveyed less through any single technique than through the coordinated relationship between framing, character action, and narrative progression.[41] Such a pattern suggests that hope is less a property of isolated shots than an effect produced by the viewer's inferential engagement with a sequence, in which later images acquire meaning from what has already been established.[42] This sense of inferential accumulation is consistent with the view that film viewers actively construct meaning from formal features, since small variations in framing can prompt different interpretations of a character's mental state.[43]

2. Self-Motivation: Turning Intention into Action

Self-motivation emphasizes the impetus to act in response to challenges. The story includes scenes in which Merry takes a university admission test and works distributing brochures as examples of this dimension. Although these activities occur in different contexts, both can be read as actions requiring the protagonist's active involvement in pursuing a future. The motivational message does not arise merely because the protagonist has aspirations, but because those aspirations are accompanied

[41] Naglaa Elgammal et al., "Environmental Documentaries and the Climate Crisis: A Multidimensional Thematic Analysis," Frontiers in Communication 11 (August 19, 2026): 3, https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2026.1864985.

[42] Maarten Coëgnarts, "The Predictive Embodied Mind: A Case-Based Encounter with Film Aesthetics," Frontiers in Neuroscience 19 (June 30, 2025): 1583118, https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2025.1583107.

[43] Katalin Bálint, Janine Nadine Blessing, and Brendan Rooney, "Shot Scale Matters: The Effect of Close-up Frequency on Mental State Attribution in Film Viewers," Poetics 83 (July 29, 2020): 101492, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2020.101480.

by action. Such action, even when modest in scale, gives the viewer concrete evidence that the protagonist's intention is being translated into effort, and it is in this movement from desire to conduct that the film's motivational dimension is most visibly articulated.

For viewers, concrete actions are more readily associated with effort than abstract statements. Cinematography can emphasize an activity, an emotional response, or a character's interaction with others. Clear visual presentation also helps viewers understand what is at stake in a particular action. In this way, cinematography supports the interpretation of self-motivation by making the process visible. This article does not assign specific shot types to these two scenes because the complete visual analysis is not available in the material examined. Accordingly, the following discussion of self-motivation treats the relationship between action and visual emphasis as a general pattern to be tested in subsequent work, rather than as a description of the specific framing choices in these scenes.

3. Finding Ways to Achieve Goals: Optimism as Adaptation

The third dimension concerns the ability to find ways to achieve one's goals. The sequence of scenes associated with this dimension includes searching for employment, seeking work in a factory, selling a laptop, joining an MLM business, and investing in the stock market. This sequence suggests that the protagonist explores several possible routes when confronted with constraints. Optimism, in this sense, is closely related to adaptation: the goal is maintained, but strategies may change in response to opportunities and obstacles.

This interpretation also prevents optimism from being reduced to an attitude of unwavering confidence. A person can remain optimistic while recognizing that an initial approach may fail. A film can represent the search for alternatives through changes in actions and situations. At the narrative level, varied efforts indicate that the protagonist remains actively engaged with her circumstances. At the visual level, variations in shot size and continuity between scenes may help viewers understand these changes in strategy, consistent with the earlier study's general finding concerning the role of cinematographic techniques in communicating the message.

From a narrative perspective, the search for solutions reveals the relationship between goals and strategic adjustment. The protagonist does not simply repeat the same effort; she moves among the options available to her. The transition from one job to another, or from one income-generating activity to a different one, suggests that perseverance and flexibility can coexist. In other words, optimism is not synonymous with stubbornness. It may involve reassessing circumstances and remaining willing to learn about alternative possibilities.

Nevertheless, the film's representation of struggle should not be treated as a universal guide to overcoming economic hardship. Opportunities, social networks, access to education, market conditions, and environmental support are not distributed equally. A story that emphasizes individual effort risks obscuring structural factors if interpreted without context. The message of optimism is therefore better understood as encouragement to act within constraints, not as an accusation that people who have not succeeded must have failed to make sufficient effort.

This article does not present every action taken by the protagonist as practical advice for viewers. In particular, actions involving investment or membership in a business should be understood as elements of the film's narrative, not as financial recommendations. The value examined here is the effort to find solutions and adapt strategies; the suitability of any particular choice in real life requires a separate assessment.

4. Self-Confidence: Becoming an Active Subject

Self-confidence concerns an individual's belief in their capacity to act and engage with others. In the earlier study, this dimension is discussed through scenes in which Merry appears before her peers, invests in a company identified in the contents as "Airlanes," and communicates with prospective clients. These scenes shift the focus from individual effort towards situations that require the protagonist to present herself, make decisions, or interact with other people. Such interactions make visible the protagonist's willingness to be evaluated by others, and in doing so they position self-confidence not as an inner state alone but as a relational practice that is enacted, tested, and reinforced through social exchange. Within this framework, self-confidence

emerges as a dynamic capacity that varies with the social setting, since the protagonist's assurance when presenting to peers may differ markedly from her composure when negotiating with prospective clients or committing financial resources to an uncertain venture.

Self-confidence can be represented in film through gestures, facial expressions, speech, and the character's relationship with the people she encounters. The camera can direct attention to the protagonist's reactions as well as to the responses of her interlocutors. The reported predominance of eye-level framing may be interpreted as supporting an impression of relatively equal relationships, allowing the protagonist to appear as an interacting subject rather than merely an object of observation. Nevertheless, claims about effects on viewers must be distinguished from reception data: visual analysis can explain potential meanings, but it cannot by itself establish how every viewer responds to a film. Accordingly, the interpretation offered here should be read as a hypothesis about textual meaning that invites empirical testing, particularly through audience studies that examine how gendered narratives of confidence and entrepreneurship are interpreted across different viewers.[44] Such studies would also clarify whether the film's depiction of self-confidence is read as empowering, aspirational, or ideologically constraining by audiences with different social and economic backgrounds. Such findings would also help determine whether the film's emphasis on personal assurance functions as a resource for women navigating precarious labour markets, or whether it primarily reproduces individualised expectations that place the burden of economic resilience on the individual.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that cinematography plays an important role in constructing and communicating the representation of optimism in *Merry Riana: Mimpi Sejuta Dolar*. Through variations in shot size, camera angles, camera movement, and visual composition, the film presents optimism not merely as an abstract psychological attitude but as a value reflected in perseverance, self-motivation, confidence, goal-

[44] Layla Branicki, Elizabeth King, and Kate Norbury, "Joy and the Mop: The Role of Film in Doing and Undoing Gender in Entrepreneurship," Gender Work and Organization 30, no. 6 (June 24, 2023): 1960–79, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.13031.

oriented action, and the willingness to overcome difficulties. The use of eye-level framing also suggests a visual relationship of relative equality among characters. These findings demonstrate that cinematography functions not only as a technical component of filmmaking but also as a visual language capable of conveying values relevant to da'wah communication. From the perspective of Islamic communication, the representation of optimism in the film can be understood in relation to *ikhtiar*, perseverance, and hope. These values illustrate how audiovisual narratives may provide a medium for communicating messages that encourage individuals to remain active, persistent, and hopeful when facing life's challenges. Nevertheless, the interpretation presented in this study concerns the meanings constructed within the film text and does not establish how audiences actually receive or respond to those messages. Further research could expand this discussion by examining other Indonesian films with religious, social, or motivational themes, as well as comparing cinematographic techniques across different genres. Audience reception studies would also be valuable to investigate how viewers interpret and negotiate the values of optimism conveyed through cinematic language. Such research could strengthen the understanding of film as a medium of da'wah and contribute to the development of visual approaches in Islamic communication studies.

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