

# Representation of Social Inequality in the Film Jakarta Vs Everybody

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## abstract


Urbanization in major cities such as Jakarta frequently results in heightened social inequality and economic segregation, further widening the gap between different societal groups. Jakarta vs Everybody portrays these urban challenges by depicting the harsh realities of city life through characters ensnared in crime and economic hardship. This study adopts a qualitative methodology, employing semiotic and discourse analysis to examine how the film represents social inequality in the context of urbanization. The findings reveal that the film effectively illustrates marginalization, social injustice, and economic segregation present in Jakarta. Specifically, it highlights disparities in access to opportunities and resources among various social groups, which drive the main characters toward a life of crime as a shortcut to survival. These results bolster existing theories of social and economic segregation in urbanized settings, demonstrating that inequality in large cities extends beyond economic factors and shapes broader social and cultural dynamics. The implications of this research underscore the need to address uneven urbanization, which exacerbates inequality and crime in big cities. The film serves not only as a medium for raising social awareness but also as a platform for provoking deeper discussions on spatial policies and social justice in urban environments. Consequently, this study contributes to the literature on the interaction between popular media and social issue representation in urban society.

## abstrak

Urbanisasi di kota-kota besar seperti Jakarta sering kali menyebabkan ketidaksetaraan sosial dan segregasi ekonomi yang semakin memperlebar kesenjangan antar kelompok masyarakat. Jakarta vs Everybody menggambarkan tantangan perkotaan ini dengan menampilkan realitas keras kehidupan kota melalui karakter yang terperangkap dalam dunia kejahatan dan kesulitan ekonomi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis semiotik dan wacana untuk mengkaji bagaimana film ini merepresentasikan ketidaksetaraan sosial dalam konteks urbanisasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa film ini secara efektif menggambarkan marginalisasi, ketidakadilan sosial, dan segregasi ekonomi yang terjadi di Jakarta. Secara khusus, film ini menyoroti perbedaan akses terhadap peluang dan sumber daya di antara berbagai kelompok sosial, yang mendorong karakter utama untuk mengambil jalan pintas melalui kehidupan kriminal demi bertahan hidup. Hasil ini mendukung teori tentang segregasi sosial dan ekonomi dalam konteks urbanisasi, yang menunjukkan bahwa ketidaksetaraan di kota-kota besar tidak hanya terjadi secara ekonomi, tetapi juga mempengaruhi dinamika sosial dan budaya secara lebih luas. Implikasi dari temuan ini menekankan pentingnya perhatian terhadap dampak urbanisasi yang tidak merata dalam meningkatkan ketidaksetaraan sosial dan kejahatan di kota-kota besar. Film ini tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat untuk meningkatkan kesadaran sosial, tetapi juga sebagai sarana yang dapat memicu diskusi lebih mendalam mengenai kebijakan tata ruang dan keadilan sosial di daerah perkotaan. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya literatur tentang hubungan antara media populer dan representasi isu sosial dalam masyarakat perkotaan.

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ACM Computing Classification System (CCS)

EBSCOhost

Communication and Mass Media Complete (CMMC)

## 1. Introduction

Social representation is an important social psychology concept involving shared beliefs and understandings within a society or group. Moscovici, a leading figure in this field, defines social representation as a form of social knowledge created by large groups to facilitate communication, understanding, and mastery of the social environment [1]. This representation is vital in minimizing interaction uncertainty and improving communication between individuals and groups [2]. These representations are dynamic and form the basis of social representation theory, also known as social knowledge theory [3]. This theory has been developed and applied in various contexts, including cultural studies, media, and mass communication [4]. In film studies, social representation is essential for analyzing how films reflect and shape society's perceptions of social issues.

As a medium of mass communication, the film functions as entertainment and a mirror of complex social realities. Previous research has highlighted the role of cinema in reproducing social reality and establishing social hierarchies in society [5]. Films have great potential to be an effective social awareness tool by raising issues such as social inequality, marginalization, and class conflict [6]. However, there are still gaps in the study of social representation in Indonesian films, especially in the context of urbanization and social dynamics in big cities like Jakarta.

This research focuses on the representation of social inequality in the film "Jakarta vs Everybody" using a qualitative approach through semiotic and discourse analysis. By examining how this film depicts social issues such as economic segregation, crime, and individualistic lifestyles, this research seeks to contribute to sociology and film studies. This study is relevant in understanding how visual media such as films can shape social awareness and people's views on complex social realities. Apart from that, this research also enriches the literature on social representation in popular media, especially in the context of film studies and sociology in Indonesia.

Although several studies have discussed the role of

films in reflecting social dynamics, this research offers a new perspective by highlighting social representation in the movie "Jakarta vs. Everybody" and how this film visualizes social inequality in Jakarta. This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by linking previous research findings to contemporary social dynamics in urban areas. Thus, this research contributes to the "state of the art" study of social representation, especially in the context of urban society in Indonesia. Film as a mass communication medium plays a significant role in forming, reflecting, and distributing social and cultural values. The role of films in reproducing social reality and influencing public consciousness is also emphasized in research that highlights how films shape social and moral hierarchies in society [7]. Through narrative, characters, and visualization, films not only function as mere entertainment but also as a mirror of complex social realities. In this context, films often represent various aspects of social life, including conflict, inequality, and cultural and identity dynamics.

Jakarta vs Everybody is an Indonesian film that explicitly depicts urban life in all its complexity. With the theme of the struggle for life amidst the harsh life of metropolitan Jakarta, this film highlights various social issues often hidden from public view, such as marginalization, social injustice, and the search for identity. Through solid characters and storyline, this film offers a critical view of the social realities urban communities face in Indonesia. Social representation in this film is the main focus of this research, where the film is seen as a reflection of the social dynamics that occur in the urban environment. In this study, social representation analysis will reveal how Jakarta vs Everybody depicts social reality, who is represented, and how this film influences the audience's perception of the issues raised. This study is essential to understand how film, as a popular medium, can affect social awareness and shape people's understanding of contemporary social issues.

## 2. Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach to analyze the social representations in the film Jakarta vs Everybody. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the complexity and

depth of meaning in cinema, especially in understanding how they depict and shape certain social realities. The two main methods used in this research are discourse analysis and semiotics. Discourse analysis examines how narrative, dialogue, visuals, and symbols in films play a role in forming social representations [8]. This method focuses on what is shown in the film and how social messages are conveyed through language choices, interactions between characters, and scene visualization. Through this analysis, researchers can identify how the film communicates specific ideas to its audience and how the audience might interpret and understand these messages in the context of their lives.

Apart from that, semiotic analysis is used to dig deeper into the hidden meanings in the visual and audio signs and symbols throughout the film. Semiotics help decipher how color, lighting, music, and certain visual symbols create complex and layered social representations [9]. For example, using cultural symbols or urban imagery in films can signal particular views about life in Jakarta, shaping the audience's perception of social issues.

The collected data was then analyzed using thematic and semiotic analysis methods. The thematic analysis method identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns (themes) that emerge in a data collection [10]. Thematic analysis helps reveal how social issues, such as inequality, marginalization, and segregation, are represented in film narratives. The analysis begins with the coding stage, a systematic method for organizing data by assigning labels or categories to each relevant element in the film, such as dialogue, visual symbols, setting, and character interactions.

This coding can be inductive, where categories or themes are determined based on emerging data, or deductive, where categories are predetermined based on a theoretical Framework [11]. This research used a combined approach, where initial categories were determined based on the concepts of social representation theory and previous studies on the representation of social inequality in films. Still, it remained open to adding new categories that emerged from the data.

The categories that have been identified are then analyzed further to find deeper patterns or relationships between various elements. For example, how specific dialogue depicts power dynamics or certain visual symbols reinforce messages about social stratification. This analysis helps understand the relationship between the representation of social inequality and urbanization issues, which are the film's primary focus. This connection is vital to illustrate how complex social realities in big cities like Jakarta are represented and how film as a medium plays a role in shaping audience perceptions of these issues.

Apart from thematic analysis, semiotic methods are used to explore the hidden meanings in the symbols and signs in the film. Semiotics, popularized by Roland Barthes, sees signs as a combination of signifiers and signifieds that form meaning [12]. In the context of this research, visual elements such as the use of color, lighting, and visual background are understood as aesthetics and social representations that have cultural and ideological meaning. For example, specific colors in a scene can represent social class, while lighting in a particular scene can reinforce the impression of power dynamics and subordination.

By combining thematic and semiotic analysis, this research identifies the main themes and patterns in the representation of social inequality and explores how these messages are conveyed implicitly through visual and narrative language. This approach allows research to provide a more prosperous and deeper understanding of social representation in film while showing how film can be a mirror for contemporary social issues. The data collection technique in this research involves participant observation, where researchers watch films carefully and systematically to note essential elements related to social representation [13]. The criteria for selecting certain scenes or elements are based on their relationship to the main themes of the research, namely social inequality, economic segregation, and criminal life. For example, scenes showing interactions between characters from different social classes or scenes depicting the dynamics of urban life are the main focus of observation. Apart from that, observations were made by paying attention to the social and cultural context behind the representation in the film.

In addition, literature studies are carried out to provide a broader context, including understanding the social, cultural, and historical background that influences the narrative and representation in the film. This literature study also reviews social representation theories and similar previous research, providing a solid theoretical framework for analysis. The film *Jakarta vs. Everybody* is the primary data source in this research because it directly highlights social issues relevant to urban life in Jakarta. The data that has been collected is then analyzed thematically. This thematic analysis allows researchers to identify the film's patterns, main themes, and social representations [14]. These themes are analyzed in the context of social representation theory to understand how this film depicts specific social issues and how these representations can influence the audience's perceptions and attitudes toward the social reality depicted. Thus, this research seeks not only to understand social representations in films but also to explore the impact and implications of these representations on broader society.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### *Results*

*Jakarta vs. Everybody* is an Indonesian drama film directed by Ertanto Robby Soediskam, which tells the story of the journey of a young man named Dom, played by Jefri Nichol, who comes to Jakarta with the dream of becoming an actor. However, the harsh realities of the capital city forced him to work as a drug courier after failing to achieve his dream in the world of acting. This film depicts how Dom, who is full of ambition, is trapped in a dark criminal world, accompanied by characters such as Pinkan (Wulan Guritno) and Radit (Ganindra Bimo), who increasingly lead him into the dark side of Jakarta. Set against the realistic backdrop of Jakarta, the film highlights the contrast between luxury and poverty and the dangerous nightlife. The main themes explored are life's struggles, dashed dreams, and the harsh realities of urban life, with a profound message about the importance of sticking to moral values even in difficult situations. Through solid characters and settings, *Jakarta vs Everybody* provides an in-depth look at the challenges faced by those trying to find their fortune in the big city. In the film *Jakarta*

*vs Everybody*, social representation can be seen through various aspects presented in the narrative and characters of the film. This film is entertaining and reflects the community groups living in Jakarta. One aspect of social representation that can be found in this film is through characters who represent specific values, attitudes, and social identities.

Research depicting masculinity through the character Dom in the film *Jakarta vs. Everybody* shows how this film represents the concept of masculinity in the context of the story presented [15]. The idea of masculinity in *Jakarta vs Everybody* can be explained through several related theories. This theory is supported by the concept of hegemonic masculinity by Connell (2005), which explains that dominant masculinity is often constructed as an ideal that is difficult for most men to achieve [16]. In the case of the character Dom, his identity crisis reflects a failure to live up to these ideal standards of masculinity. Besides that, Butler (1991), in his book *Gender Trouble*, introduces the concept of gender performativity, where gender is seen as a series of actions based on social expectations [17]. The masculinity portrayed by Dom can be analyzed using this concept, where his actions reflect social demands rather than his true identity. In studies of masculinity, Johnson & Hearn (2001) highlights how social pressure to display power and control often results in violence as an expression of masculinity [17]. The film depicts how Dom and other characters use violence as a response to social pressure.

Apart from characters, films can also represent other social aspects, such as social class. In the context of *Jakarta vs Everybody*, the representation of social class in Jakarta can also be a theme explained through narrative and visuals in the film. Apart from that, films can also represent social situations, ideological constructions, and power relations. The representation of power relations in sexual violence in films is also a research topic that highlights how films depict power dynamics in specific contexts. The film *Jakarta vs Everybody* highlights various aspects of social life in Jakarta, focusing on social inequality and the struggle for survival in the capital city. Some of the social representations raised in this film include:

### *Urbanization and Social Inequality*

In the film *Jakarta vs Everybody*, urbanization and social inequality are depicted through various representations of Jakarta's urban society, which is complex and full of dynamics. The film highlights the realities of life in the capital, where rapid urbanization has created an environment of high mobility, carefree lifestyles, and colorful nightlife. This picture reflects the reality of urbanization in Jakarta, where mobility and the desire to achieve prosperity are the main focus of urban society, but also give rise to various challenges, including inequality and social pressure. This film depicts social inequality through its characters, especially Dom, played by Jefri Nichol. Dom is a young man who comes to Jakarta with big dreams of becoming an actor, but the reality of living in a big city forces him to take a dangerous path as a drug courier. Dom's character reflects high ambition and the courage to face risks to achieve success, even though he has to take a dark and dangerous path. Through Dom's journey, this film highlights how social inequality affects individuals who strive to achieve their dreams amidst the harshness of urban life. This film also shows interactions between individuals of different social classes, which makes it clear that there is a gap between those at the top of the social pyramid and those struggling at the bottom. Social inequality is described through economic differences and access to opportunities, resources, and social support. Dom and the other characters in this film face the reality that success in a big city like Jakarta is often determined by social background and the ability to overcome various social and economic obstacles.

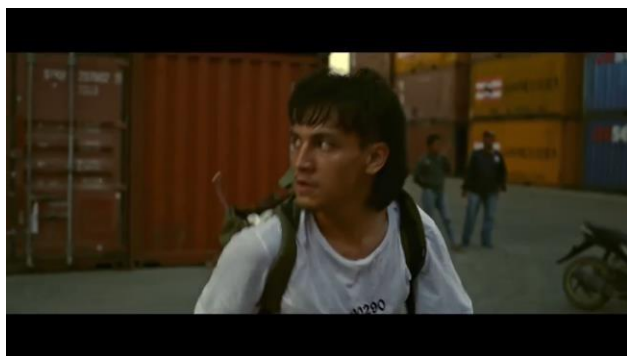


Figure 1. Urbanization and Social Inequality in the film *Jakarta vs Everybody*

Other research on social representation in films also shows that cinema can reflect social reality, including issues of inequality between social classes. *Jakarta vs Everybody*, an example of a contemporary Indonesian film, acts as a medium to convey and reflect existing social conditions, primarily related to urbanization and social inequality, which is increasingly evident in big cities like Jakarta. The film *Jakarta vs Everybody* highlights urbanization and social inequality, closely related to life in big cities like Jakarta. Urban growth theory from Wirth (2012) explains that big cities are centers of interaction between various social classes, triggering economic stratification and conflict [19], as shown in the movement of people from regions to big cities in this film. The dual economy theory of Boeke (1978) is also relevant, where the characters involved in illegal work reflect those marginalized from the formal economic sector [20]. Bourdieu (2006), in his book *Distinction*, emphasizes that social inequality is not only a matter of economics but also access to social and cultural capital [21]. This film depicts inequality through unequal access to opportunities and social networks in Jakarta. In addition, William Julius Wilson's urban underclass theory shows how marginalized groups in big cities experience social exclusion and structural poverty, as experienced by Dom and other characters in this film [22]. Through these theories, *Jakarta vs. Everybody* shows the impact of urbanization, which exacerbates social inequality, trapping many people in illegal work and living on the economic fringes of big cities.

### *Social and Economic Segregation*

In the film *Jakarta vs Everybody*, social and economic segregation can be seen through a complex representation of the life of urban Jakarta society. This film shows how social and economic segregation is reflected in the interactions between characters and the environment in Jakarta. One aspect of social segregation that can be found in this film is settlement based on the social and economic background of the characters. The characters in this film may be placed in an environment that reflects the social and economic disparities in Jakarta's urban society [23]. For example, characters representing different social classes can show how social segregation is reflected daily.





Figure 2. Social and Economic Segregation in the Film Jakarta vs Everybody

Apart from that, this film can also depict economic segregation through the activities and jobs of its characters. Characters representing various professions and economic backgrounds can show how economic inequality is reflected in the film's narrative [24]. Thus, this film reflects the social and economic segregation in Jakarta. Other research highlights how social and economic segregation can be reflected in urban communities' settlements and economic activities [25]. Analysis of extensive-scale residential spatial segregation can also provide insight into how social and economic segregation influences the spatial structure and interactions between individuals in urban contexts [26].

The theory of social and economic segregation (Manley, 2021) in Urban Socio-economic Segregation and Income Inequality states that rapid urbanization creates sharp divisions between socio-economic groups in cities [27]. In the film Jakarta vs Everybody, Jakarta is depicted as a segregated city where poor groups are marginalized in areas with limited access to resources. In spatial segregation, in theory, Tammaru *et al.* (2020) explain that urban segregation occurs due to economic and social factors that create isolated areas for groups with low economic status [28]. This film shows Jakarta as spatially divided between elite and marginalized groups. Jaczewska (2020), in the Handbook of Urban Segregation, highlights that social and economic segregation in big cities like Jakarta is exacerbated by unfair spatial planning policies [29], with Dom as an example of an individual trapped in limited social mobility. Mustard *et al.* (2017) add that groups in segregated areas tend to face restricted access to jobs, education, and services, creating a cycle of poverty

that is difficult to break, as experienced by the characters in this film [28].

### *Criminal Life*

In the film Jakarta vs Everybody, criminal life can be seen through the representation of characters involved in criminal activities amidst the complex urban life of Jakarta. This film shows how criminal life is reflected in the interactions between characters and how criminal activity influences social dynamics in Jakarta. One aspect of criminal life that can be found in this film is through the characters who are involved in criminal acts such as narcotics abuse, thuggery activities, and acts of violence. This representation reflects the reality of criminal life in a complex urban society, where some individuals are involved in detrimental and unlawful activities.



Figure 3. Criminal Life in the Film Jakarta vs Everybody

This film can also depict the demands that drive individuals to engage in criminal acts. Factors such as poverty, unstable social environments, and economic pressures can drive individuals to commit criminal acts to fulfill their needs. Other research highlights how films can reflect social realities, including criminal life in urban communities [30]. In the movie Jakarta vs Everybody, Dom's criminal life related to drug trafficking can be explained through several theories. Differential Opportunity Theory from Ohlin (1960), shows that Dom's involvement in drug trafficking is influenced by access and criminal networks in his environment [31]. Social Disorganization Theory of Sampson & Wilson (2005) emphasized that urban areas with low social order [32], such as poor areas in Jakarta, tend to facilitate the growth of criminal activity. The rational choice theory (Cornish & Clarke, 2016) is relevant in showing that

Dom chose to become a drug courier because of a rational calculation of the financial benefits compared to the risks. In addition, the Strain theory of Agnew (1999) explained that economic pressure and limited job opportunities pushed Dom and many others to get involved in the world of drugs to survive amidst the harshness of city life [33].

#### *Individualism and Free Lifestyle*

In *Jakarta vs Everybody*, individualism and a free lifestyle are key elements that encapsulate the complexity of Jakarta's urban society. The film clearly portrays how individualistic values and personal freedom shape the daily lives of the characters, reflecting the competitive nature of life in a bustling capital city. Through the characters' behaviors, the film demonstrates a focus on personal interests over collective well-being. This focus is particularly evident in the way the characters prioritize their individual success and ambitions, often at the expense of social solidarity.

Dom, the film's protagonist, exemplifies this individualistic mindset. His journey in the film highlights his relentless pursuit of personal achievement, in this case, his dream of becoming an actor. Dom's determination to succeed drives him to take significant risks, including entering the dangerous world of drug trafficking. His willingness to compromise ethical boundaries for personal gain illustrates how individualism can propel a person to take extreme actions to achieve success. Dom's choices reflect a broader commentary on how urban life fosters a sense of self-reliance, often forcing individuals to prioritize their personal goals over societal norms or moral considerations.

Additionally, the film portrays the free lifestyle that characterizes urban living in Jakarta. The characters lead lives unbound by traditional social constraints, frequently engaging in high-mobility activities and enjoying the freedom of the city's nightlife. This sense of freedom, while liberating for the characters, also comes at a cost. The film subtly critiques how prioritizing individual freedom in an urban environment can lead to social instability and disconnection. Characters like Dom, who pursue their desires without regard for collective consequences, highlight the tension between individual liberty and societal harmony.

The representation of a free lifestyle in *Jakarta vs Everybody* mirrors Jakarta's broader social dynamics, illustrating how the evolving values of urban society shape interpersonal interactions. As traditional norms lose their influence, the film suggests that individualism can disrupt social cohesion, leading to fractured relationships and a weakened sense of community. The characters' choices and interactions provide insight into the challenges of maintaining social order in a society where personal freedom is often prioritized over collective responsibility.



Figure 4. Free Lifestyle in the Film *Jakarta vs Everybody*

Other research shows that popular culture, including films, often reflects trends and values developing in society, such as individualism and free lifestyles. *Jakarta vs Everybody* functions as a medium that depicts social reality and provides a critical interpretation of the dynamics that occur in big cities. By examining how individualism and a carefree lifestyle are presented in the narrative and visuals of this film, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these values influence life in Jakarta and contribute to the formation of urban society's identity. Through this analysis, the film *Jakarta vs. Everybody* becomes a mirror for the audience to understand the impact of individualism and freedom in urban life and how these two things shape and direct social interactions in big cities like Jakarta.

#### *Discussion*

The results of the analysis of *Jakarta vs Everybody* reveal a comprehensive portrayal of urbanization and social inequality in Jakarta. The film emphasizes how rapid urbanization exacerbates social disparities, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals from different social backgrounds. The character Dom

exemplifies the effects of inequality, as his journey from aspiring actor to drug courier reflects the harsh realities of life in the city. The film illustrates how access to opportunities and resources is unevenly distributed, forcing marginalized individuals to resort to illegal means to survive. Urbanization plays a central role in the film, not just as a backdrop but as a driving force that deepens social stratification. The portrayal aligns with Wirth's (2012) theory of urban growth, which explains that cities become centers of economic stratification and conflict. The film's representation of social and economic segregation also reflects Bourdieu's (2006) concept of social capital, where unequal access to networks and opportunities reinforces inequality. Furthermore, the film's depiction of criminal life provides insight into the factors driving individuals toward illegal activities. Theories such as Differential Opportunity (Ohlin, 1960) and Social Disorganization (Sampson & Wilson, 2005) explain how individuals like Dom are influenced by their environment and limited access to legitimate opportunities. These frameworks show how economic pressure and social instability push marginalized individuals into criminal networks, a theme depicted in Dom's transformation throughout the film. Additionally, the film critiques the rise of individualism and a free lifestyle in Jakarta's urban society. Dom's character reflects the prioritization of personal ambition over social solidarity as he pursues his goals despite the ethical and social costs. This theme resonates with broader societal trends of individualism, where the pursuit of personal success often outweighs collective well-being. *Jakarta vs. Everybody* serves as both a reflection and critique of the social realities in Jakarta, shedding light on issues of urbanization, inequality, and individualism. The film illustrates the complex dynamics of city life and invites further discussion on how urban policies and social justice can address the growing disparities in large cities. The portrayal of these themes provides valuable insights into the social challenges urban societies face and reinforces the importance of equitable urban development.

#### 4. Conclusions

The social representation in the film "Jakarta vs Everybody" highlights how this film deeply reflects

the reality of urban life in Jakarta, with a strong emphasis on issues of social inequality, economic segregation and criminal life. This film not only provides a surface view of life in the capital, but also dives deeper into the complexities created by rapid and uneven urbanization. Jakarta's rapid urbanization produces a dynamic but tense social environment, where social status and economic background are the main determining factors in determining life opportunities and social interactions. The main characters, such as Dom, represent individuals trapped in the harsh realities of big city life, where they are forced to face various obstacles and temptations in their efforts to survive and pursue dreams that are increasingly out of reach. Based on the analysis of the representation of social inequality in the film *Jakarta vs Everybody*, several important findings can be concluded. First, the film highlights how Jakarta's rapid urbanization is triggering significant social and economic disparities among its people. In this context, theories such as urban socio-economic segregation from Van Ham *et al.* (2021) and spatial segregation by Tammaru *et al.* (2020) is relevant in illustrating how social and economic segregation creates isolation and limited access to opportunities in big cities.

The practical implication of this research is the importance of understanding the impact of spatial planning policies and uneven urbanization in exacerbating social inequality. Theoretically, these findings support the concept that uncontrolled urbanization often widens social gaps, as explained in various recent studies. The limitation of this research is the lack of in-depth exploration of specific factors that influence social interactions between characters in films, which could provide richer insight into urban social dynamics in Jakarta. Further research should learn more about how representations of social inequality in popular media can influence public perceptions of social reality. Further research could also investigate how film narratives influence people's attitudes towards social problems in urban areas. Therefore, this research helps understand the relationship between social representations depicted in films and urban dynamics that occur in big cities like Jakarta.



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