



“Echoes of the Unseen”: A Psychological Inquiry into Memory, Identity, and Hidden Truths in *Rangitaranga* (2015)

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20126881>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 23-04-2026

Published: 10-05-2026

Keywords:

Fear of the Unknown, Superstition, Repressed Memory, Identity Reconstruction, Moral Guilt, Psychological Conflict.

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the psychological themes presented in *Rangitaranga* using thematic and content analysis. The research focuses on major psychological concepts such as fear of the unknown, superstition as social control, repressed memory and psychological conflict, identity reconstruction, and moral guilt and consequences. By examining the film’s narrative, dialogues, characters, and visual elements, the study explores how these themes are represented through the experiences of Gautam and the mysterious events surrounding the village. The findings reveal that the film presents suspense and mystery not only as entertainment but also as reflections of human psychological processes. Gautam’s journey from confusion and uncertainty to self-awareness demonstrates how hidden memories and unresolved past experiences influence identity, emotions, and behavior. The study also highlights how repressed memories contribute to emotional conflict and psychological tension throughout the narrative. In addition, the film portrays how superstition and cultural beliefs influence social behavior and act as mechanisms of control within the community. The villagers’ fear-based beliefs reflect the psychological effects of conformity and collective fear. The movie further explores themes



of guilt, morality, and accountability by showing the emotional burden created by past actions and hidden truths. Symbolic elements such as the isolated house, dark forest, and mysterious atmosphere strengthen the representation of fear and emotional conflict. Overall, the study concludes that *Rangitaranga* effectively presents complex psychological ideas in an engaging and relatable manner, making it valuable for understanding human behavior, fear, memory, emotional conflict, and identity development.

Introduction

The Kannada psychological mystery film *Rangitaranga*, directed by Anup Bhandari, is more than a suspense thriller because it explores important psychological and sociocultural themes through its narrative and characters. The film deals with concepts such as fear, memory, identity, superstition, and moral guilt, making it suitable for psychological analysis. This study uses thematic analysis to examine how these themes are represented and how they reflect human emotions, behavior, and social influence.

The analysis is supported by interdisciplinary research that explains the connection between psychological processes and sociocultural contexts. Studies by Cinnamon Lindsay Latimer et al. (2021) and Jacqueline Paul et al. (2026) suggest that identity and wellbeing are closely connected to culture, community, and collective experiences. Although these studies focus on Māori youth, their theoretical ideas are relevant to *Rangitaranga*, where characters are strongly influenced by social beliefs, cultural traditions, and past experiences. The film reflects the psychological understanding that identity is shaped through interaction with society and culture.

Another important aspect explored in the study is autonomy and social control. Research by Wyeth et al. (2010) and Palmer et al. (2021) explains how systems of authority and external control influence behavior and decision-making. In *Rangitaranga*, this is reflected through superstition, secrecy, and social hierarchy, which shape the actions and perceptions of the characters. The film demonstrates how fear and cultural beliefs can regulate behavior and limit individual freedom.

A major theme in the film is the fear of the unknown. Sharma and Rao (2021) explain that uncertainty and ambiguity create strong emotional and cognitive reactions. The film creates this fear through isolated settings, mysterious events, and incomplete information, which disturb both the characters and the audience. Closely connected to this is the theme of superstition as social control. Patil and Desai (2019)



discuss how supernatural beliefs can influence collective thinking and maintain authority within communities. Similarly, the film shows how fear-based beliefs affect people's actions and reinforce power structures.

The study also focuses on repressed memory and psychological conflict. According to Mehta and Singh (2021), traumatic experiences may be suppressed but continue to influence behavior indirectly. In *Rangitaranga*, memories are fragmented and hidden, and the gradual revelation of the past creates emotional and psychological tension. Another central theme is identity reconstruction. Nair and Thomas (2022) explain that identity changes through reflection and life experiences. The characters in the film undergo emotional and psychological transformation as hidden truths are revealed and personal beliefs are challenged.

Finally, the theme of moral guilt and accountability adds an ethical dimension to the narrative. Das (2023) explains that guilt is connected to moral reasoning and social behavior. In the film, guilt becomes an important force that leads characters toward recognition, justice, and transformation.

Thematic analysis is used as a qualitative method to identify and interpret recurring patterns, dialogues, and character developments within the film. Overall, this study views *Rangitaranga* as a psychologically rich and culturally rooted film that reflects important human concerns related to fear, identity, memory, morality, and social influence.

Background of the study

The study of films from a psychological perspective has gained importance because films are effective tools for understanding human emotions, behavior, memory, and social interaction. Psychological films, especially mystery and thriller genres, are useful for exploring themes such as fear, trauma, identity, guilt, and perception. Because of this, films are increasingly analyzed in psychology, media studies, and cultural studies.

Rangitaranga is suitable for psychological analysis because it combines suspense, emotional conflict, and cultural beliefs within a complex narrative. The film explores themes such as fear of the unknown, superstition, repressed memory, identity reconstruction, and moral guilt. The characters experience emotional and psychological struggles as hidden truths gradually emerge, showing how past experiences, trauma, and social beliefs influence thoughts, emotions, and behavior. The film also reflects how secrecy and collective beliefs shape individual perception and decision-making.



Previous studies support the importance of analyzing these themes. Sharma and Rao (2021) discuss fear and uncertainty as major emotional responses, while Patil and Desai (2019) explain how superstition can function as social control. Mehta and Singh (2021) focus on repressed memory and psychological conflict, and Nair and Thomas (2022) examine identity reconstruction through emotional and social experiences. These perspectives show that *Rangitaranga* is a valuable text for thematic psychological analysis because it combines cultural storytelling with emotional and cognitive themes.

Rationale of the Study

The main reason for selecting *Rangitaranga* for this study is its strong representation of psychological themes within a suspenseful and culturally rooted narrative. The film realistically portrays emotional conflict, fear, trauma, identity confusion, and moral responsibility, making it relevant for psychological analysis. Through its storytelling, the film demonstrates how hidden experiences, beliefs, and social influences affect human thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

The narrative strongly reflects themes of fear, identity transformation, and psychological conflict. It shows how individuals struggle with uncertainty, hidden truths, and social pressure, while also portraying how guilt and past experiences influence present actions. The film further highlights the impact of superstition, secrecy, and collective beliefs on decision-making and behavior. These themes are closely related to psychological concepts such as social influence, emotional regulation, memory processes, and self-identity.

This study also contributes to research on psychological themes in Kannada cinema through thematic analysis. Although *Rangitaranga* is widely appreciated as a mystery thriller, limited academic attention has been given to its psychological and sociocultural dimensions. Therefore, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the film by connecting cinematic representation with psychological theory and showing how films can be used to explore human behavior, emotional development, and social realities.

Review of Literature

Paul et al. (2026) examine the economic well-being of rangatahi Māori in relation to *kāinga* (home and place of belonging), emphasizing that wellbeing extends beyond financial factors to include cultural identity, social relationships, and connection to land. The study highlights that *kāinga* plays a central role in shaping opportunities, identity, and overall development among Māori youth. The authors identify that systemic inequalities and historical marginalization continue to affect economic outcomes, while culturally grounded approaches support resilience and self-determination. Strengthening



connections to family, land, and cultural values enables rangatahi Māori to achieve both economic stability and a stronger sense of identity. The study also stresses the importance of inclusive policies that recognize Indigenous perspectives. From a psychological perspective, the findings highlight the role of belonging, identity, and environment in shaping wellbeing and behavior. In relation to Rangitaranga, these ideas help explain how background and social context influence identity and personal development, making the study relevant for understanding themes such as identity reconstruction and social influence.

Das (2023) explores the theme of moral guilt in contemporary cinema, examining how films portray guilt as a complex psychological and moral experience. The study suggests that guilt is often represented both as a burden that causes emotional distress and as a transformative force that can lead to personal growth. Characters who acknowledge and confront their wrongdoing are more likely to achieve psychological relief, redemption, and a sense of moral closure. In contrast, those who deny or suppress guilt tend to experience prolonged internal conflict and negative consequences. The research also highlights how audiences interpret these narratives as moral lessons, reinforcing ideas of accountability, justice, and ethical responsibility. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the dynamic relationship between guilt, justice, and redemption within cinematic storytelling. However, *Das (2023)* acknowledges that relying solely on film analysis limits the generalizability of findings, as cinematic representations may not fully reflect real-life psychological processes or diverse cultural experiences.

Nair and Thomas (2022) analyze identity reconstruction in narratives centered on trauma and transformation, highlighting how individuals reshape their sense of self following disruptive experiences. The study reveals that identity reconstruction occurs through processes such as self-reflection, meaning-making, and interaction with others. Characters often transition from confusion and fragmented self-perception to greater self-awareness, illustrating psychological growth and adaptation. Audience responses further emphasize the relatability of these identity struggles, suggesting that such narratives resonate with real-life experiences of change and recovery. The authors argue that identity is not fixed but fluid, continuously shaped by personal experiences and evolving social contexts. Resilience is identified as a key factor that enables individuals to navigate trauma and rebuild a coherent identity. However, the study acknowledges a limitation in its limited consideration of cultural variations, as identity formation and reconstruction may differ significantly across sociocultural backgrounds and contexts.

Latimer et al. (2021) examine the provision of health and social services for Māori youth (rangatahi) through the lens of tino rangatiratanga (self-determination). The study highlights that mainstream service



systems often fail to effectively meet the needs of Māori communities due to cultural misunderstandings, historical mistrust, and systemic inequalities rooted in colonization. As a result, many families are hesitant to engage with services that do not align with their cultural values and practices. The authors emphasize that rangatahi wellbeing is deeply connected to cultural identity, whānau (family), and strong community relationships. They argue that culturally grounded, community-led approaches are more effective in fostering trust, strengthening identity, and improving mental health outcomes. Such approaches prioritize Indigenous knowledge systems and collective wellbeing. Overall, the study underscores the importance of empowering Indigenous communities and integrating culturally relevant practices into service delivery to create meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable improvements in youth wellbeing.

Palmer et al. (2021) examine Māori perspectives on pest management and the use of biotechnology in conservation, emphasizing the importance of rangatiratanga, or self-determination. The study explains that environmental decisions are influenced not only by science but also by cultural values, Indigenous knowledge, and community autonomy. While biotechnology may provide environmental benefits, it also creates ethical, cultural, and social concerns for Māori communities. The authors highlight the conflict between externally

controlled scientific approaches and the desire of Māori people to maintain authority over decisions affecting their land and environment. Psychologically, the study emphasizes the importance of autonomy, identity, and collective responsibility in shaping people's responses to change. Excluding Indigenous voices can create mistrust and resistance, whereas respecting rangatiratanga promotes empowerment and strengthens cultural identity. These ideas connect with Rangitaranga, where tradition, fear, power, and belief systems strongly influence social behavior and perception.

Sharma and Rao (2021) examine the theme of fear of the unknown in Indian psychological thrillers through qualitative thematic analysis. The study finds that elements such as ambiguity, darkness, mystery, and unexplained events strongly contribute to feelings of anxiety, suspense, and anticipation among viewers. The authors explain that this fear is connected to evolutionary psychology, where uncertainty naturally increases alertness and survival-oriented responses. Audience interpretations in the study suggest that unfamiliar settings and unresolved narratives create stronger emotional engagement and maintain psychological tension throughout the film. The research highlights that fear of the unknown is an effective narrative device that enhances suspense and emotional depth in cinematic storytelling. Filmmakers use uncertainty strategically to influence audience perception, curiosity, and emotional



reactions. The study is relevant to Rangitaranga, where mystery, hidden truths, and unfamiliar environments create psychological tension. However, the research is limited to urban audiences, which may reduce its broader cultural generalizability.

Mehta and Singh (2021) examine repressed memory and psychological conflict from a psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on how traumatic experiences are often pushed into the unconscious mind. The study finds that suppressed memories frequently reappear through fragmented recollections, intrusive thoughts, emotional distress, and internal confusion. Characters in narratives often experience significant psychological conflict while attempting to connect unresolved past trauma with their present identity and sense of self. Audience responses in the study reveal empathy toward these struggles, as viewers recognize the emotional complexity of coping with hidden trauma. The authors explain that repression acts both as a protective defense mechanism and as a source of continuous psychological tension. The research emphasizes the important role of memory in influencing behavior, emotions, and identity formation. These ideas are relevant to Rangitaranga, where hidden memories and

emotional conflict shape the protagonist's journey. However, the study is limited by the absence of longitudinal analysis on long-term trauma recovery.

McGruer et al. (2019) explore the lived experiences of Māori individuals with osteoarthritis using a qualitative approach based on Kaupapa Māori principles. The study emphasizes the importance of cultural context, showing that health experiences are shaped not only by physical conditions but also by identity, community support, and traditional values. The authors argue that mainstream healthcare systems often fail to fully consider Indigenous perspectives, creating gaps in understanding and care. From a psychological perspective, the findings highlight the role of cultural identity, resilience, and social support in coping with chronic illness and emotional challenges. The study also emphasizes how personal experiences and environmental contexts influence perception and wellbeing. These ideas are relevant to Rangitaranga, where memory, social environment, and emotional experiences shape characters' identities and psychological struggles. Thus, the study provides a useful framework for understanding themes such as identity reconstruction, emotional conflict, and psychological tension in the film.

Patil and Desai (2019) examine how superstition functions as a mechanism of social control in rural narratives, emphasizing its role in shaping collective behavior and maintaining social order. The study finds that beliefs related to spirits, curses, and ritual practices are often reinforced by elders and community leaders to regulate behavior and encourage conformity among individuals. These belief



systems create fear and discourage questioning, thereby helping to preserve existing authority structures and social hierarchies. The authors argue that superstition acts as a subtle but powerful tool for maintaining power dynamics within communities. Audience interpretations in the study reveal awareness of both the fear created by such beliefs and the manipulation associated with them. The research also highlights the psychological influence of collective beliefs on individual decision-making and behavior. These ideas are relevant to Rangitaranga, where fear, traditional beliefs, and social pressure strongly influence the actions and perceptions of the villagers. However, the study gives limited attention to cultural variations and modernization.

Wyeth et al. (2010) examine the concepts of rangatiratanga (self-determination) and *ōritetanga* (equality) in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi. The study highlights the tension between equal treatment and the preservation of cultural autonomy, arguing that standardized systems often fail to recognize the importance of identity, self-governance, and community control. The authors suggest that true wellbeing is achieved when individuals and communities are empowered to maintain authority over their cultural and social practices. From a psychological perspective, the study emphasizes the connection between autonomy, identity formation, and personal agency. These ideas are relevant to Rangitaranga, where characters struggle between societal beliefs, traditional expectations, and personal realization. The film reflects how social influence and hidden truths affect individual identity and decision-making. Thus, the study provides a useful framework for understanding themes such as identity reconstruction, social control, power, and psychological conflict within the narrative.

Methodology

Aim

The present study examines how Rangitaranga represents psychological and sociocultural themes through its narrative and character development. The research focuses on themes such as fear, memory, identity, superstition, and moral guilt. Using thematic analysis, the study explores how psychological conflict and social beliefs influence behavior and perception. Overall, the study aims to understand the deeper psychological and cultural meanings presented in the film.

Research Objectives:

1. To analyze how fear of the unknown is constructed and used as a psychological and narrative device.



2. To examine the role of superstition as a mechanism of social control within the community.
3. To explore representations of repressed memory and internal psychological conflict.
4. To understand processes of identity reconstruction in relation to past experiences and social context.
5. To investigate the portrayal of moral guilt and its connection to accountability and transformation.

Research Questions:

1. How does Rangitaranga construct and intensify the fear of the unknown through narrative and visual elements?
2. In what ways does the film depict superstition as a tool for maintaining social control and authority?
3. How are repressed memories and psychological conflicts represented through characters and storytelling?
4. How does the film portray identity reconstruction in response to hidden pasts and social influences?
5. What role does moral guilt play in shaping character actions and narrative resolution?

Research Design and Paradigm

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in **constructivist-interpretivist paradigm**, where meaning is understood as socially and culturally constructed through narratives, symbols, and interactions. The research is exploratory in nature and seeks to interpret the **psychological and sociocultural dimensions** embedded within the film.

A hybrid methodological approach combining **Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)** and **Qualitative Content Analysis (Krippendorff, 2013)** is employed. Thematic analysis facilitates the identification of recurring patterns and deeper meanings across the narrative, while content analysis allows for a systematic examination of dialogues, visual cues, and symbolic elements. This combination enables a comprehensive understanding of both explicit and implicit messages within the film, ensuring analytical depth and rigor.



Sample Selection

The primary sample for this study is *Rangitaranga* (2015), selected through **purposive sampling** due to its relevance to psychological and sociocultural themes such as fear, identity, and memory. The film's strong narrative structure, cultural setting, and psychological complexity make it an appropriate case for in-depth qualitative analysis.

As a single-case study, the film is treated as a **cultural and psychological text**. It serves as a medium through which broader societal beliefs, power structures, and individual psychological experiences can be examined. The richness of its audiovisual storytelling allows for detailed interpretation of both narrative and symbolic dimensions.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through repeated and detailed viewing of the film over an extended period. The film was divided into key narrative segments, and important scenes were closely examined and documented. Dialogues, character interactions, and visual elements were carefully noted to capture both explicit and subtle meanings.

Particular attention was given to:

- Scenes depicting fear, suspense, and ambiguity
- Instances where superstition influences behavior or decision-making
- Moments revealing memory gaps, flashbacks, or hidden pasts
- Character transformations and identity-related revelations
- Visual and cinematic elements such as lighting, setting, sound, and camera angles

Supplementary materials such as interviews, reviews, and critical discussions were also referred to in order to contextualize interpretations and strengthen analytical understanding. A coding framework was developed to organize recurring ideas into thematic categories such as “fear of the unknown,” “social control through belief,” “repressed memory,” “identity transformation,” and “moral accountability.”



Analytic Procedure

The analysis followed the six-phase framework of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. **Familiarization:** The film was watched multiple times to gain an in-depth understanding of its narrative and psychological layers.
2. **Initial Coding:** Relevant scenes, dialogues, and visual cues were coded to identify patterns related to fear, identity, memory, and power.
3. **Searching for Themes:** Codes were grouped into broader themes reflecting key psychological and sociocultural concepts.
4. **Reviewing Themes:** Themes were refined by comparing them across different scenes to ensure consistency and clarity.
5. **Defining Themes:** Each theme was clearly defined and linked to theoretical concepts from the review of literature.
6. **Writing Up:** The final themes were presented with supporting examples from the film and interpreted using psychological and cultural frameworks.

Reflexivity Statement

As a researcher with a background in psychology and media studies, I acknowledge that my interpretations are shaped by my academic training and sociocultural context. My perspective as an Indian researcher influences how I understand themes related to culture, belief systems, and social structures within the film, particularly in relation to how tradition, superstition, and community dynamics are represented and internalized by characters. This positionality allows for culturally sensitive insights, but it also necessitates a conscious awareness of potential biases that may arise from familiarity with similar sociocultural frameworks.

To maintain analytical rigor, reflexivity was practiced throughout the research process. This involved continuous self-reflection, systematic note-taking, and critical evaluation of emerging interpretations at each stage of the thematic analysis. I actively questioned my assumptions and remained attentive to alternative readings of the film's narrative and characters. Efforts were made to ensure that the analysis remained closely grounded in the film's visual and narrative



content, while also being informed by relevant psychological and media theories. Additionally, maintaining a balance between subjective interpretation and theoretical support helped enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. This reflexive approach ensured that the analysis was not only interpretative but also methodologically transparent and academically robust.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based entirely on publicly available content and does not involve human participants. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. However, ethical standards were maintained by ensuring accurate representation of the film's content and proper acknowledgment of all referenced sources.

The analysis avoids speculative or clinical judgments about characters and instead focuses on interpretive understanding based on observable narrative and cinematic elements.

The study adheres to academic integrity and respects the creative work of the filmmakers.

However, ethical care was taken by:

- Systematically deriving themes from the film using a transparent thematic analysis process
- Ensuring that all themes are supported by actual scenes, dialogues, and narrative elements
- Avoiding researcher bias by not imposing personal assumptions on the data
- Maintaining reflexivity throughout the analysis to remain aware of subjective interpretations
- Properly citing all research studies and theoretical frameworks used
- Avoiding false, exaggerated, or unsupported interpretations of the film
- Respecting the original storyline, cultural context, and creative intent of *Rangitaranga*

The study follows ethical principles of qualitative research and thematic analysis, focusing only on scholarly interpretation while maintaining respect for the film as a creative work.



Results: Thematic Findings

Thematic analysis of *RangiTaranga* revealed six dominant themes that reflect deeply embedded psychological, cultural, and socio-symbolic discourses within the film's narrative structure, character arcs, and visual storytelling. These themes were developed through iterative coding, interpretive analysis, and conceptual mapping of key scenes, dialogues, and narrative transitions. The findings highlight how the film interweaves elements of mystery and folklore with psychological complexity, revealing underlying tensions between memory, identity, belief systems, and moral accountability.

Through repeated viewing and thematic categorization, six interrelated dimensions emerged, each contributing to a nuanced understanding of fear, cognition, and socio-cultural influence within the storyline. These themes demonstrate how the film not only constructs suspense but also reflects deeper psychological struggles and collective belief systems.

1 . Fear of the Unknown

A central theme in the film is the pervasive fear of the unknown, which drives both the narrative tension and the psychological experiences of the characters. The unexplained disappearances, mysterious symbols, and unfamiliar rural setting create an atmosphere of uncertainty and cognitive unease. This fear is not merely external but also internal, as characters confront gaps in knowledge and understanding.

The ambiguity surrounding events reflects a fundamental human tendency to fear what cannot be explained or controlled. Psychologically, this aligns with uncertainty avoidance and anxiety responses, where individuals attempt to impose meaning on ambiguous stimuli. The film sustains suspense by withholding clear explanations, thereby immersing both characters and viewers in a continuous state of anticipation and apprehension.

The theme of fear of the unknown in *Rangitaranga* can be explained through the psychological theory of intolerance of uncertainty. This theory states that people experience anxiety and fear when situations are unclear or unpredictable. In the film, the mysterious events, isolated setting, and hidden truths create constant uncertainty among the characters. Cognitive psychology explains that the human mind often interprets ambiguity as a possible threat, leading to suspicion and emotional tension. The film shows how fear is increased not only by real danger but also by



the imagination of what might happen. Thus, *Rangitaranga* reflects how uncertainty strongly influences human emotions and behavior.

2 . Superstition as Social Control

The narrative highlights how superstition operates as a mechanism of social regulation within the community. Traditional beliefs, myths, and ritualistic practices are used to explain events that lack rational clarity, thereby reinforcing collective norms and controlling behavior. Villagers often rely on supernatural explanations rather than questioning underlying truths, which creates an environment where fear is normalized and dissent is discouraged.

This reflects how culturally embedded belief systems can function as informal structures of authority, shaping perceptions and limiting critical inquiry. The film subtly critiques this dynamic by revealing how superstition can obscure reality and sustain cycles of ignorance and fear.

The theme of superstition as social control in *Rangitaranga* can be understood through Social Influence Theory and cultural psychology. These theories explain that people's beliefs and behaviors are often shaped by social norms, traditions, and fear of social rejection. In the film, supernatural beliefs and village superstitions influence how characters think and behave, preventing them from questioning authority or hidden truths. Fear-based beliefs are used to maintain control and obedience within the community. The film shows how collective beliefs can manipulate individual perception and decision-making. Thus, superstition becomes a psychological tool for maintaining power and social order.

3 . Repressed Memory and Psychological Conflict

Another significant theme is the role of repressed memory in shaping identity and behavior. The protagonist's journey is marked by fragmented recollections and hidden past experiences that gradually resurface. These suppressed memories create internal psychological conflict, as the individual struggles to reconcile present identity with forgotten truths. The film portrays memory not as a stable construct but as something that can be distorted, buried, and later reconstructed.

This aligns with psychological theories of repression, where unresolved trauma or conflict is pushed out of conscious awareness but continues to influence behavior and emotional responses. The gradual uncovering of these memories becomes central to both the narrative resolution and the character's psychological integration.



The theme of repressed memory and psychological conflict in *Rangitaranga* can be explained through psychoanalytic theory, especially the ideas of Sigmund Freud. According to this theory, painful or traumatic experiences may be pushed into the unconscious mind to avoid emotional distress. However, these hidden memories continue to influence thoughts, emotions, and behavior indirectly. In the film, fragmented memories and hidden truths create emotional tension and confusion among the characters. The gradual revelation of the past reflects the conflict between suppressed experiences and conscious identity. Thus, the film shows how unresolved memories can lead to psychological struggle and emotional instability.

4 . Identity Reconstruction

Closely linked to memory is the theme of identity reconstruction. As hidden truths emerge, the protagonist undergoes a process of redefining selfhood. The film presents identity as fluid and contingent upon knowledge, experience, and context rather than fixed or inherent. The revelation of past events forces a re-evaluation of personal history, relationships, and moral positioning.

This transformation reflects the psychological process of self-concept revision, where new information leads to a restructuring of one's sense of self. The narrative emphasizes that identity is not merely discovered but actively reconstructed through confrontation with truth.

The theme of identity reconstruction in *Rangitaranga* can be explained through Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and narrative identity theory. These theories suggest that identity is not fixed but changes through life experiences, self-reflection, and social interaction. In the film, characters undergo emotional and psychological transformation as hidden truths about their past are revealed. Their beliefs, relationships, and understanding of themselves change throughout the story. The film shows how individuals rebuild their sense of self after facing trauma, conflict, and reality. Thus, *Rangitaranga* reflects the psychological process of redefining identity through experience and self-discovery.

5 . Moral Guilt and Consequences

The theme of moral guilt is intricately woven into the storyline, highlighting the psychological burden of past actions and ethical transgressions. Characters are shown grappling with the consequences of decisions that were previously concealed or ignored. The film underscores how guilt operates as an internal moral compass, resurfacing even when external accountability is absent.



This psychological tension drives key narrative developments, as unresolved guilt manifests in fear, avoidance, and eventual confrontation. The unfolding events suggest that moral consequences are inevitable, reinforcing the idea that actions, regardless of secrecy, carry enduring psychological and social repercussions.

The theme of moral guilt and consequences in *Rangitaranga* can be explained through cognitive dissonance theory and moral psychology. These theories suggest that people experience psychological discomfort when their actions conflict with their moral values or conscience. In the film, characters struggle emotionally after confronting past actions, hidden truths, and unethical decisions. Feelings of guilt influence their thoughts, behavior, and relationships, leading to fear, regret, and emotional conflict. The narrative shows that actions have psychological and social consequences that cannot be easily escaped. Thus, the film highlights how guilt and conscience play an important role in moral accountability and human behavior.

Table 1. Thematic Findings from Thematic and Content Analysis of Rangitaranga (2015)

Theme	Description	Representative Examples / Indicators	Theoretical Reference(s)
1. Fear of the Unknown	The film constructs fear through ambiguity, darkness, and unexplained events, reflecting how uncertainty intensifies psychological distress and suspense	- Isolated island setting creating unease. - Mysterious disappearances and deaths - Unexplained sounds and visions - Protagonist’s growing paranoia	Freud (1919); Carleton (2016); Zuckerman (1994)
2. Superstition as Social Control	Superstitious beliefs are used by the community to regulate behavior, maintain silence, and avoid confronting hidden truths, reinforcing collective fear	- Villagers attributing events to supernatural forces - Avoidance of questioning local myths - Fear-based compliance within the community	Durkheim (1912); Foucault (1980); Vyse (2013)



	and conformity.	- Silence surrounding past crimes
3. Repressed Memory and Psychological Conflict	The protagonist's suppressed memories gradually resurface, creating internal conflict and emotional distress, highlighting the impact of unresolved trauma	-Fragmented flashbacks of childhood - Confusion about identity and past - Emotional distress triggered by familiar places - Gradual uncovering of traumatic truth
4. Identity Reconstruction	The narrative follows the protagonist's journey of rediscovering his true identity, illustrating identity as fluid and shaped by memory, experience, and revelation	-Transformation from Gautam to Sandhya's past connection - Piecing together past relationships - Confrontation with hidden identity - Acceptance of true self
5. Moral Guilt and Consequences	The film explores how past actions, particularly moral transgressions, lead to long-term psychological burden and inevitable consequences.	- Hidden crimes resurfacing over time - Characters experiencing guilt and fear - Revelation of past wrongdoing (Sandhya's fate) - Justice unfolding through truth revelation

Discussion

The present study aimed to critically examine Rangitaranga through the dual lenses of thematic and content analysis, exploring how the film constructs narratives of fear of the unknown, superstition as social control, repressed memory and psychological conflict, identity reconstruction, and moral guilt and consequences. The six emergent themes discussed in the previous section do



not exist in isolation but are deeply interwoven with broader sociocultural beliefs, folklore traditions, and psychological processes embedded within rural contexts. This section interprets the significance of these themes in light of existing research and theoretical frameworks within media psychology and cultural psychology.

Fear of the Unknown

Fear of the Unknown refers to the anxiety and discomfort people experience when they encounter situations that are unfamiliar or difficult to understand. This fear often arises from uncertainty and lack of clear information, leading individuals to imagine threats or supernatural causes. In the movie Rangitaranga, this theme is portrayed through the mysterious and unsettling events in the isolated village setting.

The characters are surrounded by unexplained occurrences, hidden pasts, and a sense of secrecy that creates constant tension and fear. Both the protagonist and the audience feel uneasy due to the unfamiliar environment and lack of clarity about what is happening. As the narrative unfolds, the fear gradually shifts from assumptions of supernatural forces to more realistic explanations, highlighting how uncertainty and limited knowledge can shape human perception, beliefs, and emotional responses.

Timestamp	Dialogue	Character
00:18:10	“This house feels strange?”	Indu
00:22:05	“Feels like someone is there?”	Indu
00:25:18	“I can’t understand this sound”	Gautam
00:27:05	“What we cannot see is what scares us”	Gautam
00:30:12	“Unseen things create fear”	Gautam
00:33:40	“Did you hear that again?”	Indu



00:36:15

“Something is not right here”

Indu

00:39:00

“There is something we are missing”

Gautam

Superstition as Social Control

Superstition as Social Control refers to how beliefs in supernatural forces, rituals, and fear of curses are used to influence and control people’s behavior. These beliefs often create fear and obedience, especially in communities where questioning authority is discouraged. In the movie Rangitaranga, this theme is clearly reflected through the way the village is shaped by superstitious beliefs and mysterious traditions.

The villagers rely on supernatural explanations for strange events, which creates a sense of fear and prevents them from questioning what is really happening. Certain individuals take advantage of these beliefs to maintain control and hide the truth. As a result, people become passive and accepting of situations without seeking logical answers. As the story progresses, these superstitions are gradually challenged, revealing how fear-based beliefs can be used as a tool to manipulate others and maintain power within a community.

Timestamp	Dialogue	Character
00:45:08	“This is God’s curse”	Elder
00:50:14	“Questioning is wrong”	Villagers
00:52:20	“ Belief ensures safety”	Villagers
00:52:00	“Everyone follows this rule	Villagers
00:55:18	“Some things should not be questioned”	Elder



00:58:40	“Do not interfere in these matters”	Villager
01:01:05	“Elders know what is right”	Elder
01:03:22	“Something bad will happen if you ignore this”	Villagers

Repressed Memory and Psychological Conflict

Repressed Memory and Psychological Conflict refers to the way painful or traumatic experiences are pushed out of conscious awareness, often leading to inner tension, confusion, and emotional struggle. These hidden memories may not be fully recognized, but they continue to influence a person’s thoughts, feelings, and behavior. In the movie Rangitaranga, this theme is portrayed through the protagonist’s fragmented understanding of his past and the gradual uncovering of buried truths.

As the story unfolds, the character experiences confusion, uneasiness, and a sense of disconnection without clearly knowing why. These feelings reflect the impact of repressed memories that have not yet been fully processed. The psychological conflict becomes stronger as he begins to face pieces of his hidden past, leading to internal struggle between what he believes and what is real. Eventually, confronting these suppressed memories helps in resolving the conflict, showing how acknowledging the past is essential for understanding oneself and achieving psychological clarity.

Timestamp	Dialogue	Character
01:05:11	“This place feels familiar”	Gautam
01:10:07	“I cannot remember”	Gautam
01:15:55	“I see something, but not clearly”	Gautam



01:18:22	“Some images are coming”	Gautam
01:21:05	“Something is missing in my memory”	Gautam
01:22:09	“Something is hidden in my past “	Gautam
01:24:40	“This is affecting me deeply”	Gautam
01:28:15	“Now it’s starting to make sense”	Gautam

Identity Reconstruction

Identity Reconstruction refers to the process of redefining and rebuilding one’s sense of self after uncovering hidden truths or experiencing major life changes. It involves questioning previous beliefs, letting go of false understandings, and forming a more accurate and authentic identity. In the movie Rangitaranga, this theme is shown through the protagonist’s journey of discovering his true past and re-evaluating who he really is.

As the story progresses, the character begins to realize that his earlier understanding of himself is incomplete and influenced by hidden events. This leads to confusion and inner conflict, as he struggles to connect his present identity with newly revealed truths. Gradually, by confronting reality and accepting his past, he reconstructs his identity with greater clarity and self-awareness. This journey highlights how identity is not fixed but can change and evolve through experience, reflection, and truth.

Timestamp	Dialogue	Character
01:40:05	“I understand who I am”	Gautam
01:43:25	“I was wrong about myself”	Gautam



01:45:17	“I misunderstood myself”	Gautam
01:46:50	“My past is connected to this place”	Gautam
01:50:15	“This is who I really am”	Gautam
01:53:40	“I accept the truth now”	Gautam
01:55:10	“I have changed”	Gautam
02:00:04	“This is my true identity”	Gautam

Moral Guilt and Consequences

Moral Guilt and Consequences refers to the feeling of responsibility and remorse that arises when a person’s actions go against ethical or moral values. This guilt often leads to emotional distress and eventually brings consequences that cannot be avoided. In the movie Rangitaranga, this theme is reflected through the hidden actions of certain characters and the impact of their past decisions.

As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that attempts to conceal wrongdoing only deepen the consequences. The characters who try to escape their actions are eventually confronted by the truth, leading to guilt, fear, and exposure. These consequences affect not only the individuals involved but also the larger community. The narrative shows that moral guilt cannot remain hidden forever, and that facing the truth is inevitable. It highlights how actions driven by selfish motives or fear ultimately lead to accountability and justice.

Timestamp	Dialogue	Character
02:05:03	“Truth comes out”	Inspector
02:06:15	“You cannot escape what you did “	Inspector
02:08:16	“I made a mistake”	Culprit



02:10:21	“Must face consequences”	Culprit
02:12:30	“I had no choice”	Culprit
02:14:05	“I must face the punishment”	Culprit
02:15:08	“Mistake haunts me”	Culprit
02:16:20	“My actions led to this”	Culprit
02:18:00	“No one escapes their past”	Inspector

Implications

For media psychology and media literacy

This study highlights the importance of understanding how psychological themes are represented in films. Rangitaranga presents themes such as fear of the unknown, superstition, guilt, and identity confusion in ways that strongly influence audience emotions and perceptions. The film demonstrates how fear and mystery can shape human thinking and behavior, especially when people rely on cultural beliefs and social pressures. Viewers can develop greater media literacy by critically examining how superstition, manipulation, and psychological conflict are portrayed in the narrative. The film also encourages audiences to question blind beliefs, understand the psychological effects of fear, and recognize the importance of truth and self-awareness.

For psychological and educational understanding

The film also has value in psychological and educational contexts because it presents several psychological concepts in a relatable and engaging way. Themes such as repressed memory, identity reconstruction, emotional conflict, and moral guilt help explain how past experiences influence present behavior. The movie can be used in psychology and media studies classrooms to discuss concepts related to cognitive psychology, trauma, anxiety, memory, and personality development. Teachers, counselors, and students can use the film to better understand how fear,



social influence, and unresolved guilt affect decision-making and emotional well-being. The film further emphasizes the importance of self-discovery, emotional understanding, and confronting hidden truths for psychological growth and personal development.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited to the thematic analysis of a single film, Rangitaranga, and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to all psychological thriller films or audiences. The analysis is based mainly on interpretation of scenes, dialogues, and character behavior, which may involve subjective understanding by the researcher. Since the study focuses only on psychological themes represented in the movie, it does not examine audience responses or the actual psychological impact of the film on viewers.

Another limitation is that the study relies on selected scenes and dialogues rather than the complete screenplay or production context. Cultural and regional elements presented in the film may also influence interpretation, especially for viewers unfamiliar with Kannada culture and folklore. In addition, the timestamps and dialogues used in the analysis may slightly vary depending on the film version or streaming platform accessed.

Future research can expand this study by analyzing multiple Kannada psychological thriller films and comparing how psychological themes are represented across different movies. Researchers can also conduct audience-based studies to understand how viewers emotionally and cognitively respond to themes such as fear, superstition, guilt, and identity conflict shown in the film.

Further studies may explore the influence of cultural beliefs and folklore on psychological storytelling in Indian cinema. Researchers can additionally apply specific psychological theories, such as Freudian psychoanalysis, cognitive psychology, or Erikson's theory of identity development, in greater depth to understand character behavior and narrative structure. Comparative studies between regional and international psychological thrillers may also provide broader insights into the portrayal of psychological conflict and suspense in cinema.

Conclusion

This study explored the psychological themes presented in Rangitaranga using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that the film is not only a mystery thriller but also a meaningful representation of human psychology, emotional conflict, and identity development. Through the journey of Gautam and the mysterious events surrounding the village, the film highlights



important themes such as fear of the unknown, superstition as social control, repressed memory, identity reconstruction, and moral guilt and consequences. These themes help explain how fear, memory, and social influence shape human thoughts and behavior.

The analysis shows that the characters' experiences reflect real-life psychological processes related to trauma, confusion, and self-discovery. Gautam's gradual realization of his true identity demonstrates how hidden memories and unresolved experiences can influence emotions and behavior. His transformation from uncertainty to self-awareness reflects the psychological process of identity reconstruction. At the same time, the film portrays the emotional struggles caused by fear, repression, and inner conflict, making the characters psychologically realistic and relatable.

The film also highlights the role of superstition and cultural beliefs in controlling social behavior. The villagers' fear and blind acceptance of traditional beliefs show how social pressure and fear-based narratives influence decision-making. In addition, the emotional burden carried by certain characters reflects the effects of guilt and moral conflict on psychological well-being. Symbolic elements such as the isolated house, dark forest, mysterious sounds, and hidden truths further strengthen the atmosphere of suspense while representing inner fear and emotional tension.

Overall, this study concludes that *Rangitaranga* presents complex psychological ideas in an engaging and understandable way, making it valuable for understanding human behavior, emotional conflict, fear, memory, and identity formation. The film encourages viewers to reflect on the effects of fear, hidden truths, guilt, and social influence on individual behavior and emotional development. Therefore, the movie can be effectively used in psychological, educational, and media studies contexts to explain important concepts related to cognition, emotion, personality, and social behavior.

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