



# Director creative process in pre-production stage of Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) Film

Maihalfri Daffa Bariq<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Muttaqien<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Communication Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 55183, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Communication Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 55183, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author's email: [muttaqien@umy.ac.id](mailto:muttaqien@umy.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

### Keywords

Creative process  
Directing  
Director  
Film

The film Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) by Noise Films, which is packaged with a minimal dialogue concept, won awards nationally and internationally. This cannot be separated from how a director carries out his creative process, especially during pre-production. The purpose of this research is to find out how the director's creative process was in the pre-production stage of the film Subuh (Miracle at Dawn). The research method is a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research results show that directors apply nine creative stages in the pre-production stage, according to Ed Gaskell, namely watching your plot, writing the screenplays, genre theme and drama, drawing on ideas, location, setting scene, stars and actors, finding the crew, and research production. This research provides a deeper understanding of the director's role in the creative process in the film industry.

## 1. Introduction

Independent (indie) films have developed in line with current technological advances. In this era of Globalisation, all information about films, both the educational side and references to films, is very easily accessible (Westall, 2021). Indie films are the opposite of Hollywood films. Whereas indie films have a unique, different, and less commercial format (Chun & Choi, 2023). In Indonesia, indie films operate independently with limited financial resources, crews that may not be paid, and direct distribution to film festivals to gain an audience, not profits for further production (Suparno, 2020). Nonetheless, some indie films have received national and international awards, one of which is a film entitled Subuh (Miracle at Dawn).

Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) is a fiction drama short film produced by Noise Films. Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) tells the story of Samuel Wijayanto, who used to be a Christian and decided to convert to Islam. At the same time, his father, a Christian Pastor, could not accept his son's decision. This is the trigger for Samuel and his father's relationship to deteriorate. This film was born from the creativity of Achmad Rezi Fahlevie, who became the director (Putu Shanti Prema Utami et al., n.d.). The director plays an essential role in a film production. The director can create an idea through writing into an image or visual (Student et al., 2021). The director must be able to describe the message conveyed through the director's vision, mission, and treatment so that the crew can assist the director in defining the message through film-forming elements such as sound, visual, and artist (Oki & Ridwan, 2022). Not only creating ideas, the director is also responsible for leading the production of a film from pre-production, production, and post-production (Herrera Marcano et al., 2009).

Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) has been screened at various festivals and received national and international awards such as Best Film Nomination at Klaten Film Festival 2021, Best Director at Bogor Independent Film Festival 2021, Official Selection at Balinale International Film Festival 2022, and others. The success of Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) must be connected to the creative process of Achmad Rezi Fahlevie as, the director who created this film. Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) has an exciting



film packaging concept that is different from other short films, namely by using a film with minimal dialogue (Patmawati, 2021). This famous silent comedy film by Charlie Chaplin became the beginning of the popularity of silent films. A silent film is a film produced without dialogue and sound recording. In silent films, the director must convey the message in the film through gestures, mimics, or pantomimics (Asri, 2020). The concept of silent film is also applied to the film *Subuh* (Miracle at Dawn), but at the end of the film, the director also provides a little dialogue, namely when the father wakes up his son for morning prayers (Rodriguez, 2014). Achmad Rezi Fahlevie, as the director of *Subuh* (Miracle at Dawn), shows the conflict of the father, a Christian pastor who does not accept his son's decision to convert to Islam (Seto, 2019). This is interesting because the director shows the conflict between them using a film with minimal dialogue. This is different from most films that show the conflict through dialogue (Jati Kusuma, 2019). Another uniqueness is the rarity of films without dialogue or minimal dialogue produced today (Skryabin, 2021).

This research process refers to several previous studies, including Lina Mahmudah's research entitled *The Creative Process of Directing Ayo Dolan Films During the Covid-19 Pandemic* with the results of research explaining that there are differences in production in previous films in the form of restrictions on the creative process carried out by the director when making Ayo Dolan films due to the Covid-19 Pandemic (Supriyadi et al., 2021). Furthermore, research from Nopsi Marga Handayani entitled *Tonny Trimarsanto's Creative Process as Director of The Road Film at the Pre-Production Stage* the results of research showing Tonny's creative process during the Pre-Production stage as director of the docudrama film *The Road* (Handayani, 2020). Then another study written by Rizka Febry Indriani entitled *The Creative Process of the Director in Making Rena Asih Children's Musical Film* with the results of the research, namely the application of the director's creative concept in Musical Films emphasising Javanese philosophy. The three studies have similarities in examining the creative process of directing in film (Wijaya & Firmanto, 2021). However, the three studies have differences, namely, the three objects of the research film examine the type of film with the concept of dialogue film, unlike the object of this research, which is focused on a film with a minimal dialogue concept entitled *Subuh*. Based on the background description above, the problem formulation in this research is how the creative process of directing in the film *Subuh* (Miracle at Dawn) is in the pre-production stage (Liu et al., 2020). This research aims to discover the director's creative process in directing the film *Subuh* (Miracle at Dawn) in the pre-production stage.

## 2. Method

The research method in examining Achmad Rezi Fahlevie's creative process as a director in creating the film *Subuh* (Miracle at Dawn) uses a qualitative descriptive approach. A qualitative research approach is research whose findings are not in the form of counts and numbers but in the form of words, pictures, or recordings (Wenerda, 2022). The qualitative research approach examines natural objects to interpret phenomena that occur and involves various existing methods (Oki & Ridwan, 2022). This research also uses a descriptive method approach. The descriptive method analyses and presents facts systematically so that they can be more easily understood and concluded. The data collected is descriptive, so it does not intend to seek explanations, test hypotheses, make predictions, or study implications (Nurullita, 2021).

This research was conducted in Yogyakarta. The object of this research is Achmad Rezi Fahlevie, a director conducting the creative process in *Subuh* film. The data collection techniques in this research used observation, interview, and documentation techniques. In this study, researchers interviewed one main informant, Achmad Rezi Fahlevie, as the director and one supporting informant, Muhammad Wahyu Saputra, as the producer. Supporting data in this research was obtained through a literature study process in the form of books, scientific articles, and recorded data sources in the form of the film *Subuh* (Miracle at Dawn).

Data validity in this research uses data triangulation techniques, which is the most popular way to maintain the validity of research data. Triangulation is a method of checking the validity of data that utilises something other than the data to check or compare the data (Hastuti et al., 2022). In testing the validity of the data, researchers used source triangulation, which means comparing and rechecking the degree of trustworthiness of information obtained through different sources (Sugiyono, 2017). This research uses three data analysis stages: data reduction, data presentation, verification and conclusion

drawing. In this study, the data reduction stage begins when you have obtained data on the creative process that takes place through interviews and then sort out the data that is important to use. The information that has been reduced is then arranged so that it gives the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action (Rijali, 2019).

### 3. Result and Discussion

In discussing the creative process of *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)*, which applies a minimal dialogue film, first look at how the process at each stage in filmmaking. The analysis is based on the steps of the creative process, according to Ed Gaskell. This research shows that the director applies nine creative stages in pre-production, according to Ed Gaskell, namely Hatching your Plot, Writing the Screenplay, Genre Theme and Drama, Drawing on Ideas, Location, Setting Scene, Stars and Actors, Finding the Crew, and Research Production (Babalola, 2023).

#### a. Hatching your Plot

The Creative Process of *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* film started from the director's anxiety towards the phenomenon of religious tolerance. In the Hatching Your Plot stage, the director got this idea while conducting a community service programme in a village in Magelang, where most of the residents adhere to non-Muslim religions but dress like Muslims, wearing Muslim clothes, sarongs, and caps. Then, the director developed the basic idea based on notes of direct experience that he saw until he came up with a story idea about tolerance of diversity in the family, namely a Christian boy who converted to Islam. This became a problem because his father was a pastor (Martha et al., 2012). The director chose the subject of the boy and the father because he wanted to emphasise family issues. Even so, the director also inserted issues about religious tolerance in the family conflict. The pre-production stage of the film *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* in the process of finding story ideas to the final draft took up to 2 months. This is because the most challenging period of this film is in the research stage. The director must learn more about other religions that he does not follow so that there is no misunderstanding in the delivery of the story.

#### b. Writing the Screenplay

In the Screenwriting stage, the basic idea that has been determined is written into a screenplay. In writing the script, the director goes through several stages, namely, writing a premise and logline, then developing it into a synopsis. The finished synopsis is then arranged scene by scene to become a story scenario. In writing the script for *Subuh*, the director only wrote a story scenario without presenting dialogue. The director wants to play with symbols and scenes that can explain the story's meaning without showing dialogue in the film. *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* uses facial expressions, scenes, and props to convey information to the audience.

#### c. Genre Theme and Drama

The genre of the film *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* is a fictional drama. The theme to be conveyed in this film is the theme of religious tolerance inserted through family drama and packaged with a minimal dialogue film concept. The reason for using the concept of minimal dialogue in this film is that the director wants to emphasize the conflict in the family between the child and the father. With this sensitive theme of religious tolerance, the director eliminates dialogue to avoid debates that will lead to which religion is right and wrong.

#### d. Drawing on Ideas

Storyboards are helpful to make it easier for artistic stylists, camera stylists, and lighting stylists with the help of sketch drawings to arrange properties and player movements before production. In translating ideas, *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* does not use storyboards in conceptualising the film's visual images. Instead, the film uses photoboards derived from photographs of scene designs during *recce* on set.

#### e. Location

Film production locations are very supportive in many ways, especially in strengthening the need for story ideas and calculating production costs. In the film, *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* only uses one location and only inside the house. The production location of this film is in Gedungkiwo village,

Yogyakarta City. This location was chosen because it fits the criteria the director wants. The director chose this place because he wanted a house with a semi-ancient style and a social status that was not too rich or poor. The supporting factor for choosing this location is also because the late husband of this house was Catholic while his wife was Muslim, so the house owner has an affinity with the story of this film.

#### **f. Setting Scene**

In this movie, the director wanted to show an old Christian house setting with a cold and calm atmosphere. *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* uses shot on location in its production process. That is, using properties already in the shooting location, and not much is changed to look as it is. There are only a few property additions to enhance the picture to make it look neater. Many of the original properties of the house can be used to produce this film because the husband of the house owner is Catholic. Only a few additional properties, such as iqro books, Al-Quran, fried eggs, etc., were used.

#### **g. Stars and Actors**

The film *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* uses actors with acting experience. The use of experienced actors can facilitate the director in the staging and shooting process. This film has two players, namely the father and son characters. The director chose Tri Sudarsono to play the father character because the director had seen a film played by Tri Sudarsono. In the film, Tri Sudarsono also played a character who did not talk much. Finally, the director decided to play the father character by Tri Sudarsono. As for the child character, the director chose his friend, Azaro Verdo Nuary, a theatre kid. The director also saw that Azaro Verdo Nuary's acting was excellent and suitable to play the child's character. Before the production day, the team also did a one-day reading to convey the director's vision and mission to the cast and build chemistry between the players (Morgan, 2021).

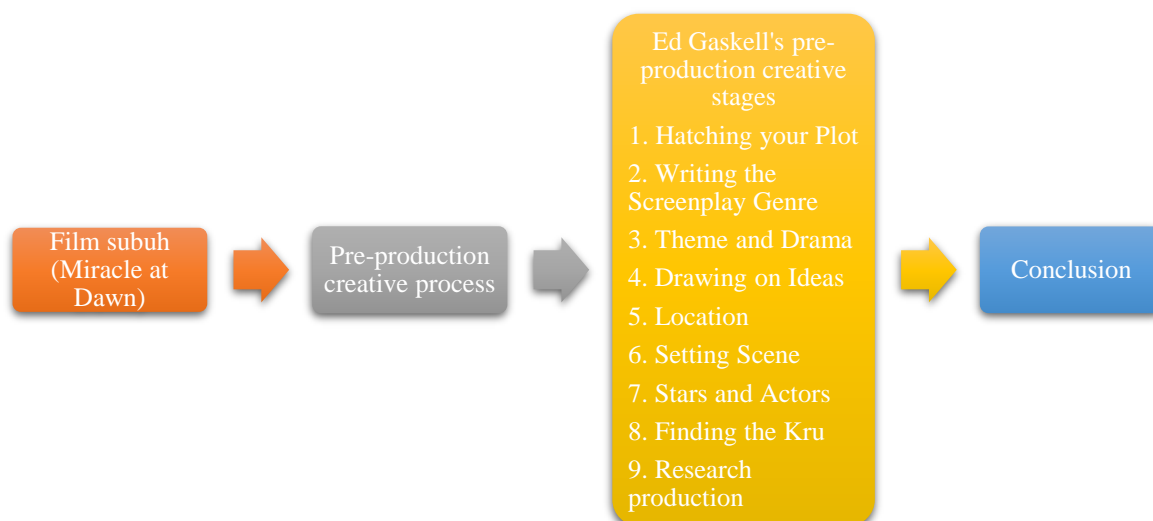
#### **h. Finding the Kru**

The production process of shooting *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* involved 13 people who were divided into various departments. In choosing the crew, the director decided to invite his friends whom he already knew and knew how to perform. Then, in the formation of the jobdesk, the director looks more at the crew's expertise and the jobdesk that is usually taken.

#### **i. Research Production**

Based on research written by Syatriadin entitled *Religious Harmony in the Context of Interfaith Families*, it explains that Harmony can also mean a process of becoming harmonious because previously there was disharmony, as well as the ability and willingness to live side by side and together in peace and tranquillity. The understanding of interfaith families is based on interfaith marriage and conversion (Student et al., 2021). This fact is essential for the director in writing the story. Research in the film *Subuh (Miracle at Dawn)* was conducted through observation and interviews. Interview data was obtained from the director's friends who adhere to the religion. In addition, the director also conducted interviews with religious leaders to ensure that the information he got was correct. The director also got information when checking the filming location because the owner of the house, who had the same religious differences, was the late husband of the owner of the house, who was Catholic.

**Table 1. Scheme of the research results of the creative process of the film director Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) in the pre-production stage**



#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of research examining the creative process of Achmad Rezi Fahlevie as a director in the creation of a minimal dialogue film entitled Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) using a qualitative descriptive approach. The creative process of planning the director's concept is carried out through 9 stages of the creative process in pre-production of a film, namely Hatching your Plot, Writing the Screenplay, Genre Theme and Drama, Drawing on Ideas, Location, Setting Scene, Stars and Actors, Finding the Crew, and Research Production. The stages of the pre-production creative process are applied to the film Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) with the theme of religious tolerance in the family so that in this study, it can be concluded that the initial stage of the story idea built by the director in the film Subuh (Miracle at Dawn) has the strength of the issues and conflicts conveyed using minimal dialogue films. Overall, the pre-production creative process carried out by the director is centred on a simple story idea, screenwriting in the form of scenes and symbols instead of dialogue, raising genres, themes and dramas with hot issues in society, photoboard in the form of scene design photos as a substitute for storyboards, location setting in Yogyakarta, setting in scenes that apply shots on location and utilize surrounding properties, selecting experienced actors, selecting film production crews from the director's friends who have expertise in their fields, and production research through observation and interviews with sources.

#### 5. Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude to Allah SWT, who has given His grace so that the researcher can complete this research. The researcher would like to thank the Communication Science Study Programme of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for supporting the researcher to realise this research. My deepest gratitude to the supervisor Muhammad Muttaqien, S.I.Kom, M.Sn for the encouragement and advice always given during the lecture period, as well as to the family who always provides endless support. Finally, I thank my friends who have provided support, time, advice, and affection.

#### 6. References

- Asri, R. (2020). Membaca Film Sebagai Sebuah Teks: Analisis Isi Film "Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini (NKCTHI)." *Jurnal Al Azhar Indonesia Seri Ilmu Sosial*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.36722/jaiss.v1i2.462>



- Babalola, O. S. (2023). Organizing, Planning and Developing Visual Style in Screen Directing during Pre-Production. *International Journal of Current Research in the Humanities*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.4314/ijcrh.v26i1.21>
- Chun, W., & Choi, A. Y. (2023). Analyzing the Layout Design of the HuangHai's Movie Posters Context to the Visual Elements of the Culture Code Brand Design (CCBD) Methodology. In *Springer Series in Design and Innovation* (Vol. 27). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20364-0\\_52](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20364-0_52)
- Handayani, R. (2020). *Metodologi Penelitian Sosial* (M. N. Rohman (Ed.)). Trussmedia Grafika.
- Hastuti, H., Andy Ary Maulana, A. A. M. W., & Iska, I. (2022). role of social media Instagram of community towards tourism promotion in Baubau City. *COMMICAST*, 3(3), 201–210. <https://doi.org/10.12928/commicast.v3i2.5957>
- Herrera Marcano, T., Cachada, A., Rocha-santos, T., Duarte, A. C., & Roongtanakiat, N. (2009). Saudi Press's handling of Local issues: A Content Analysis of the Press relationship with the Authority. *□□□□ □, □□□□□□*. <https://doi.org/10.1038/132817a0>
- Jati Kusuma, M. I. (2019). Messages of parents affection for children in the movie bulan terbelah di langit amerika. *International Journal of Communication and Society*, 1(2), 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.31763/ijcs.v1i2.47>
- Liu, Y., Chin, W. L., Nechita, F., & Candrea, A. N. (2020). Framing film-induced tourism into a sustainable perspective from Romania, Indonesia and Malaysia. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 12(23). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12239910>
- Martha, G. B., Alves, E., & Contini, E. (2012). Land-saving approaches and beef production growth in Brazil. *Agricultural Systems*, 110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2012.03.001>
- Morgan, H. (2021). Mad Studies and disability studies. In *The Routledge International Handbook of Mad Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429465444-16>
- Nurullita, D. (2021). Violation of justice in American police department as reflected in the film Changeling. *Commicast*, 2(1), 35. <https://doi.org/10.12928/commicast.v2i1.2726>
- Oki, O. cahyo nugroho, & Ridwan, R. Y. P. (2022). Gemblak stereotype film “kucumbu tubuh indahku” by Garin Nugroho. *COMMICAST*, 3(3), 266–275. <https://doi.org/10.12928/commicast.v3i2.5734>
- Patmawati, P. (2021). Representasi Kesenjangan Sosial Dalam Film Parasite (Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes). *MITZAL (Demokrasi, Komunikasi Dan Budaya) : Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan Dan Ilmu Komunikasi*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.35329/mitzal.v5i2.1896>
- Putu Shanti Prema Utami, N., Dewa Ayu Sugiarica Joni, I., & Devia Pradipta, A. (n.d.). *Konstruksi Tindakan Korupsi Pada Film “Negeri Tanpa Telinga.”* 1–12.
- Rijali, A. (2019). ANALISIS DATA KUALITATIF. *Alhadharah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah*. <https://doi.org/10.18592/alhadharah.v17i33.2374>
- Rodriguez, M. (2014). Physiognomy and Freakery: The Joker on Film. *Americana : The Journal of American Popular Culture, 1900 to Present*.
- Seto, A. (2019). Islamist buzzers: Message flooding, offline outreach, and astroturfing. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.14764/10.ASEAS-0021>
- Skryabin, V. Y. (2021). Analysing Joker : an attempt to establish diagnosis for a film icon . *BJPsych Bulletin*. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjb.2020.146>
- Student, M. T., Kumar, R. R., Ommments, R. E. C., Prajapati, A., Blockchain, T.-A., MI, A. I., Randive, P. S. N., Chaudhari, S., Barde, S., Devices, E., Mittal, S., Schmidt, M. W. M., Id, S. N. A., PREISER, W. F. E., OSTROFF, E., Choudhary, R., Bit-cell, M., In, S. S., Fullfillment, P., ... Fellowship, W. (2021). Analisis semiotika anti korupsi dalam film menolak diam. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 14(1), 1–13.
- Sugiyono. (2017). metode kuantitatif, kualitatif. In *alfabeta*.

- Suparno, D. (2020). Film Indonesia “Do’a untuk Ayah” Tinjauan Unsur Intrinsik dan Ekstrinsik. *Buletin Al-Turas*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v21i1.3824>
- Supriyadi, A., Wang, T., Pribadi, P., Mauludin, M. A., Ma’arif, F., & Nuryana, Z. (2021). A review of institutional response and Covid-19 pandemic risk communication in regional autonomy system in Indonesia. *International Journal of Communication and Society*, 3(1), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.31763/ijcs.v3i1.192>
- Wenerda, I. (2022). Digital literation of citizens neighborhood association’s WhatsApp group in response Covid-19 information. *International Journal of Communication and Society; Vol 4, No 2 (2022): December*. <https://doi.org/10.31763/ijcs.v4i2.252>
- Westall, C. (2021). Migrant Movements and Cricketing Stereotypes. In *New Caribbean Studies*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65972-1\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65972-1_7)
- Wijaya, J. A., & Firmanto, A. D. (2021). Representasi gender pada film tilik menurut studi semiotik roland barthes. *Interaksi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.14710/interaksi.10.2.166-176>