



## Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Family Conflict in the Film Home Sweet Loan

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**Abstract:** This study examines the representation of family conflict in the film *Home Sweet Loan* using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. Family conflict is understood as an unavoidable social reality, often triggered by unequal role distribution, miscommunication, and economic pressure. The film *Home Sweet Loan* was chosen as the object of analysis because it portrays the emotional struggles of Kaluna, a young woman who faces various forms of domestic tension, including unequal household responsibilities, financial burdens stemming from her brother's debt, and limited personal space in her extended family home. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method through close observation of seven selected scenes, which were analyzed using Peirce's triadic model consisting of representamen, object, and interpretant. The findings reveal that the film represents three categories of family conflict as classified by Joseph A. Devito: role conflict, resource conflict, and communication conflict. Imbalanced expectations, competition over limited family resources, and unilateral decision-making create emotional strain that shapes the narrative trajectory. Visual signs and symbolic elements in the film effectively illustrate Kaluna's psychological burden and the unequal distribution of familial roles. The study concludes that *Home Sweet Loan* serves not only as entertainment but also as a form of social reflection, emphasizing the importance of open communication, empathy, and fairness in maintaining harmony within the family.

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## INTRODUCTION

Realizing a harmonious family is the desire of every individual. Family relationships are reflected through interactions filled with expressions of affection, mutual support, collaboration among family members, and a high intensity of togetherness. However, family conflict is an unavoidable aspect of family life. Conflict can be understood as a form of disagreement or clash of interests between two or more parties. In this context, the term “quarrel” is often used as a synonym for interpersonal conflict within the family.

According to [kompasiana.com](http://kompasiana.com), conflict between siblings is common in many Indonesian families, both in upper-middle-class and lower-middle-class households. Family conflicts may arise from various factors such as differences in personality, jealousy over parental treatment, or discrepancies in attention. Examples of minor conflicts include arguments between siblings due to differing perceptions or perceived unfairness at home, while major conflicts may involve inheritance disputes.

Sibling conflict can significantly affect the family, causing household turmoil, communication difficulties, and even negative impacts on mental health. Such conflict may begin in childhood and continue into adulthood, and if unresolved with effective communication, can become prolonged.

In the context of family relationships, interpersonal conflict is not something that can be completely eliminated; rather, it is often seen as an inevitable consequence of social interactions within family life. Muslichah & Hilman state that conflict within a family is characterized by tension and disputes. Triggers of family conflict include a lack of affection and attention from parents, which may make it difficult for children to develop their identity. Another trigger is misunderstandings that occur during verbal communication between parents and children (Lia Estiastuti, 2021).

Joseph A. DeVito, in *The Interpersonal Communication Book* (Joseph A. DeVito, 2016), discusses conflicts in interpersonal communication, including those that occur within families. According to DeVito, conflict is a condition in which two or more people are interdependent but possess different and opposing goals, needs, values, or desires, resulting in tension.

In the family context, DeVito classifies conflicts into five categories based on their sources or causes: 1. Values Conflict – arising from differences in beliefs, moral views, or life principles among family members. 2. Role Conflict – occurring when expectations of a family member's role are unmet or overlap. 3. Goal Conflict – happening when family members pursue different or opposing goals. 4. Communication Conflict – caused by errors in sending or receiving messages, differences in communication styles, or poor listening skills. 5. Resource Conflict – emerging from competition over limited resources such as money, time, attention, or household facilities.

Film, as a medium of audiovisual communication, functions as a combination of message delivery through moving images, the use of camera technology, color, and sound. These elements are supported by a storyline containing messages that the director intends to convey to the audience (Susanto, 2022).

Film, or cinema, is literally derived from the term cinematography, which originates from the Greek words *phōtos* (light) and *graphē* (writing or image). It refers to the art and process of creating moving images through light, mediated by the use of a camera. Thus, film can be understood as a visual medium that constructs motion and meaning through the manipulation of light (Ike Desi Florina, 2024).

Based on the researcher's preliminary study, several films in Indonesia carry family themes, such as *Sabtu Bersama Bapak* (2016), *Cek Toko Sebelah* (2016), *Keluarga Cemara* (2018), *Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini* (2019), *Gara-Gara Warisan* (2022), and the more recent *Home Sweet Loan* (2024). Specifically for *Home Sweet Loan*, the researcher aims to examine the family conflicts portrayed in the film.

Directed by Sabrina Rochelle Kalangie, this film is adapted from a novel of the same title by Almira Bastari. Its storyline reflects the dynamics of urban life, filled with typical metropolitan social conflicts. These external tensions become more complex when aggravated by the family conflicts experienced by the main character, intensifying her longing for emotional stability and her personal dream of owning an ideal home.

The film centers on Kaluna, played by Yunita Siregar, an office worker from a modest family who dreams of owning her own house. As the youngest child, she lives with her parents, married siblings, and nieces/nephews, making the house feel crowded and often disrupting her comfort.

Within her family environment, Kaluna frequently experiences complex tensions among family members. She feels marginalized within her own household and is often treated differently by her married siblings, as though her role is merely that of a housekeeper. Household burdens are disproportionately placed upon her. The peak of conflict occurs when Kaluna's family faces severe financial pressure, worsened by her brother Kanendra's involvement in a property fraud scheme. Kanendra accrues significant debt due to online loans and uses the family home certificate as collateral.

Placed in a difficult situation, Kaluna is torn between holding onto her dream of owning a proper home earned through her hard work, or staying loyal to her family's collective needs. This internal conflict ultimately drives her to make the drastic decision to leave home in search of peace and personal freedom.

After spending some time living apart from her family, Kaluna still fails to attain complete inner peace, as her mind remains burdened by the deteriorating condition of her family. Through a deep process of reflection, Kaluna ultimately decides to sacrifice herself by paying off the debts left by Kanendra, as a moral responsibility for the house that had served as her living space from childhood to adulthood. This decision is also driven by her profound empathy for the suffering endured by both of her parents due to Kanendra's actions. With great sacrifice, Kaluna gives up all the savings she had accumulated for her future.

However, her father chooses a more drastic option — selling the family house as a means of settling the remaining debt, driven by guilt because Kaluna had often become the primary support during the family's financial crises. He also attempts to return Kaluna's savings as a form of restoring fairness within the family relationships.

This film presents a strong narrative portrayal of the ups and downs of life's struggles through the character of Kaluna. Screenwriter Almira Bastari and director Sabrina Rochelle Kalangie successfully depict the emotional and social dimensions of the protagonist in depth, while conveying moral messages about sacrifice, responsibility, and the search for meaning within a family space filled with conflict.

Thus, the urgency of thoroughly examining the semiotic elements in the film *Home Sweet Loan* becomes significant in revealing the underlying meanings and understanding the transformation of storytelling from literary work to cinema. This analytical approach is expected to encourage audiences to interpret the film not merely as a form of popular entertainment but also as a representational medium rich in reflective values, particularly regarding the dynamics of family conflict represented both implicitly and explicitly in the visual narrative of *Home Sweet Loan*.

Based on the conceptual explanation above, the researcher formulates the study entitled “*Semiotic Analysis of the Representation of Family Conflict in the Film Home Sweet Loan (Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Analysis)*”, which aims to explore how the use of signs and symbols in the film constructs the meaning of family dynamics and the internal conflicts that accompany them.

Through Peirce's semiotic approach, this research is expected to contribute to expanding audience understanding of the essence and complexities of family relationships, emphasizing the importance of conflict as a natural part of emotional and social growth within family groups. In addition, this study seeks to provide new perspectives on how cinema can represent real-life issues in a meaningful and communicative manner.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to obtain deep and comprehensive understanding. Accordingly, the research aims to reveal various representations and realities related to the dynamics of family conflict as mediated through the film *Home Sweet Loan* as the object of study, encompassing aspects of behavior, perception, and actions interpreted narratively through verbal descriptions based on a scientific approach. Descriptive qualitative research is defined as a method that describes and portrays existing phenomena—whether natural or human-made—by focusing on characteristics, qualities, relationships, or activities (Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, 2011).

This study examines the film *Home Sweet Loan* through the framework of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to analyze how meaning is constructed through signs. The analysis focuses on the relationship between the representamen as the sign form, the object as the referent, and the interpretant as the meaning generated within the film's narrative and visual structure. Originating from the Greek term *semeion* (meaning "sign"), semiotics emphasizes that signs enable representation, thought, and communication, as meaning arises through the interpretation of signs.

Semiotics explores how meaning is produced through interactions between signs and human knowledge. The application of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory is particularly relevant for film analysis, as it enables the interpretation of signs beyond their surface meanings to uncover underlying ideological dimensions. Peirce's semiotic framework classifies meaning through three interrelated elements: the sign, the object, and the interpretant (Sarwo Edy, 2024).

The researcher examines the film *Home Sweet Loan* through the lens of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to explore the process of meaning-making mediated by signs. This analysis includes mapping representamen as the form of the signifier, the interpretant as the result of interpretation, and the object as the referent indicated by the sign within the film's narrative and visual structure. According to Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of the triangle of meaning, "A sign is something or a capacity associated with a person. It also refers to a more developed symbol. A sign that is created becomes the interpretant of the first sign, which shows something called the object" (Fiske, 2007).

Within the theoretical framework developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, the concept of the triangle of meaning consists of three main elements: representamen, object, and interpretant. The representamen or sign is a form recognizable through two essential conditions: first, it must be perceptible either physically or through cognition and affect; and second, it must be able to represent something beyond itself. The object is the entity referred to by the sign, whether it exists mentally within the subject's mind or externally outside the sign system. The interpretant refers to the result of the semiosis process, which is the meaning or interpretation arising from the relationship between the representamen and the object within a particular context.

Data collection in this research utilizes both primary and secondary sources. The primary data are derived from the film *Home Sweet Loan* in video format, which serves as the main object of analysis. The visual content is segmented into scenes and examined in depth using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. To support this process, secondary data are gathered from various written references such as dictionaries, books, articles, and scientific journals, which help strengthen the interpretation of the primary data. The data collection technique applied is observation, whereby the researcher systematically observes narrative flow and scenes representing family conflict within the



film. All collected data are then analyzed using Peirce's semiosis framework, focusing on interpreting messages and symbolic meanings embedded within the visual and narrative structure of the film.


The data analysis technique applied in this study is semiotic analysis based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory. This approach is grounded in the triadic relationship among three main components—representamen (sign), object (referent), and interpretant (meaning). The analysis is conducted on audiovisual elements and dialogues in the film *Home Sweet Loan* that represent family conflict, with the aim of interpreting the meanings contained in each scene and uncovering symbolic messages present within the film's narrative structure.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION


As previously described, the results of this study were analyzed using three main components of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory: representamen (signs), objects (referents), and interpretants (interpretations of meaning). The researchers observed scenes depicting family conflict. During the analysis, they added visual elements in the form of still images as representamen containing semiotic content. Of the 15 scenes depicting family conflict, the researchers selected only seven for further analysis, as they align with Joseph A. DeVito's classification of three of the five types of family conflict, as cited in his book, *\*The Interpersonal Communication Book\** (Joseph A. DeVito, 2016): Role Conflict, Resource Conflict, and Communication Conflict. Each of these scenes is described through the construction of objects and interpretants within the film. The results of these observations are presented in the visualization below:


**Table 1.** There are two scenes that demonstrate role conflict.

Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	<p>Scene 1 (04 : 21) Kaluna feels other family members are not being initiative.</p>
<b>Object</b>	The scene shows Kaluna washing dishes, symbolizing the household workload often placed on one person—typically women. The dialogue “ <i>you didn’t think to help wash the dishes, did you?</i> ” reflects emotional tension, imbalance of domestic roles, and lack of initiative from other family members to share responsibilities.
<b>Interpretant</b>	Kaluna’s accumulated fatigue triggers frustration and dissatisfaction. The lack of awareness and responsibility from family members makes her feel emotionally and physically burdened.
<b>Result</b>	Classified as <b>role conflict</b> , aligning with DeVito’s theory that family conflict emerges when role expectations are unmet or overlapping.


Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	 <p>Scene 2 (1 : 02 : 31) Kaluna feels she is being used as protection for Kanendra's debt.</p>
<b>Object</b>	The debt symbolizes not only financial trouble but also moral and emotional burdens placed on Kaluna due to Kanendra's negligence. The dim, narrow room highlights pressure and intrusion into personal emotional space.
<b>Interpretant</b>	This scene reflects Kaluna's resistance against prolonged domination and unfair burdens. The line " <i>you are the one who owes money, why should I be the one paying it?</i> " symbolizes women's struggle for fairness and self-assertion within modern families.
<b>Result</b>	Another example of <b>role conflict</b> , consistent with DeVito's theory of unmet or overlapping family role expectations.


**Table 2.** There are 2 scenes that show resource conflicts.


Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	 <p>Scene 3 (14 : 40) Kaluna sleeps in the maid's room.</p>
<b>Object</b>	The maid's room symbolizes social status and marginalization within the household. Although still inside the same house, Kaluna is symbolically pushed out of the family's comfort zone.
<b>Interpretant</b>	Sleeping in the maid's room reflects sacrifice and inner conflict. The dim lighting and cramped space emphasize isolation and loss of dignity within an unequal family dynamic.
<b>Result</b>	Identified as <b>resource conflict</b> , involving competition or imbalance over limited resources—here, personal space.

Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	 <p>Scene 4 (1 : 02 : 06) Kanendra asks Kaluna to settle his loan debt.</p>
<b>Object</b>	The scene depicts online loan (pinjol) pressure and threats of losing the house certificate—symbolizing stability and family security. Debt affects not only the borrower but drags family members into unwanted responsibility.
<b>Interpretant</b>	Reflects how financial burdens damage family harmony and trigger moral dilemmas—helping a sibling vs. protecting one's own future.
<b>Result</b>	Categorized as <b>resource conflict</b> , aligned with DeVito's theory that conflicts arise over scarce resources such as money, space, or security.

**Table 3.** There is a scene that shows communication conflict.

Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	 <p>Scene 5 (12 : 10) Kaluna receives a phone call from her mother about being moved to the maid's room.</p>
<b>Object</b>	The conflict arises from unilateral decisions made without involving Kaluna. The room relocation symbolizes lack of personal space and hidden communication wounds within the family.
<b>Interpretant</b>	Dialogue such as “ <i>on the phone you said it was okay</i> ” illustrates meaning shifts and miscommunication. Small, uncoordinated decisions become sources of emotional conflict.
<b>Result</b>	Example of <b>communication conflict</b> , stemming from unclear messages and lack of mutual understanding.

Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	 <p>Scene 6 (23 : 46) Kaluna protests because her sister-in-law's child entered her room.</p>
<b>Object</b>	The bedroom represents personal territory. Its violation reflects weak boundaries and lack of respect for privacy in extended families.
<b>Interpretant</b>	The conflict is not just about noise or disturbance but symbolic disrespect for personal space, causing frustration and hidden resentment.
<b>Result</b>	Classified as communication conflict, driven by unspoken expectations and misunderstanding of personal boundaries.

Component	Description
<b>Sign</b>	 <p>Scene 7 (1 : 06 : 30) Kaluna leaves the house and cries at a bus stop at night.</p>
<b>Object</b>	This scene represents the culmination of emotional pressure—debt, expectations, and lack of understanding from her family. Her crying symbolizes the breaking of hope for a supportive home.
<b>Interpretant</b>	Her departure reflects self-protection and resistance against unhealthy family dynamics, not weakness. The scene conveys the emotional reality of many individuals trapped in toxic family patterns.
<b>Result</b>	Categorized as a <b>communication conflict</b> , consistent with DeVito's concept that miscommunication worsens interpersonal tension and escalates family conflict.

## CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the representation of family conflict in the film *Home Sweet Loan* using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach through qualitative descriptive methods. The results of the study indicate that this film represents three forms of family



conflict out of five forms of family conflict according to Joseph A. DeVito's theory, namely role conflict, resource conflict, and communication conflict. The mismatch of individual expectations and responsibilities, the struggle or imbalance in the use of resources, and differences in communication styles between family members as well as the lack of ability to listen empathetically, are the main sources of emotional tension in the story. Through visual signs and symbols, this film displays the social reality of modern families that are full of moral and emotional meaning. Thus, Home Sweet Loan not only functions as entertainment, but also as a reflective medium that emphasizes the importance of open communication, empathy, and role justice in maintaining family harmony.

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