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## The Teacher, the Scapegoat: Analyzing Hori in the Film *Monster*

Vivian Graciela Chertian

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Petra  
Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia

[viviangc@petra.ac.id](mailto:viviangc@petra.ac.id)

# The Teacher, the Scapegoat: Analyzing Hori in the Film *Monster*

Vivian Graciela Chertian

viviangc@petra.ac.id

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia

**Abstract:** In society, the clash of different people, values, and interests in desiring a single shared object could cause the accumulation of conflicting forces to be directed at a single innocent individual. When it resulted in the banishment or execution of the blamed individual, it was known as scapegoating. One of the parties implied to be prone to scapegoating in a community, as demonstrated in the film *Monster*, is teachers. Using the qualitative descriptive method, this paper investigated the scapegoating mechanism in the case of Hori, a teacher character in *Monster*, through his actions and words when interacting with other characters. Three main parties were involved in the process of scapegoating: a parent, Hori's colleagues and partner, and the students. The scapegoating started when a student, Minato, accused Hori of conducting verbal and physical abuse. The single parent's overwhelming concern, the school staff's priority in protecting the school's reputation, and the students' reluctance to be involved in the case caused them to perceive Hori as a threat to each party's well-being. Despite Hori's innocence, the accumulation of hostility resulted in Hori's expulsion from school. The case in the story implied the dominant power that the school community members have against teachers, highlighting the fragility of a teacher's position in society.

**Key words:** film analysis, character analysis, scapegoating, teacher

**Abstrak:** Dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat, pertentangan antara orang, nilai, dan kepentingan yang berbeda terhadap satu keinginan yang sama berpotensi menimbulkan konflik yang akhirnya ditujukan kepada seorang yang tidak bersalah. Ketika hal tersebut berakibat pada pengucilan atau eksekusi, terjadilah pengambinghitaman. Salah satu pihak yang dinilai rentan menjadi kambing hitam, seperti ditampilkan dalam film *Monster*, adalah guru. Dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini mengkaji mekanisme pengambinghitaman Hori, karakter guru dalam film *Monster*, melalui perbuatan dan perkataannya saat berinteraksi dengan karakter lainnya. Tiga pihak utama terlibat dalam pengambinghitaman: orangtua, rekan-rekan Hori, serta para murid. Pengambinghitaman dimulai saat seorang murid, Minato, menuduh Hori atas kekerasan verbal dan fisik. Kekhawatiran berlebih dari orangtua, prioritas pihak sekolah untuk melindungi reputasi sekolah, serta ketidakinginan para murid untuk terlibat menyebabkan ketiga pihak untuk menilai Hori sebagai ancaman pada kesejahteraan masing-masing pihak. Walaupun Hori terbukti tidak bersalah, akumulasi kebencian yang ada membuat Hori dikeluarkan dari sekolah. Dari analisis karakter tersebut, terdapat implikasi adanya kekuatan dominan yang anggota komunitas sekolah miliki terhadap guru, sehingga posisi guru menjadi rentan di dalam masyarakat.

**Kata kunci:** analisis film, analisis karakter, pengambinghitaman, guru

## INTRODUCTION

As an increasingly popular form of entertainment, the number of platforms that accommodate film or movie creators to display their works are increasing. One of them included film festivals, in which films from around the world are screened in one or more cinemas or screening venues, usually with prizes given out for various categories (Iordanova, 2016; Kuhn & Westwell, 2012). Cannes Film Festival is one of the notable film festivals and known for its significant influence, especially in arthouse cinema. It has a long history of screening films carrying different themes, starting with screening humanist films, where the “perspective of an individual living in the world along with fellow human beings” (Ostrowska, 2016, p.18), moving to films containing criticism towards the existing dominant social and economic structures, to showing the political and social situations in different parts of the globe. Traces of these themes are still carried in several films screened in the festival, including the film *Monster*.

*Monster (Kaibutsu)* is a film directed by Hirokazu Kore-Eda and was awarded the Best Screenplay at the 76th Cannes Film Festival in 2023 (Festival de Cannes, n.d.; Hirokazu, 2023). The film utilized perspective changes from different characters to narrate a story surrounding Minato. The story began from the perspective of Saori, Minato’s mother, who was concerned over the injuries her son received, allegedly caused by a teacher named Hori. Her perspective showed her attempts in holding Hori responsible for his misconduct. The movie then shifted to Hori’s perspective, where it was revealed that Hori did not abuse Minato on purpose and that he accidentally caused an injury when trying to stop Minato from rampaging in class. It was later revealed from Minato’s perspective that he was distressed over his friendship with Hoshigawa, which eventually triggered several instances where Minato hurt himself physically.

From the movie, one of the perspectives interesting to look deeper into is Hori’s perspective. The use of more than one perspective in the movie, along with the depiction of Hori’s interactions with other characters, constructed his identity in different ways. The most dominant depiction throughout the story, however, is his position as a teacher who became the scapegoat in his case which involved Minato.

Teachers have been frequently featured in stories involving schools, with their roles ranging from hero to villain. Citing Rodgers & Scott (2008), Long & Pope (2016, p.25) highlighted that the identity of teachers in literature is dependent and majorly influenced by the social, cultural, political, and historical forces within multiple contexts, “formed in relationship with others and involves emotions”, dynamic, and “involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time”. Teachers’ identities can also be “interpreted and constructed through the stories...that others tell” (Long & Pope, 2016, p.25).

Though the notion applied in the context of literary works, it can also be applied to teachers in films. Teacher characters within films can represent real-life teachers, and this is made possible by films’ position as the vehicle of carrying ideology. Ideology includes “basic ideas and assumptions that help shape a given culture, the preconceived notions and beliefs that structure a given society (as well as its individual members)” (Benshoff, 2016, p.19). These beliefs are frequently taken in by people or groups in society with them being unaware of the power and influence that work in the background (Benshoff, 2016; Sikov, 2020). Therefore, analyzing a film allows us to understand the implications of what is going on in society and the issues prevalent in it (Benshoff, 2016). As such, in the context of teacher characters, we can analyze the notions and beliefs of who teachers are in society based on what is shown in the film that features teacher characters.

Long & Pope (2016) posited that films which feature teacher characters allow viewers to examine the representations of teachers and understand the contexts where teachers function. To look further into how a teacher character in a story can reflect certain aspects of teachers in real life, it is necessary to analyze the factors that played a role in the construction of the character's identity, which are the words and actions of both the character and other characters involved with them. There are several studies conducted regarding teachers in film, as exemplified by Boyd (2016) who investigated the construction of a teacher savior figure by analyzing Nona Alberts in the drama *Won't Back Down*. Another example in the Asian context is a study from Puspitasari & Ambarastuti (2017) which delves into the aspects of nationalism displayed by H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto in the movie *Guru Bangsa HOS Tjokroaminoto*. However, there are still gaps in the studies of teacher characters in creative works.

Previously, there were various studies that discussed the scapegoating of certain characters in literature. A study by Chen (2012) elaborated on how Tessie Hutchinson acted as a scapegoat in the short story *The Lottery*. Another study by Klečková (2020) looked at the ironic victimization of the characters from three stories written by William Somerset Maugham, with the characters being outcasts and expulsion being the key theme in the stories. There are fewer studies focusing on the scapegoating of teachers in literary works or movies. Most of the studies regarding them are dominated by discussions on Western media, especially for works compiled in Shoffner's (2016) work about teachers in fiction and film. There is one study by Nerlino (2023) regarding teacher's perception of the media portrayal during COVID-19, but it is discussed in the context of real-life conditions and not creative works. There are still few studies discussing teacher characters in Asian creative works, especially ones focusing on the issue of teachers' depiction as scapegoats. This research is meant to fill the gap by providing insight into the depiction of teachers in an Asian creative work – in this context, a film – and how the issue of scapegoating in the film reflects an issue regarding teachers that exists in real life. Thus, this paper aims to elaborate on how Hori's character is constructed as a scapegoat in the story through his actions and words, as well as the other characters' actions and words, and how such construction reflects certain aspects in real life regarding teachers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper investigated the scapegoating mechanism which occurred to Hori in the movie *Monster* using Rene Girard's theory of scapegoating as cited in Palaver (2013). Palaver (2013) explained how one can become a scapegoat by quoting Rene Girard's (1986) notions of mimetic theory and scapegoat mechanism. It is stated that "human beings influence each other, and when they are together, they tend to desire the same objects" (Girard in Palaver, 2013, p.36). However, such desire possibly results in conflicts between the parties involved, and there could be positive and negative outcomes from it. When several members of society became hostile and clashed against each other, it was possible that a feeling born by an individual could turn into "a communal force unanimously directed against a single individual" (Palaver, 2013, p.151). In such cases, even the presence of the smallest hint or the most baseless accusation could circulate quickly in a certain community and transform into irrefutable proof of an issue. It eventually resulted in the execution or banishment of the targeted individual from the community.

Palaver (2013, p.151) also added that "since virtually any form of violence in this atmosphere ... is capable of bringing about the snowballing of all against one, essentially any member of the community can become the victim of this mechanism." In scapegoat mechanism,

the negative feelings from people within the community are directed into an individual. The victim of scapegoating is perceived as being responsible for the crisis arising in the community and is blamed for what could be the mistakes made by others in the community. Girard (in Palaver, 2013) also elaborated that a vital part of the scapegoat mechanism is the misperception of the prosecutors regarding the whole issue, as “the members of the group are unaware that they are transferring their own guilt and responsibility onto the victim” (p.152) when thinking of the means to overcome the crisis. He dubbed this ‘hallucinatory phenomenon’ as a “monstrous double” (Palaver, 2013, pp.148-149). As the persecutors cannot see their responsibility for the crisis or issue’s origins and the resolution which comes after it, in the persecutors’ perspective, the scapegoat is seen as both good and evil at the same time (Palaver, 2013). This theoretical review was used to explain the process of scapegoating which happened in the object of the research.

## METHOD

The study utilized a descriptive qualitative method using textual analysis. A qualitative approach was taken in this study as it allowed the researcher to examine the data closely within a limited framework and interpret the data, then narrow the information retrieved into specific themes (Creswell, 2020). Additionally, textual analysis was chosen as a method which allows the researcher to examine the messages, values, and meanings behind text found in films (Smith, 2017). Altogether, a qualitative textual analysis enables the researcher to retrieve information regarding an individual in a specific socio-cultural context, describe it in detail, and link the experiences within the text to the larger structures in real social life (Smith, 2017).

The data collected included the dialogs between Hori and other characters in the film. The researcher first watched the film and transcribed the parts where Hori appeared in the movie. After the transcription was completed, the researcher rewatched the film scene by scene to check the transcription made and conducted close observation to the words Hori said to other characters, the words other characters said to Hori, and the context of the interaction. Afterward, for the data analysis, the researcher interpreted the meaning behind the dialogs compiled while considering relevant real-life socio-cultural contexts, then connected the themes and messages found in them with Girard’s notion of scapegoating. After the data were analyzed, the researcher conducted rechecking to refine the details, then formulated a conclusion on how the scapegoating mechanism found in the film’s story related to existing real-life socio-cultural context.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the context of school, the student’s well-being is well-desired and should become one of the primary concerns of the teachers, school staff, and parents. However, in responding to the desire for the student’s well-being, each party involved may have different perceptions of things that are related to the shared desire. This is where conflict potentially happens. The discussion of how the clash of desire triggered the whole scapegoating mechanism would be divided into three sections based on the main parties interacting with Hori: Saori (Minato’s parent), Hori’s colleagues and partner (the principal, school staff members, and Hori’s girlfriend), and the students (Minato, Hoshikawa, Kida, and other students).

### A. The First Trigger: Saori

The beginning of Hori's scapegoating was first exemplified by Saori as Minato's (the student's) parent, who was concerned about the physical and mental well-being of her son, Minato, when she saw Minato hurt.

**Table 1:**  
Scene references 1 and 2

Scene	Characters	Dialog
1	Minato (M), Saori (S)	<p><b>M:</b> What would a human be if a pig's brain was transplanted to him? A human? A pig?</p> <p><b>S:</b> What are you talking about?</p> <p><b>M:</b> There was research about it.</p> <p><b>S:</b> Who told you about it?</p> <p><b>M:</b> Hori-sensei.</p>
2	Saori (S), Customer (C)	<p><b>C:</b> Did you know that there was a cabaret club on the third floor (of the burned building)?</p> <p><b>S:</b> Yes, yes, I saw a lady wearing a short skirt distributing promotional flyers.</p> <p><b>C:</b> From what I heard, there was Hori-sensei in that store. A teacher in a cabaret club...</p> <p><b>S:</b> Was he lonely?</p> <p><b>C:</b> Words usually spread fast about that, you know.</p>

From the scenes in Table 1, at the beginning of the movie, it was implied early in the story that Hori told Minato about the transplantation of a pig's brain to a human brain. A customer at Saori's workplace also mentioned a rumor about Hori visiting a cabaret club. In Japan, cabaret clubs were classified as places for nighttime entertainment and amusement and associated with the sexual industry, particularly for salarymen (Norma, 2011; Hartley, 2018). The ideal image of a teacher in society was someone who would teach good moral values to students and provide good examples; hence, visiting a place commonly perceived in society as amoral created an image that a teacher was not giving a good example of implementing moral values. The two events constructed Saori's perception that Hori was not a good teacher.

As the story progressed, there were scenes where viewers were led into thinking that Hori was the trigger of the issue in the movie.

**Table 2:**  
Scene references 3-5

Scene	Characters	Dialog
3	Minato (M), Saori (S)	<p><b>S:</b> What's wrong? Did something happen at school? Is it because you're a slow eater? <i>*silence*</i> Why did you cut your hair? Why did you lose your sneaker? Hey, what's wrong?</p> <p><b>M:</b> It's a pig's brain. My brain has been replaced with a pig's brain. That's what's weird about me. I'm a monster.</p> <p><b>S:</b> Who said that? Kamata? It's Kamata, right? Who said it?! Minato, who told you that?!</p> <p><b>M:</b> <i>*long silence*</i> Hori-sensei.</p>

- 
- 4 Saori (S), Principal (P),  
Hori (H), Staff (F)
- S:** His ears were pulled so hard that they bled. He begged the teacher to stop, and the teacher said, “Your brain is a pig’s brain. You wouldn’t know unless you feel such pain.”
- P:** I see.
- ...
- P:** Regarding the concerns that you have told us beforehand, Mr. Hori would like to apologize to you.
- H:** Regarding this matter, I felt regretful because my guidance to Mugino caused a misunderstanding. I deeply apologize.
- ...
- S:** May I confirm, Mr. Hori? Mr. Hori! You conducted violence towards my son, didn’t you?
- P:** It seems like there was a misunderstanding—
- S:** There is no misunderstanding! Because my son got hit by this teacher, he got hurt. Do you understand?
- ...
- What did you put inside your mouth? Candy? Why did he eat candy? Do you understand what we are talking about right now?
- H:** This is typically how single mothers are, just like my mother, so I know—
- F:** Hori-sensei.
- S:** What’s wrong with single mothers?
- H:** They tend to be overly worried—
- S:** Do you mean that I am being overprotective?
- ...
- H:** I deeply apologize.
- 
- 5 Saori (S),  
Hori (H), Staff (F),  
Kazuma (another teacher - K)
- H:** I am very sorry.
- S:** This kind of teacher in this school...I couldn’t send my child to a school with this kind of teacher, could I? Please ask him to stop.
- H:** *\*chuckles\**
- S:** Did I say something funny? Did I say something weird?
- H:** Don’t be so agitated.
- S:** I’m not agitated, I’m just saying what’s obvious—
- H:** Your son is a bully.
- F:** What are you saying?
- H:** Mugino Minato bullies Hoshikawa Yori.
- F:** There is no proof of such things.
- K:** Hori-sensei, take that back.
- H:** Does Mugino have a knife or weapon at home?
- S:** What are you talking about? You’re spouting nonsense. ...You’re in that cabaret bar. Oh, I know. You burned that bar, didn’t you? You are the arsonist, aren’t you? The one who has a pig’s brain is you, isn’t it?
- 

Minato insisted that he had a pig’s brain and that Hori was the one who told Minato that when Saori demanded to know about Minato’s verbal and physical abuser in Scene 3. This resulted in Saori further perceiving Hori as guilty of threatening Minato’s wellbeing,

which was viewed as undesirable for a teacher to do to a student. Hence, Saori reported to the school, as seen in Scene 4. When Hori met Saori, he appeared to react nonchalantly when Saori constantly asked him questions. Hori then commented that it was typical of a single mother to be overly worried. Saori appeared offended, and Hori had to apologize for his words. Saori's anger escalated the next day Saori came back to school. Hori suddenly apologized and tried to explain what happened to Minato. He later said that Saori was being worked up and expressed that Minato bullied Yori. Saori responded out of anger and accused Hori of being the arsonist in the fire shown at the beginning of the story, despite having no proof whatsoever and basing it on a customer's rumor from her workplace. These scenes, displaying Saori's perspective as well as Hori's statements that appear blaming and guiltless, are the first part that initiated the snowballing of hostility towards Hori.

### B. The Second Trigger: Hori's Colleagues and Partner

The second party who supposedly has concerns about the student's well-being is the school staff, which includes the principal, a teacher named Kazuma, a teacher called Chorosuke, and an unnamed school staff. However, instead of Minato's well-being as the focus, the school staff had the school's reputation as their main interests.

**Table 3:**  
Scene reference 6

Scene	Characters	Dialog
6	Saori (S), Principal (P)	<p>P: We are deeply sorry.</p> <p>S: No, you've got it wrong. Wait a minute. Can we all sit down? Please sit. My son was hurt by his teacher's cruel words. This is not a misunderstanding.</p> <p>P: We're sure that the teacher's guidance was not conveyed accurately.</p> <p>...</p> <p>P: It seems like there was a misunderstanding—</p> <p>S: There is no misunderstanding! Because my son got hit by this teacher, he got hurt. Do you understand?</p> <p>P: We take your opinion seriously and we will provide more proper instructions in the future.</p> <p>S: <i>*talking to Hori*</i> So, did you hit him? Did you not hit him? Please answer which. Answer me!</p> <p>P: <i>*reads the content of folder shown by staff*</i> We confirmed that there was contact between the teacher's hand and Mugino Minato's nose.</p> <p>S: That means you hit him, right?</p> <p>P: <i>*continues reading*</i> There was contact between the hand and the nose.</p>

From Scene 6, it could be seen that the principal at first continuously apologized and believed that there was a misunderstanding, implicitly trying to defend Hori despite, at the same time, apologizing to Saori. However, throughout her conversation with Saori, oftentimes she had to read scripted sentences through a folder shown by the unnamed school staff. This caused Saori to become more upset with the principal's seemingly unserious response to Saori's complaint. It



highlighted that the principal most probably did not have Minato’s well-being as the main interest. Rather, in this scene, the principal was shown trying to avoid the conflict from escalating, as it might result in Saori taking legal action against the school.

This was further emphasized on a scene where Hori was called to the teacher’s office to discuss about what caused Minato to get hurt.

**Table 4:**  
Scene references 7-8

Scene	Characters	Dialog
7	Hori (H), Minato (M), Other Students	<p><i>Hori saw a bag thrown outside of the class. Inside the class, Minato was throwing things.</i></p> <p><b>H:</b> Mugino? What are you doing? Mugino, stop!</p> <p><i>Hori tried to stop Mugino by grabbing his hands, but accidentally elbowed Mugino’s nose.</i></p> <p><b>H:</b> I’m sorry. Are you alright? Why are you doing this?</p> <p><i>Hori asked the students.</i></p> <p><b>H:</b> What happened? Why? Playing around?</p> <p><b>Boy student:</b> He’s being annoyed.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Annoyed? How do you think you would feel if their things were thrown around like this? What do you think?</p> <p><b>M:</b> I won’t like it.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Right? Let’s apologize to them.</p> <p><b>M:</b> I’m sorry.</p> <p><i>Minato’s nose bled.</i></p> <p><b>Students:</b> A nosebleed!</p>
8	Hori (H), Principal (P), Other Teacher (T), Staff (F)	<p><b>H:</b> I didn’t hit him. I just happen to accidentally shove him with my arm...I can explain that I stopped Mugino from going rampage.</p> <p><b>F1:</b> If you blame the child, the parent will be enraged.</p> <p><b>F2:</b> If this reaches the Education Council, the whole school will be punished.</p> <p><b>F1:</b> Then all of us will...</p> <p><b>H:</b> Actually...</p> <p><b>P:</b> What actually happened is not important.</p>

Scene 7 showed the true interaction that happened in class when Hori was alleged of hitting Minato. On the other hand, Scene 8 showed Hori’s attempt to explain that he accidentally elbowed Minato when trying to stop him from going rampage in class. The scenes showed Hori’s attempt to keep Minato’s well-being from hurting himself from rampaging, as well as other students’ well-being from being potentially hurt by Minato’s rampage. However, it could be seen that the staff’s main concern was their own well-being and the school’s reputation. Even the principal emphasized that what truly happened was insignificant. It could be seen that the school staff’s desire to maintain their well-being clashed with Hori’s desire for Minato’s well-being. As Hori was the person mentioned by Minato to be the culprit of the abuse, the school staff became hostile to Hori for causing a ruckus that risked the school’s reputation and the school staff’s well-being. This hostility was hinted prior to Saori being shown coming to school to complain about Minato being hit by Hori.

**Table 5:**  
Scene references 9-10

Scene	Characters	Dialog
9	Hori (H), Kazuma (K), Chorosuke (C), Staff (F)	<p><b>K:</b> Mugino Minato's guardian came to protest.  <b>H:</b> Huh? About what?  <b>C:</b> You had sly eyes and scary look, so stay here.  <b>H:</b> I haven't done anything. I will properly explain to her.  <b>F:</b> We can't let this get out of hand. We're already used to facing guardians, so leave this to us.</p>
10	Hori (H), Hori's girlfriend (G)	<p><b>G:</b> Said the one who likes sending letters about misspellings to the publishers?  ...  Can't you find a more interesting hobby?  <b>H:</b> This makes me shiver in excitement, though.  <b>G:</b> When you're having fun, your face is scary. I'm sure your students are also scared of you. ... Your smile is so stiff children would cry and flowers would wither.</p>

In Scene 9, the staff insisted that Hori hide and let other staff talk to Saori because Hori had sly eyes and a scary face. It was even supported by the statement from Hori's girlfriend in a separate situation in Scene 10. The characters implied that his physical looks would lead people into assuming he was evil, despite the baseless assumption that someone with certain physical looks would certainly have an evil personality. The implications from these scenes further added to the snowballing of hostility towards Hori.

### C. The Third Trigger: The Students

The children also showed hostility towards Hori because he was assumed to threaten the children's well-being. This could be seen first through Minato's interaction with Hori.

**Table 6:**  
Scene references 11-12

Scene	Characters	Dialog
11	Hori (H), Students (D)	<p><b>H:</b> Mugino! Why? Did I do something to you? I haven't done anything, right?  <i>Minato nodded.</i>  <b>H:</b> I see.  <i>Hori walked away from the stairs. Mugino ran away, then fell on the stairs.</i>  <b>D1:</b> Are you alright? I will call a teacher!  <b>D2:</b> What's wrong?  <b>D3:</b> Hori pushed him.</p>
12	Hori (H)	<p><i>Hori encouraged the students while they were building up a human pyramid. Minato was on the second tier, and the third tier was about to build up when he collapsed.</i>  "Ah, you called yourself a boy? *hits Mugino lightly*</p>

Previously, Minato blamed Hori for being the person who said that Minato had a pig’s brain. However, in a later scene, Minato admitted that Hori actually did nothing wrong. Even so, he still ran away upon being confronted by Hori, most likely from guilt for blaming the innocent Hori. Still, when other students saw the confrontation and Minato fell from the stairs due to running in panic, a student perceived that Hori pushed Minato down the stairs. An intriguing part was that in a short scene, Hori hit Minato lightly after Minato collapsed in the students’ attempt to make a human pyramid during sports lesson (Scene 12). When it happened, Minato was visibly feeling unwell. He would then likely perceive Hori’s small action as a threat to his mental and emotional well-being, hence blaming Hori for his future injuries. The second part where hostility could be observed was through Hori’s interaction with a student, Hoshikawa.

**Table 7:**  
**Scene references 13-15**

Scene	Characters	Dialog
13	Hori (H), Hoshikawa (Y)	<p><i>*Hori saw Hoshikawa on the ground*</i>  <b>H:</b> Hoshikawa, what’s wrong?  <b>Y:</b> Good morning, my shoes fell off.  <i>*Hori helped grab Yori’s fallen bag*</i>  <b>H:</b> Here you go.  <b>Y:</b> Thank you.</p>
14	Hori (H), Hoshikawa (Y)	<p><i>Hoshikawa was locked in a bathroom stall when Hori came.</i>  <b>H:</b> What’s wrong?  <i>Hori noticed a clip that caused Yori not to be able to come out and removed it.</i>  <b>H:</b> Hoshikawa?  <b>Y:</b> Oh, it’s Hori-sensei. Thank you.</p>
15	Hori (H), Hoshikawa (Y), Saori (S)	<p><b>H:</b> I think that Mugino frequently bullied you.  <b>Y:</b> I have never been bullied by Mugino.  <b>H:</b> What are you saying?  <b>Y:</b> And Hori-sensei...  <b>S:</b> Hori-sensei is...?  <b>Y:</b> He always hits Mugino.  <b>H:</b> What was that?  <b>Y:</b> Everyone also knows, but <i>sensei</i> (teacher) is scary, so everyone stays quiet about it.</p>

From Scenes 13-14, it was implied that Hoshikawa was being bullied by his classmates. In a separate perspective, it was revealed that Minato decided to rampage in class as a distraction, which led to Hori’s attempt to stop Minato. Hoshikawa witnessed the attempt, yet also blamed Hori when he was asked to testify whether Minato bullied him in Scene 15. Furthermore, Hoshikawa blamed Hori even though Hori helped him several times. From these scenes, despite Hori’s demonstrated kindness to Hoshikawa, it was assumed that Hoshikawa prioritized Minato’s well-being in return for distracting the bullies from before. This was also because, throughout the story, Minato was closer to Hoshikawa than Hori was. Thus, there was the instance where Hoshikawa channeled this desire for Minato’s well-being by blaming Hori in the process. Other students were also implied to be concerned about their own wellbeing when facing the issue.

**Table 8:**  
Scene references 16-18

Scene	Characters	Dialog
16	Hori (H), Kida (K)	<p><i>Kida took Hori to the school's backyard and pointed to under the stairs. There was a dead cat.</i></p> <p><b>K:</b> When I found it, it was already dry.</p> <p><b>H:</b> The cat?</p> <p><b>K:</b> I saw it. Mugino was playing with the cat.</p>
17	Hori (H), Kida (K), Kazuma (A)	<p><b>H:</b> Kida, come here for a moment. Can you tell the principal what you told me last time? That Mugino possibly killed the cat?</p> <p><b>K:</b> Huh? I didn't say that at all.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Huh? Why are you lying?</p> <p><i>Hori grabbed Kida's shoulders.</i></p> <p><b>A:</b> What are you doing?!</p> <p><b>K:</b> It hurts!</p>
18	Unnamed teacher	<p><i>Hori went to class 5-2. Inside, there was already a teacher inside and the students were seen answering the questionnaire.</i></p> <p>"Think about it carefully and answer it honestly."</p> <p><i>Students are seen circling "yes". There is one student who initially said "no" but changed it to "yes". The questions written were:</i></p> <p><i>Have you ever heard that Hori-sensei is scary?</i></p> <p><i>Has he ever shouted at you or touched you?</i></p>

In Scene 16, a female student, Kida, reported a dead cat in the school's backyard and suspected Minato of killing the cat. However, when Hori attempted to clarify the suspicion of Minato killing the cat with Kida, she refused to acknowledge ever talking about it. She also showed visible discomfort and pain as Hori grabbed her shoulders in Scene 17. Kida's strong avoidance was her attempt to protect her well-being by evading involvement with the problematic party, Hori. Kida's avoidance was also a form of hostility channeled towards Hori.

The series of events eventually led to students filling in surveys where they admitted that they felt scared of Hori or had ever been touched or shouted at by Hori (Scene 18). A frame in one scene highlighted how a student peeked at his deskmate's survey to copy her answer, and another student changed an initial "No" answer to a "Yes". It was likely that several students simply followed what the majority were doing so that their answers would not stand out by themselves. Homogeneity as a part of collectivism was prevalent in Japanese culture (Ogihara et al, 2014); hence, not adhering to the group and standing out from the majority would cause a risk of public scrutiny. Avoiding situations where one would stand out from the rest could be viewed as the unnamed students' way of protecting their well-being. This, too, led to the necessity of directing hostility towards Hori.

#### D. Hori the Scapegoat

As seen in different characters' hostility towards Hori, they had either particular assumptions about Hori that clouded their perceptions or experienced situations that forced them to direct hostility towards Hori. Despite some of the character's awareness of the truth, the existing accusations that had spread within the school community, combined with the school staff's priority to protect the school's reputation, constructed Hori as the core of the problem and the victim of scapegoating. Hence, he was the 'evil' that had to be punished for causing a major problem in the community.

**Table 9:**  
**Scene reference 19**

Scene	Characters	Dialog
19	Saori (S), Principal (P), Staff (F)	<p><b>H:</b> I really haven't done anything.</p> <p><b>P:</b> I'm also sure about that.</p> <p><b>H:</b> That's why you have to stop this, please!</p> <p><b>F:</b> If you back down now, it will only increase their suspicion.</p> <p><b>H:</b> Then, that time, why don't you—</p> <p><b>P:</b> You are protecting our school.</p>

The snowballing of hostility resulted in Hori's expulsion from the school. However, for other parties involved, he was also the 'good' perceived as the savior of the school's reputation and protector of his former colleagues' well-being as he prevented them from losing their jobs. He would also be perceived as the bringer of peace as he would no longer cause any students to feel scared. This was how the scapegoat mechanism worked in Hori's case.

#### CONCLUSION

From the study of the scapegoat mechanism implemented in Hori's case, several implications could be drawn. Hori's scapegoating highlighted the existence of conflict and moral interests between teachers at school with different parties, be it the students, colleagues, or the parents. The scene where the principal said what truly happened did not matter, for instance, implied how the parents held great power over the school's reputation, and sometimes, the staff had to comply with the parents' demand despite wanting to believe the truth behind the student's case. Secondly, the scenes in the film demonstrated that teachers were prone to these conflicts of interest, displaying the fragility of teachers' positions when faced with similar situations. In addition to that, it implied how there were existing expectations for them to not only be morally good but also adhere to the dominant powers that may be.

This study focused on discussing Hori's character in accordance with the scapegoating mechanism. However, plenty remains to be explored from this film. Future studies could focus on the analysis of other specific characters, especially Saori and Minato who mainly appeared in the scenes. Due to the scope and limitations of the analysis, this paper also has not discussed Minato and Hoshikawa's relationship deeply despite its equally vital aspect in the film, hence allowing future studies to be conducted focusing on this topic.

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