

## DOCUDRAMA GENRE TO REPRESENT RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN *OBAT MALAM* AND *SOLUSI* TV PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

Genre is an important thing in planning film or TV program. This paper focuses on exploring two national TV programs that use docudrama genre to deliver people's real past to represent their religious experience. By conducting interview with the producer of *Obat Malam and Solusi* TV program, the aim of this paper is to examine why docudrama genre used to represent religious experience in *Obat Malam and Solusi* TV program. The interview was conducted online via zoom meeting and involved the producer manager as the single participant. The open ended questions were used in the interview. A mix coding technique was applied in the interview data collection analysis. The findings show that producer's perspective puts emphasis on docudrama genre as a configuration of particular elements, highlights visual narrative aspects, and accentuates qualities of docudrama modes of documentary. It can be concluded that docudrama genre meets the need of creative and contextual way to present religious experience to the viewers.

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays television has become a medium to represent religious experience. From various television programs, *Obat Malam and Solusi* produced by Cahaya Bagi Negeri Indonesian broadcasting company are television programs that gain attention from thousands of Indonesian viewers both from urban and rural areas (Jawaban, 2016). These two television programs present testimonial stories through docudramas. These docudramas present what people struggle for, how they struggle with their life problems, and how they find their solution. Their testimonial stories represent their spiritual journey that are meaningful to share to others. Each testimony is presented using cinematography art and technique.

The docudramas are the features in *Obat Malam and Solusi* television program. The docudramas are arranged in such a way as to be a unit of the segments in these two television programs. The selection of the genre is a crucial thing because how the message can be conveyed and understood by the viewers is an important thing that becomes a concern for the producer. *Obat Malam and Solusi* television program have particular formats that support the programs. The



format of the program shows their characteristics. The docudrama is a part of the format of the program. This selected genre is designed to be the strength of the programs.

Genre is important in the production, the interpretation and the context of the programs. Bawarshi (2000, p. 335-340) proposes that the communicants and their context are parts of the function of the genre used. Genre is a concept that proposes a discourse is received in a particular mode and status and attached with an author-function; therefore, the author function is the genre function which create conceptual condition. . The concept of genre is abstract rather than empirical one in the world (Feuer, 1992, 144). Genre, firstly, regulates a preexisting social activity in which the existence is rules free and functions as an interpretive tool identifying a present communicative purpose; secondly, it constitutes an activity in which the existence is not rule free by its rhetorical and ideological conventions. In the context of film, genre defines a social and moral world (Tudor 1974, 180) and can be seen as representing ideological assumptions and particular values (Chandler, 1997, 4), therefore, the concept can plausibly change as the ideological climate changes (Hayward 1996, 50). Televisual genre indocates the viewers' social and cultural concerns (Baudry in Hayward 1996, 162). In this respect, genre reproduces the activity with the enactment conventions and shape social actions by establishing the way of recognizing the situations within the activity performed. The activity performed is the activity recognized and identified by the way or genre. Televisual genres reflect the programme-makers' values (Lichter et al., 1991).

In the context of television program, producer refers to the author function. In fact, that the television producer has particular conceptual considerations in selecting the docudrama genre, this paper aims to examine why the docudrama genre was chosen to represent religious experiences to the viewers. This paper explores the producer's perspective on docudrama genre used in *Obat Malam and Solusi* television program. The previous genre studies examine film genres with the content of films as the tools and explore the genre issues in the perspective of the viewers. Studies on the interconnectedness between film genre and film content show that genres are identified by their lexical signatures (Matthews & Glitre, 2021). Whilst, studies on the interconnectedness between genre and viewers show that the film genre elements affect the viewers' preferences and change over time following certain patterns (Xinri Fu, 2010) and the movie genre effects on the consumer's reactions toward brand placement (Garza, 2003). Both audience's likeability on film



and the structured elements of film content can be used to formulate genre definition (Olney, 2013). The viewers' preferences on film genre can also be utilized in language learning (Barza & Memari, 2014). The novelty of this current research is positioning a media practitioner (producer) in defining and evaluating film genre, particularly docudrama genre in the context of film as a medium of promoting religiosity. Here, the focus is to see docudrama genre in the media practitioner's perspective, rather than the viewers and the media scholars.

## 2. Method

This case study exercised in depth interview with a single participant to collect the data. To analyze the producer's perspective, the interview was conducted with the producer manager who organizes the process of the production. The producer manager is the most responsible person in the whole production process of *Obat Malam* and *Solusi*. The interview was conducted online via zoom meeting for 90 minutes in the third week of August 2021. The inquiry was specific to reveal the producer manager's information of docudrama genre selection. The interview used open ended questions. In examining the interviewee's information, a mix coding technique was applied (see Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Mayring, 2000).

Preconceived coding categories were executed prior to analysis of the interviewee's information. During the process of reading the interview data, however, coding categories were added. The existing concepts applied in the pre-determined coding were mode of truth (Blumenberg, 1977), mode of desire (Renov, 1993), and mode of representation (Nichols, 2001).

The interview analysis procedure was begun with reading the interview data to perceive a comprehensive nous of information (see Tesch, 1990). The second step was to identify the important thoughts from the text to gain particular concepts (see Miles & Huberman, 1994). The third step was to organize the important ideas that suggest conceptual explanation (see Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Supported by consulted literatures corresponding to the concepts, the next step was to generate theoretical structure of producer's perspective on docudrama genre. Finally, to see clearly how the concepts of the docudrama genre in the producer's perspective applied, the



elaboration is also supported by the data taken from the *Obat Malam* and *Solusi* docudramas uploaded on YouTube in 2014.

### 3. Findings

The producer possesses particular emphasises on elements and aspects of the docudrama genre used in *Solusi* and *Obat Malam*. The emphasises suggest how the producer sees the genre as particular configuration of elements and highlights certain qualities that include qualities of docudrama visual narrative aspects and qualities of documentary docudrama modes.

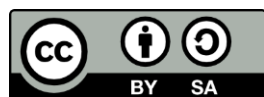
#### Docudrama Configurative Elements

The producer emphasized three configurative elements of docudrama that include reenactment, authenticity, and creativity. Authenticity concerns with rearranging times, settings, real characters, casting characters, and events to present the truth. It sets fort the genuine quality, without being corrupted from the real facts. The authenticity in a documentary refers to the visualized details of the testimonies (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). Authenticity is a mode that functions to represent, firstly, auratic places and objects and, secondly, the reenactment (Jones, 2013).

In the docudrama, the producer rearranged the meaningful events to represent a meaning configuration and visually present it. The real characters in the docudramas are the reenactors. The reenactors also put their meanings on their experiences as they testify their experiences (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The reenactors' interpretations on their religious experiences are also inserted in *Obat Malam and Solusi* docudramas.

The reenactors are functioned as the interpreter of religious teaching. Their interpretation of life aspects and inner selves are presented in a visual narrative configuration. The reenactors' interpretations are animated in the production process of *Solusi* and *Obat Malam*. Meanings are documented during producer and the reenactors' interview and represented in the reenactment. This reenactment is to represent testimonies by emphasizing the testimony authenticity (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021).

Authenticity works on the objects and the events referentiality and the affective response of the viewers. The viewers' affective response focuses on their subjectivity, instead of the objective portrayal of the past (Jones, 2013). The authenticity of the visualization brings the original real in the imagination of the viewers and stirs up their feeling (R. Siahainenia, interview,

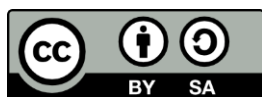


August, 2021). This visualization transmits messages coded in symbols to stimulate the interpretation of the viewers (Saunders, 2010). The authenticity of filmic visualization accentuates the notion of a construction in a social process as well as production and reception interaction (Jones, 2013). *Obat Malam and Solusi* stimulate the imagination of the viewers to places, events, people, and situation of the real characters of the testimonies. The docudramas also provoke their feelings of the viewers to feel the recklessness, hope, faith, and love represented.

Docudrama is a documentary presented in a drama perspective through the process of reenactment. This process contains the actual events documentation, the actual events dramatization, the subject's identity portrayal, and reflective knowledge formation. In *Obat Malam and Solusi's* pre-production process, the interview with the real characters are conducted to document their experiences of struggle, pursuit, feelings and thoughts. Their religious experiences are dramatized in the reenactment of the docudramas (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021; see also R. Hutagalung, interview in Manopo, 2013). The docudramas narrate the psychological experiences. These psychological experiences are revived in the reenactment (Agnew, 2004). The reenactment is based on the narration gained from the interview with the real characters (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021; see also D. Salim, interview in Manopo, 2013). Particular patterns are resulted in the reenactment to stimulate the viewers' feelings. The reenactment is the real characters' experiences visualization (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021; see also R. Hutagalung, interview in Manopo, 2013).

The structure of testimonies in *Obat Malam and Solusi* suggests the Biblical knowledge via personal experiences and the truth coming from that knowledge. Life transformation are testified by the reenactors (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The personal experiences of the reenactors are authenticated through the reenactment that functions to suggest a generalized proposition on the basis of personal religious experience.

The important element of the reenactment is creativity (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The docudramas need creativity to present the testimonies in a pleasant way and to gain the attention from the viewers (Schafer et al., 2003). The drama format is effective to deliver the reenactment and to stimulate the imagination of the viewers (R. Siahainenia, interview, August,



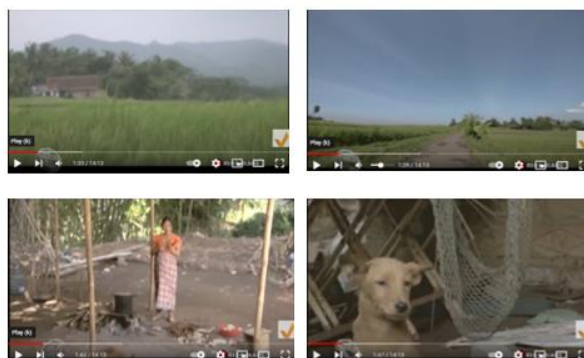
2021). Through the dramas, the viewers are encouraged to learn from others by imaginatively positioning themselves in given physical and visual situation. Drama provides a framework of meaning in a life story (Postman, 1990). The life stories in the drama present the producer's viewpoint (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). Drama offers multiple perspectives, contradiction, and complexity of life (Dunne, Afary, & Paulson, 2021, p. 207). The details of drama attract the viewers, e.g. people's triumphs and tragedies (De Fossard, 2015). *Obat Malam and Solusi* create dramatic situation and attract the viewers' attention through the presence of the real characters as the carrier of the messages. The docudramas present the intended perspective, attitude, and behaviors to the viewers.

### **Qualities of docudrama visual narrative aspects**

Producer's perspective qualifies the visual narrative aspects of docudrama genre that correspond to the reenactment. These aspects are required to make a good visual narrative. In *Solusi* and *Obat Malam*, the spoken testimonies are transformed into visual narrative. This visual narrative of *Obat Malam and Solusi* makes the testimonies accessible, delivers messages, stirs up emotional responses, and encourages the viewers to gain a conclusion, (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The visual text has intertextuality to present good impression (Ali, 2021). The reenactment of *Obat Malam and Solusi* highlights five visual text aspect: fidelity, realism, verisimilitude, faithfulness, truthfulness, naturalism, and realism.

The synchronization between the supporting environment and the visualized object is stressed in the reenactment (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The synchronization that refers to fidelity is to create the testimonial details exactness degree (Ali, 2021) in the reenactment of the docudramas. Fidelity of *Obat Malam and Solusi* can be seen in the details used such as the scenes of real characters and the casting characters' selection (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The selection of time, location, and casting characters ensure the fidelity at maximum degree. This can be seen in the visuality of *Menjangan Kalung*, a remote village in Blitar (see picture 1).



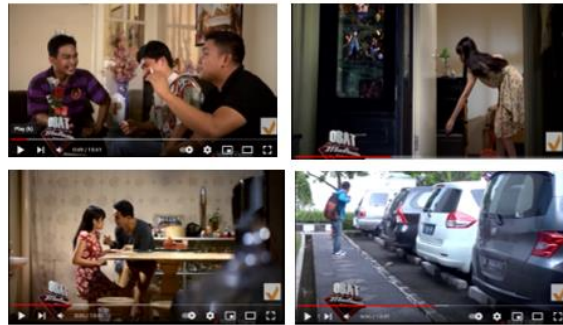


Picture 1. *Solusi*  
Title Episode: *Perjuangan Seorang Pembantu Mengejar Ijazah*  
Based on Juariyah's True Story  
Visuality: Poor Life in Remote Village  
Source: YouTube Channel, uploaded by Jawaban.com

*Obat Malam and Solusi* rely on in depth interview with the real characters to ensure the fidelity to the original. The fidelity stresses on the real characters' role as the first person interpreter. In the reenactment, the first interpreter testifies their attitudes, and beliefs (Lowenthal, 2015). The real characters confess that the reenactment animates their religious experiences (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The real characters are the authoritative source of fidelity of *Obat Malam and Solusi* reenactment.

The emphasis in the reenactment is to show what it is visually (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). In this respect, the visual reality is faithful to the resources that is the real characters' testimonies. This aspect stresses on the relation between the fidelity of representation and the resources (Ali, 2021). The docudramas are faithful to present the narrative with culturally accurate and appropriate way. The messages contained in the visualization is presented in particular context (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The dramatization of the content is to influence the perception of the viewers towards the content. In this regard, truthfulness means correctness or truthfulness (Scarafilo, 2016). Truthfulness is achieved by producing the reenactment as closely as possible to the message. This can be seen in the visuality of people in middle class (see picture 2).





Picture 2. *Obat Malam*

Title Episode: *Siksaan Kejam Suami Pecandu Narkoba Terhadap Istri*

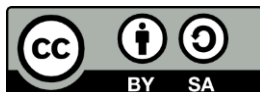
Based on Dudung Parlindungan's True Story

Visuality: Dramatizing Drug Addiction in Middle Class

Source: YouTube Channel, uploaded by Jawaban.com

The accuracy and effectiveness of the meaning representation of *Obat Malam and Solusi* is ensured by the visuality faithfulness. The reenactment scenes are faithful to what really happened and supported by natural images and highlight the relation between the resources and the messages representation (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The changing from the testimonies to the reenactment is a transposition. A transposition is a faithful interpretation to the original (Brougere, 2014).

The faithfulness of reenactment corresponds to the aspect of realism of the visuality (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). Realism in the docudrama refers to the effort to show occurrences experienced by the real characters to spread hope to the viewers (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). Realism in *Obat Malam and Solusi* is used to present contemplative narratives to the viewers. Realism in the docudramas emphasizes that the visualization of the reenactment ties to the reality including religious, psychological, and social realm of the real characters (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The visual narratives provide perceptual and representational content and bring awareness to the viewers. This can be seen in the visuality of a badly wounded victim (see picture 3).







Picture 3. *Solusi*  
Title Episode: *Pengakuan Korban yang Tertimpa Reruntuhan Gempa Padang 2009*  
Based on Yetty Setiawan's True Story  
Visuality: Badly Injured Victim  
Source: YouTube Channel, uploaded by Jawaban.com

To narrate the testimonies, the reenactment also works on naturalism. Both naturalism and realism are interconnected in the reenactment. Naturalism is descriptive when realism is narrative (Lukacs, 1970). Naturalism is intended to create natural images (Ali, 2021). The details of the testimonies, including bare psychological aspect and biological forces, are reenacted as natural as possible (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The docudrama naturalistic scenes expose the real characters' dark side, as well as their improvement (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The reenactment contains two pairs of depictions that emphasizes realism and naturalism interconnection. The first refers to depicting things as they appear and presenting deterministic view of real characters' actions. The second refers to the decision of the real characters as their response to circumstances and as their natural forces determination. This can be seen in the visuality of riot (see picture 4).



Picture 4. *Obat Malam*  
Title Episode: *Berkat di Balik Kerusuhan Jakarta*  
Based on Jemmi Suhadi's True Story  
Visuality: Riot in Jakarta 1998  
Source: YouTube Channel, uploaded by Jawaban.com

The verisimilitude is something important in the reenactment (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The verisimilitude is the visualization accuracy as the resembling reality quality (Ali, 2021). This accuracy is to present the truth quality or the reality appearance. *Obat Malam and Solusi* use visualization to dramatize the events by adhering to the truth quality or reality



appearance in order to present information about certain events to the viewers (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The verisimilitude is shaped by realism that concerns on the interaction between the visualized and the viewers (Roderick, 2014). The verisimilitudinous narratives created in the reenactment include subjects, casting characters, and details with high similarity to the reality to stimulate the beliefs and sympathy of the viewers (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The details, events, and dialogues are reenacted as realistic as possible to represent convincing description in significant ways. This can be seen in the visuality of child abuse (see picture 5).



Picture 5. *Solusi*  
Title Episode: *Tersiksa oleh Ayah Sendiri*  
Based on Sri Ayu's True Story  
Visuality: Real Character of Sri Ayu  
and Reenacted Accurate Details of Her Father's Brutality  
Source: YouTube Channel, uploaded by Jawaban.com

The reenactment verisimilitude is significant because the narratives and the believability of the narrative are presented by the casting characters and the details. The casting characters must be believable to animate the narratives (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The producer's vision is delivered through the reenactment casting characters who are believable to the viewers; thus, they do not lose their belief in the casting characters and the narratives before viewing the docudramas. Verisimilitude is significant because it corresponds to the value expression (Ivin, 1969).

*Obat Malam and Solusi* are to create the viewers' trust (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The visual ability to create trust from the viewers is the truthfulness of visuality (Ali, 2021). This trust is on presenting the quality of being true. *Obat Malam and Solusi* create realistic piece of work on truth basis (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The efforts to convince the



viewers are conducted through framing the narratives in the synchronous point of view with the real characters.

The whole narratives of the docudramas work on the notion of truthfulness that contains the visuality complexity. The visuality has multifaceted relationship with the reality represented (Topolska, 2021). *Obat Malam* and *Solusi* scenes give context to the reality fragment represented. The scenes are the most representative for the context of the real characters' narrative (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The scenes are the transporters of messages and truthfulness. This can be seen in the visuality of personal documentary photos (see picture 6).

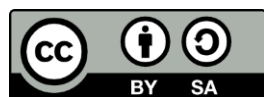


Picture 6. *Obat Malam*  
Title Episode: *Aku Pergi ke Paranormal Tuk Mengejar Kekayaan*  
Based on Supandi's True Story  
Visuality: Real Supandi, Rina Seroja (His Wife),  
and Personal Documentary Photographs  
Source: YouTube Channel, uploaded by Jawaban.com

The truthfulness of the reality fragment is the producer's goal. The truthfulness involves control negotiation in the image making, therefore, the producer achieves the perspective synchronisation with the real characters. The visuality truthfulness has power to influence the viewers therefore they characterize the details of religious experiences (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021).

### Qualities of documentary docudrama modes

The qualities of docudrama modes of documentary are important notion in the producer's perspective on docudrama. Documentary mode to deliver the reality representation is the concern for the genre selection for *Obat Malam* and *Solusi* (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The production of *Obat Malam* and *Solusi* highlight four qualities of documentary docudrama modes



(see Renov, 1993; Blumenberg, 1977; Nichols, 2001) and add the quality of awareness corresponding to mode of desire.

The selection of docudrama genre emphasizes on authenticity quality of the documentary (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). Authenticity of the documentary mode refers to significance and legitimacy (Blumenberg, 1977). Correspondingly, the reenactment scenes are the factual reality subjective representatives. The reenactment subject matter is decided based in the producer's judgement by the virtue of fact (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The reenactment scenes legitimize and signify the actual moments. The scenes provide the sense of authenticity (Blumenberg, 1977, p. 19). The docudrama scenes connect the reality and aesthetic, thus, authenticity is related to presenting the pleasure by mean of the content structure (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021).

An example can be seen in Sugiarto's testimony (*Solusi*, on YouTube, 2014). The docudrama narrates Sugiarto's drug addiction in the past, his recent life as new person. The scenes of the docudrama qualify double effects: his life in the past and present by mean of the relatedness between environment and person, speech and image. The scenes structure is important to legitimize the whole series of events, therefore, they appear true and valid to stimulate emotion. The documentary style infuses the authenticity sense to a fiction (Blumenberg, 1977, p. 21).

The selection of actions and events based on the significance quality of mode of truth are intended to stir the viewers' imagination (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The significance level of events and actions create the authentic experience. The selection of actions and events is based on justifying the conceptual, psychological, and aesthetic experience to affect the level of truth (Blumenberg, 1977, p. 20). The producer artistically configures the work to posture ethical considerations for *Obat Malam* and *Solusi*. The considerations include subject matter and actions selection, legitimacy and significance creation by cinematography manipulation, and the show of private events (Blumenberg, 1977, p. 20).

Private moments are selected to meet the authenticity purpose and the selection is based on ethical decision. An example can be seen in Joudy Ante's testimony (*Obat Malam*, on YouTube, 2014). The docudrama narrates being abandoned experience and act of women's trafficking involvement. The scenes present a cause and effect relation. The act selection develops concern to

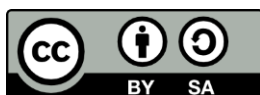


present merely the actions signifying the real events. On the basis of significance, the editing is done to structure the docudrama and the interpretation. The concepts are generated from the subjects' aesthetic criterion also support the significance quality. *Obat Malam* and *Solusi* structure a concept that suggests the humanity worldliness and the afterlife contemplation (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021).

The selection of docudrama genre also emphasizes on the representation mode (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). This mode refers to the way the scenes construct the world in the filmic version (Nichols, 2001). Mode of representation puts the producer as the independent interest representative and real characters as the independent actors. This mode relies on interviews as truthful sources of information about the subject (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). Interviews are a trustworthy source about the subjects in the participatory mode (Natusch & Hawkins, 2014, p. 104). The interview that stresses in the interaction between film maker and the subject is significant in participatory representation mode. The involvement of interview refers to participatory representation mode.

The participatory mode involves the encounter between the producer and the subjects, therefore, *Obat Malam* and *Solusi* are the results of this encounter and the manifestation of participatory film making. An example can be seen in Berliana Panjaitan's testimony (*Solusi*, on YouTube, 2014). The docudrama shows the scenes of interview with the real characters in order to give a sense in a given circumstance and the changing. The interview scenes place the viewers as the witness of the dialogue between the real characters and the producer and reveals the producer's connection with the issues of the docudramas. In this regard, the perspective of the film maker is instilled in the participatory mode (Nichols, 2001, p. 181).

*Obat Malam* and *Solusi*'s documentary aspect is intended to affect the viewers (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). This intent corresponds to mode of desire to meet human's need to see a particular matter in different perspectives to stimulate the viewers' response (Renov, 1993). An example can be seen in Moses Binur's testimony (*Obat Malam*, on YouTube, 2014). The docudrama narrates the life of ex-criminal and ex-drug addiction. The willingness to testify his life transformation can be an inspiration to the viewers. *Obat Malam* and *Solusi*'s reenactment



is contextual and creative manner to affect the viewers by emotional and intellectual engagement (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021).

The viewers are impressed by the persuasive visual content arranged in configurative technique. Persuasive visual content is the mean to achieve the quality of rhetoric. the whole composition of scenes suggests the viewers the notion of hope, a way out for everyday problems (R. Siahainenia, interview, August, 2021). The reenactments show the people freed from their bondage, repented form their sinful habits, and lived their new life. They testified their salvation, faith, hope, and love to God. Life testimony is powerful and persuasive, and more persuasive when it uses visuality to deliver the narratives. The docudrama genre also has the quality of awareness to create the knowledge of the fact in the viewers' mind. The docudramas intent to create the awareness of the viewers towards the need of salvation and the Savior per se. The viewers are convinced to experience the same spiritual experience: the salvation and the Savior.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the whole elaboration of producer's perspective on docudrama genre, it can be concluded that docudrama genre meets the need of creative and contextual way to present religious experience to the viewers. The creativity and contextuality are significant qualities to the programs; therefore, in the efforts to achieve these qualities, combined modes of documentary of docudrama genre are applied to attain the authenticity and the viewers' effect. The findings of this research are recommended to professionals in media world who concern on religious broadcasts to use docudramas as the effective way to promote religiosity.

#### **About the Author**

The author is a student of American Studies Doctoral Program Gadjah Mada University.

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