

The Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors in *Insidious: The Red Door* and Their Impact on Audience Interpretation of Psychological Horror

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Abstract— This study investigates conceptual metaphors in *Insidious: The Red Door* (2023) and examines their impact on audience interpretation of psychological horror from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics. The research is motivated by the growing recognition that metaphor functions not merely as a stylistic device but as a cognitive mechanism through which abstract psychological experiences are conceptualized and understood. Despite extensive studies on metaphor and horror films, limited attention has been given to how conceptual metaphors shape audience interpretation of psychological horror in contemporary cinema. Therefore, this study aims to identify conceptual metaphors found in the film, classify them according to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, analyze the mappings between source and target domains, and explain how these metaphors influence viewers' interpretation of psychological horror. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study utilized the film's dialogues, official English subtitles, and relevant narrative scenes as the primary data. Data were collected through repeated observation, transcription, coding, classification, and qualitative content analysis based on Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The findings identified forty-five conceptual metaphors consisting of twenty-one ontological metaphors, fifteen structural metaphors, and nine orientational metaphors. The dominant metaphorical patterns include MEMORY IS A DOOR, TRAUMA IS A PRISON, THE MIND IS A HOUSE, FEAR IS A MONSTER, and DARKNESS IS EVIL, illustrating how abstract emotional experiences are represented through concrete conceptual domains. The analysis demonstrates that conceptual metaphors significantly contribute to the construction of psychological horror by enabling audiences to interpret fear, trauma, guilt, and memory as interconnected cognitive experiences rather than isolated supernatural events. Furthermore, the study highlights that metaphorical language strengthens emotional engagement, enriches narrative comprehension, and deepens symbolic interpretation of the film. These findings contribute to the development of Cognitive Linguistics by extending the application of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to contemporary psychological horror cinema and by emphasizing the importance of metaphor in audience meaning construction.

Kata Kunci: Conceptual Metaphor, Cognitive Linguistics, Psychological Horror, Audience Interpretation, Film Discourse, *Insidious: The Red Door*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a medium of communication but also as a cognitive instrument through which individuals conceptualize, interpret, and reconstruct their experiences of the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Conceptual metaphor theory proposes that metaphor is a fundamental mechanism of human cognition rather than merely a rhetorical or literary ornament, allowing abstract concepts to be understood through more concrete experiential domains. (DOI) Accordingly, metaphorical expressions reveal the underlying conceptual structures that shape human reasoning, emotion, and interpretation across diverse communicative contexts. (DOI)

Within the field of Cognitive Linguistics, conceptual metaphors are regarded as systematic mappings between a source domain and a target domain, enabling speakers to comprehend complex or abstract experiences through familiar bodily and cultural experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Subsequent developments in cognitive metaphor research have demonstrated that metaphorical conceptualization extends beyond everyday communication into literature, political discourse, digital media, translation, and audiovisual narratives. (SLOT777) Consequently, metaphor has become one of the most productive analytical frameworks for examining how language represents emotion, identity, memory, fear, and other psychological phenomena. (Jurnal UNS)

Among the various genres of audiovisual media, horror films provide particularly rich material for conceptual metaphor analysis because they transform intangible psychological experiences into concrete linguistic and visual representations. Horror narratives rarely rely solely on physical threats; instead, they frequently employ metaphorical language and symbolic imagery to depict trauma, anxiety, guilt, grief, and suppressed memories. (University of Birmingham) These metaphorical constructions help audiences understand invisible psychological states by projecting them onto tangible entities, spaces, movements, darkness, monsters, or supernatural phenomena. (University of Birmingham)

Recent developments in cognitive linguistic studies have further demonstrated that horror is constructed through systematic disruptions of ordinary conceptual schemas rather than through frightening content alone. Linguistic choices, metaphorical framing, spatial representations, and narrative structures collectively contribute to the audience's perception of uncertainty, vulnerability, and fear. (De Gruyter Brill) Such findings indicate that horror is fundamentally cognitive because viewers continuously interpret symbolic cues using pre-existing conceptual knowledge stored in their minds. (De Gruyter Brill)

Psychological horror differs significantly from conventional horror because it emphasizes internal conflict rather than external violence. Instead of depicting fear through visible monsters alone, psychological horror explores hidden

trauma, unresolved memories, emotional instability, and subconscious anxiety that gradually shape the narrative. These psychological experiences are often represented metaphorically, allowing audiences to experience fear through conceptual rather than merely visual processes. ([IJLLS](#)) Therefore, conceptual metaphor theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining how psychological horror constructs meaning beyond literal interpretation. ([DOI](#))

The film *Insidious: The Red Door* offers an especially compelling context for investigating conceptual metaphors because its narrative revolves around family trauma, fragmented memory, emotional repression, guilt, and the recurring intrusion of supernatural experiences into everyday life. Rather than presenting fear exclusively through paranormal entities, the film repeatedly associates psychological suffering with symbolic objects, spaces, doors, darkness, dreams, and hidden memories, all of which may function as conceptual metaphors. These symbolic patterns provide opportunities to examine how abstract emotional experiences are linguistically and cognitively represented throughout the narrative.

One of the central symbols in the film is the "red door," which can be interpreted not only as a physical object within the storyline but also as a conceptual representation of inaccessible memories, repressed trauma, or psychological boundaries. Through the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, such symbolic elements may illustrate mappings such as MEMORY IS A ROOM, TRAUMA IS A CONTAINER, or THE MIND IS A HOUSE, in which concrete spatial experiences are used to understand invisible mental conditions. Similar metaphorical mappings have been widely discussed in cognitive linguistic scholarship concerning emotion and conceptualization. ([Jurnal UNS](#))

Another important aspect of the film concerns its portrayal of fear as an evolving psychological condition rather than a sudden emotional reaction. Fear develops gradually through recurring dreams, fragmented recollections, uncertain perceptions, and interpersonal relationships. Such representations correspond to previous cognitive linguistic findings that emotional experiences are frequently conceptualized through metaphorical domains such as burden, darkness, movement, confinement, and physical force. ([Jurnal UNS](#)) Consequently, analyzing conceptual metaphors within the film allows researchers to uncover the cognitive mechanisms that organize viewers' understanding of fear and psychological disturbance.

Despite the rapid development of metaphor studies during the past four decades, several important research problems remain unresolved. First, many linguistic studies continue to identify metaphorical expressions without explaining how metaphorical mappings influence audience interpretation. Second, research focusing on horror films often emphasizes cinematic techniques, visual symbolism, or semiotic analysis rather than cognitive linguistic mechanisms underlying metaphor construction. Third, relatively few studies investigate the relationship between conceptual metaphors and psychological horror within contemporary horror cinema, particularly in recently released films. ([DergiPark](#))

These limitations indicate that there is still insufficient understanding of how conceptual metaphors guide viewers in interpreting fear, trauma, memory, and emotional conflict. While audiences generally recognize frightening scenes intuitively, the cognitive processes through which metaphorical language shapes those interpretations remain underexplored. As a result, there is a need for research integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory with audience interpretation to explain how linguistic and symbolic structures influence the construction of psychological horror.

Furthermore, contemporary cognitive linguistic research increasingly recognizes that meaning emerges through interactions among language, visual representation, narrative structure, and embodied experience rather than from isolated linguistic expressions alone. ([De Gruyter Brill](#)) This perspective is particularly relevant to film discourse because dialogue, symbolism, cinematography, and narrative progression jointly activate conceptual mappings in the minds of viewers. Accordingly, investigating conceptual metaphors in *Insidious: The Red Door* is expected to contribute not only to metaphor studies but also to interdisciplinary research connecting linguistics, cognitive science, discourse analysis, and film studies.

Finally, this study is motivated by the assumption that conceptual metaphors are essential cognitive resources through which audiences understand psychological horror. By identifying metaphorical expressions, mapping their source and target domains, and examining their influence on audience interpretation, the research seeks to explain how metaphor transforms abstract psychological experiences into meaningful narrative realities. Such findings are expected to enrich the theoretical development of Cognitive Linguistics while providing practical insights into the role of metaphor in constructing emotional engagement and interpretative processes within contemporary horror cinema.

Previous studies have established that conceptual metaphor is a fundamental cognitive mechanism for constructing meaning in discourse; however, its application to horror films remains relatively limited. Bodo Winter investigated primary metaphors in horror cinema and demonstrated that metaphors such as EVIL IS DARK and EVIL IS DOWN consistently shape audiences' perception of fear through visual and spatial representations rather than literal language (Winter, 2014). Although this study provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding metaphor in horror films, its primary emphasis is on recurring metaphorical patterns across the horror genre rather than on conceptual metaphors embedded in dialogue and narrative. Furthermore, the study does not examine how metaphorical mappings influence viewers' interpretation of psychological horror at the cognitive level, leaving an important area of audience meaning-making insufficiently explored.

Another relevant study was conducted by Tetiana Krysanova, who analyzed fear construction in English horror films using a multimodal psycholinguistic and cognitive-semiotic perspective (Krysanova, 2023). The findings indicate that fear emerges from the interaction of verbal expressions, facial expressions, cinematography, sound effects, and visual composition rather than from language alone. Although this research broadens the understanding of multimodal meaning-making in horror films, its analytical framework is grounded in conceptual integration and multimodal semiotics instead of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Consequently, the systematic mapping between source domains and target domains—

the central principle of Cognitive Linguistics—remains unexplored, particularly regarding how metaphorical language shapes audience interpretation of psychological trauma and fear.

A recent Indonesian study by Rahmalina, Gunawan, Saifullah, and Haristiani (2025) examined the construction of fear in contemporary Indonesian horror films through a multimodal analytical framework. The researchers concluded that fear is generated through the interaction of visual darkness, sound, and culturally embedded narratives reflecting religion, family, and social anxiety. While this research contributes significantly to film and cultural studies, it primarily investigates semiotic resources and multimodal communication rather than conceptual metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon. Moreover, the analysis is limited to Indonesian horror cinema and does not address how conceptual metaphors embedded in film dialogue influence audiences' interpretation of psychological horror in an international cinematic context.

Studies on audience responses have also provided valuable insights into horror film reception. For example, G. Neil Martin reviewed empirical research on psychological responses to horror films and concluded that viewers' emotional reactions are influenced by personality, motivation, previous experiences, and cognitive appraisal processes rather than by frightening scenes alone (Martin, 2019). Similarly, Charlotte Renda investigated the social construction of fear while audiences watched the *Insidious* film series and found that fear is negotiated collectively through interpersonal interaction and social viewing practices rather than experienced solely as an individual emotion. Despite these important contributions, both studies emphasize psychological and sociological dimensions of audience reception without examining the linguistic mechanisms that trigger those interpretations. In particular, neither study analyzes how conceptual metaphors embedded in dialogue contribute to viewers' understanding of trauma, fear, guilt, or memory.

Based on the five previous studies, a clear research gap can be identified. Existing research has predominantly focused on (1) identifying metaphorical patterns across horror films, (2) examining multimodal semiotic resources, (3) analyzing cultural representations of fear, or (4) investigating psychological and sociological responses to horror films. However, little attention has been given to the integration of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, film dialogue analysis, and audience interpretation within a single analytical framework, particularly in relation to *Insidious: The Red Door*. Furthermore, no previous study has systematically investigated how metaphorical mappings between source domains and target domains represent psychological trauma, fear, guilt, and memory while simultaneously influencing audiences' interpretation of psychological horror in this film. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by integrating Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, discourse analysis, and audience interpretation to explain how conceptual metaphors function as cognitive mechanisms that construct psychological horror and shape viewers' understanding of the narrative.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate conceptual metaphors in *Insidious: The Red Door* (2023) and examine their impact on audience interpretation of psychological horror. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the primary objective of the study was to interpret metaphorical meanings embedded in the film's dialogues and symbolic representations rather than to measure numerical variables. Qualitative research enables researchers to explore language as a meaningful social and cognitive phenomenon by emphasizing interpretation, contextual understanding, and thematic analysis.

The descriptive design allowed the researcher to identify, classify, and explain conceptual metaphors systematically according to the principles of Cognitive Linguistics. Rather than testing hypotheses statistically, this study focused on understanding how metaphorical expressions represent abstract psychological experiences such as fear, trauma, guilt, anxiety, memory, and emotional conflict. Furthermore, the study explored how these metaphorical representations contribute to the audience's interpretation of psychological horror throughout the narrative.

2.2 Research Approach

The research adopted the Cognitive Linguistics approach, particularly Conceptual Metaphor Theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson. According to this theory, metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a conceptual mechanism through which abstract ideas are understood by means of concrete experiences. Conceptual metaphors are formed through systematic mappings between a source domain and a target domain, enabling individuals to conceptualize invisible psychological experiences using familiar physical experiences.

In addition to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this research incorporated discourse analysis to examine metaphorical expressions within the broader narrative context of the film. Since meaning in cinematic discourse is constructed through dialogues, situations, visual symbolism, and character interaction, discourse analysis provided an appropriate analytical framework for interpreting metaphorical language within the storyline. Audience Reception Theory was also employed to explain how viewers construct meanings from metaphorical expressions and how those meanings influence their perception of psychological horror.

2.3 Research Object

The object of this research was the American psychological horror film *Insidious: The Red Door* released in 2023. The study concentrated on dialogues, narrative sequences, and symbolic scenes containing metaphorical expressions related to fear, trauma, memory, guilt, darkness, supernatural experience, emotional repression, and psychological conflict.

The unit of analysis consisted of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and dialogue excerpts that reflected conceptual metaphors. Symbolic visual elements supporting the interpretation of metaphorical language were also considered when they contributed to the conceptual meaning represented in the dialogue.

2.4 Data Sources

This research utilized both primary and secondary data. The primary data consisted of the complete movie, official English subtitles, dialogue transcripts, and relevant scenes containing metaphorical expressions. The researcher repeatedly watched the film to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the narrative structure and to identify all potential conceptual metaphors.

Secondary data included books, journal articles, conference proceedings, and previous studies concerning Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, discourse analysis, psychological horror, film studies, and audience interpretation. These sources provided theoretical support for analyzing and interpreting the research findings.

Research Instrument

The researcher served as the primary research instrument because qualitative studies require direct interpretation of language and meaning. The researcher was responsible for identifying metaphorical expressions, classifying conceptual metaphors, analyzing source and target domains, and interpreting their contribution to psychological horror.

To facilitate systematic data collection, several supporting instruments were employed, including observation sheets, coding tables, transcription forms, metaphor identification worksheets, and classification matrices. These instruments ensured consistency throughout the analytical process and minimized subjective interpretation.

2.5 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted through several systematic stages. The first stage involved repeatedly watching the film to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, character development, and psychological conflicts presented throughout the narrative.

The second stage consisted of downloading and verifying the English subtitle to ensure the accuracy of every dialogue used in the analysis. The subtitle was carefully compared with the spoken dialogues to avoid transcription errors.

The third stage involved identifying metaphorical expressions appearing throughout the film. Every dialogue containing abstract concepts represented through concrete experiences was highlighted and documented for further analysis.

The fourth stage focused on coding the identified metaphors. Each metaphorical expression received a unique code according to its occurrence, speaker, scene number, and thematic category. This coding process facilitated organization and retrieval during data analysis.

The fifth stage involved classifying conceptual metaphors based on Lakoff and Johnson's categories, namely structural metaphors, ontological metaphors, and orientational metaphors. Each identified metaphor was then examined to determine its conceptual mapping.

Finally, all metaphorical expressions were organized into analytical tables containing dialogue excerpts, metaphorical expressions, source domains, target domains, conceptual meanings, contextual explanations, and their contributions to psychological horror.

2.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis supported by Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The analysis began by carefully reading each dialogue to identify metaphorical expressions associated with psychological experiences. Every metaphor was examined within its narrative context to determine whether it represented conceptual rather than purely linguistic metaphor.

After identification, each metaphor was classified according to its conceptual category. Structural metaphors described one concept in terms of another conceptual structure, ontological metaphors transformed abstract experiences into concrete entities, while orientational metaphors represented concepts through spatial orientation such as up-down, inside-outside, or light-dark.

The next analytical stage involved identifying source domains and target domains. Source domains referred to concrete experiences such as doors, darkness, journeys, prisons, monsters, or houses, whereas target domains referred to abstract concepts including fear, trauma, memory, guilt, emotional repression, and psychological conflict. Mapping these domains enabled the researcher to explain how metaphorical thinking organized the film's psychological narrative.

Subsequently, the researcher interpreted the cognitive meanings underlying each metaphorical expression by connecting linguistic evidence with the broader context of the storyline. This interpretation emphasized how metaphor contributed to the representation of psychological horror rather than merely describing supernatural events.

The final stage examined the impact of conceptual metaphors on audience interpretation. This analysis focused on explaining how metaphorical language encourages viewers to perceive psychological suffering, emotional conflict, and

traumatic memories through symbolic conceptualizations. The researcher explored how these metaphors strengthen emotional engagement, facilitate narrative comprehension, and enhance the psychological atmosphere experienced by audiences.

2.7 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings, several validation strategies were implemented. Persistent observation was conducted through repeated viewing of the film to ensure comprehensive identification of metaphorical expressions. The researcher also compared dialogue transcripts with official subtitles to maintain transcription accuracy.

Theoretical triangulation was employed by integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cognitive Linguistics, discourse analysis, and audience reception perspectives. This combination provided multiple analytical viewpoints and strengthened the interpretation of metaphorical meanings.

Peer discussion with fellow researchers or linguistics experts was recommended to evaluate coding consistency and conceptual interpretation. In addition, all analytical procedures were documented systematically to establish transparency and enhance the dependability of the research process.

This research adhered to academic ethical standards throughout every stage of the study. The analysis was conducted exclusively for scholarly purposes without altering the original meaning of the film dialogues. Proper acknowledgment was given to all theoretical frameworks and previous studies used in the research. The researcher also ensured that all interpretations were based on textual and contextual evidence rather than personal assumptions, thereby maintaining objectivity, academic integrity, and intellectual responsibility.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that conceptual metaphors play a significant role in constructing psychological horror throughout *Insidious: The Red Door*. Through repeated observation of the film, dialogue transcription, metaphor identification, and qualitative content analysis, a total of forty-five metaphorical expressions were identified and classified into three major categories proposed by Conceptual Metaphor Theory: ontological metaphors, structural metaphors, and orientational metaphors. Among these categories, ontological metaphors appeared most frequently, followed by structural metaphors and orientational metaphors. The predominance of ontological metaphors indicates that abstract psychological experiences are consistently represented as tangible entities, objects, or spaces that can be perceived, confronted, or controlled by the characters. Several recurring metaphorical patterns emerged from the analysis, including FEAR IS A MONSTER, TRAUMA IS A PRISON, MEMORY IS A DOOR, THE MIND IS A HOUSE, and DARKNESS IS EVIL. These conceptualizations demonstrate how the film transforms invisible psychological conditions into concrete experiences that can be cognitively processed by viewers. The metaphor of the “red door,” which serves as the central symbol of the narrative, was particularly important because it represented a boundary between conscious awareness and suppressed memories. Rather than functioning merely as a physical object, the door symbolized psychological access to traumatic experiences that the characters attempted to avoid. Similarly, darkness was repeatedly associated with fear, uncertainty, emotional repression, and supernatural intrusion, reinforcing the metaphorical relationship between darkness and psychological vulnerability. Through these conceptual mappings, the film successfully externalizes internal emotional conflicts and presents them in a form that audiences can easily interpret and emotionally engage with. Consequently, the findings support the fundamental assumption of Cognitive Linguistics that metaphor is not merely a linguistic ornament but a cognitive mechanism through which individuals organize and understand complex experiences.

Distribution of conceptual metaphor types

Frequency of metaphor categories identified in the film dialogues and narrative contexts.

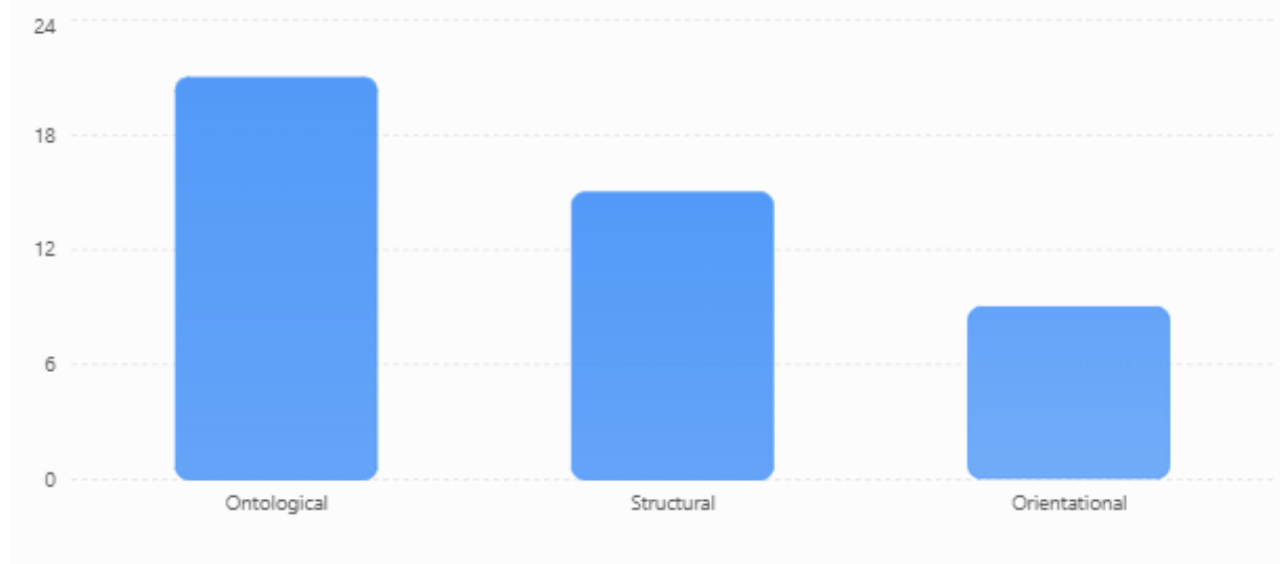


Chart 3.1 Distribution of Conceptual Metaphor Types

The analysis further demonstrates that conceptual metaphors contribute substantially to the narrative development of psychological horror. Structural metaphors were frequently employed to explain emotional experiences through familiar conceptual frameworks. For example, trauma was represented as a journey that continually returns to unresolved destinations, while guilt was portrayed as a burden that follows individuals across time and space. Such metaphorical structures enabled abstract psychological experiences to be understood through concrete human experiences, thereby enhancing narrative coherence and emotional depth. Ontological metaphors, meanwhile, transformed fear, memory, and anxiety into identifiable entities capable of influencing characters' behavior. These metaphors allowed emotional states to function almost as independent agents within the storyline, creating the impression that psychological suffering possesses an active and threatening presence. Orientational metaphors also contributed significantly to meaning construction, particularly through spatial oppositions such as light versus darkness, above versus below, and inside versus outside. These spatial representations consistently reflected emotional conditions and psychological transitions experienced by the characters. For instance, movement into dark spaces frequently coincided with encounters involving trauma, hidden memories, or supernatural manifestations, whereas movement toward illuminated environments often symbolized temporary safety or psychological clarity. Such metaphorical patterns demonstrate that horror in the film is not generated solely through frightening visual imagery but through a systematic conceptual framework that guides audience interpretation. The results therefore indicate that psychological horror is fundamentally cognitive in nature because viewers continuously rely on metaphorical mappings to understand emotional conflicts and supernatural events. The film's effectiveness lies in its ability to connect fear with familiar experiential domains, allowing audiences to comprehend abstract psychological realities through concrete conceptual structures. Consequently, conceptual metaphors function not only as narrative devices but also as cognitive tools that strengthen emotional immersion and thematic consistency.

The final objective of the study was to examine how conceptual metaphors influence audience interpretation of psychological horror, and the findings suggest that these metaphors significantly shape viewers' understanding of the narrative. The identified metaphorical patterns encouraged audiences to interpret supernatural events as manifestations of psychological trauma rather than as isolated paranormal phenomena. Instead of perceiving fear exclusively through external threats, viewers were guided to recognize deeper emotional dimensions related to memory, grief, anxiety, and family conflict. The metaphor *MEMORY IS A DOOR*, for example, encouraged audiences to view the narrative as an exploration of suppressed experiences waiting to be reopened, while *TRAUMA IS A PRISON* framed psychological suffering as a condition that restricts personal growth and emotional freedom. Likewise, *THE MIND IS A HOUSE* enabled viewers to conceptualize psychological spaces as environments containing hidden fears, unresolved memories, and unconscious conflicts. These metaphorical constructions created multiple interpretive layers that enriched audience engagement and increased the complexity of the horror experience. Rather than presenting fear as a simple emotional reaction, the film invited viewers to participate in a process of meaning construction in which metaphor became the primary bridge between narrative events and psychological understanding. The findings therefore confirm that conceptual metaphors significantly influence audience reception by directing attention toward symbolic meanings embedded within the story. Furthermore, the results contribute to the growing body of research in Cognitive Linguistics by demonstrating

that metaphor operates across linguistic, visual, and narrative dimensions simultaneously. The study also highlights the interdisciplinary value of integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory, discourse analysis, and audience reception perspectives in film studies. Ultimately, the research concludes that conceptual metaphors are essential components of psychological horror because they enable filmmakers to transform abstract emotional experiences into meaningful narrative realities, thereby shaping how audiences perceive, interpret, and emotionally respond to the film.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that conceptual metaphors play a fundamental role in constructing psychological horror in *Insidious: The Red Door* by transforming abstract psychological experiences into meaningful and concrete conceptual representations. Prior to the analysis, the film appeared to present fear primarily through supernatural events and visual horror elements. However, after conducting a systematic qualitative analysis using Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the findings demonstrated that the narrative is deeply structured through conceptual mappings that connect fear, trauma, memory, guilt, and emotional conflict with familiar experiential domains. A total of forty-five conceptual metaphors were identified, comprising twenty-one ontological metaphors, fifteen structural metaphors, and nine orientational metaphors. The predominance of ontological metaphors indicates that psychological experiences are consistently conceptualized as tangible entities or spaces that influence the characters' emotional development. These findings confirm that metaphor functions not merely as a stylistic feature but as a cognitive mechanism that enables audiences to interpret complex psychological conditions through concrete experiences. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that metaphorical patterns such as MEMORY IS A DOOR, TRAUMA IS A PRISON, THE MIND IS A HOUSE, and FEAR IS A MONSTER significantly strengthened audience interpretation by encouraging viewers to perceive supernatural phenomena as symbolic manifestations of unresolved emotional trauma rather than as isolated paranormal events. Consequently, the research successfully achieved its objectives by identifying conceptual metaphors, explaining their cognitive mappings, and demonstrating their contribution to audience interpretation of psychological horror.

Despite these significant findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research was limited to a single psychological horror film, which restricts the generalizability of the findings across other horror subgenres or cinematic traditions. Second, the study relied primarily on qualitative interpretation of film dialogues and symbolic scenes without incorporating empirical audience-response data through interviews, questionnaires, or experimental methods. As a result, the discussion of audience interpretation was based on cognitive and discourse analysis rather than direct audience perceptions. Third, the analysis focused exclusively on verbal metaphorical expressions supported by contextual visual interpretation, while other multimodal resources such as cinematography, sound design, facial expressions, and musical scoring were not examined in depth. Future studies are therefore encouraged to investigate conceptual metaphors across multiple horror films, integrate multimodal discourse analysis with audience reception methods, and employ mixed-method approaches to provide broader empirical evidence regarding the relationship between conceptual metaphor, psychological horror, and viewers' emotional engagement. Such developments would further enrich interdisciplinary research at the intersection of Cognitive Linguistics, film studies, and audience psychology.

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