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Analysis of Moral Message in "Buzz" Album by Niki Zefanya

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the moral messages found in the lyrics of the Buzz album by Niki Zefanya, an Indonesian singer who writes and performs in English. The album contains 13 songs, each filled with emotional and reflective content that offers listeners insights into life, relationships, and personal growth. This research employs a qualitative method with a moral criticism approach to analyse how Niki communicates values such as empathy, resilience, and self-awareness through figurative language and storytelling. The data were collected by carefully listening to each song while reading the lyrics and examining the feelings or conditions of the author when writing the song. The collected data were analysed using Narrative Analysis for Moral Values, identifying stories, emotions, and cultural contexts within the lyrics to uncover and categorize moral themes. The findings show that, although the messages are not stated directly, they can be felt and understood through careful interpretation. This study aims to help listeners, especially non-native English speakers, understand the deeper meanings behind English song lyrics and encourage more thoughtful listening experiences.

Keywords: *Buzz album, Niki Zefanya, moral message, song analysis*

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, the role of language in shaping global interactions extends far beyond practical communication. The rise of English as a dominant force in various domains sets the stage for its profound influence on cultural expression and societal values, not only for formal communication but also as a medium of expression in entertainment and art. According to Crystal (2003), English is "the global language," used in international diplomacy, business, and increasingly, in cultural industries like music and film. As people across the world consume English language entertainment, they are also exposed to the cultural and moral values embedded in those works.

One of the most influential forms of entertainment that transmits values is music. Music is not merely a source of enjoyment it is a vehicle for storytelling, emotional release, and ethical reflection. Scholars like Frith (1996) argue that "popular music is central to the way we form our

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sense of identity and morality." When listeners engage with songs especially those rich in poetic and narrative elements, they often interpret the lyrics through personal and social lenses. This makes music a potent tool for conveying moral messages, whether explicitly or implicitly. However, this transmission is not always straightforward. Many English language songs use figurative language, metaphors, and symbolic storytelling, which can obscure the intended meaning particularly for non-native English speakers. As noted by Tagg (1982), music's meaning is "context-dependent and often open to interpretation," which means the moral message may not be immediately apparent. For Indonesian listeners who enjoy English language music but may struggle to grasp the nuanced meanings of the lyrics, this creates a gap between appreciation and comprehension.

The phenomenon where people cannot catch the moral message in many songs is especially relevant in the digital age, where music is streamed globally, and listeners can access songs from any part of the world. As English-language songs dominate platforms like Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube, Indonesian audiences are increasingly exposed to moral messages embedded in foreign lyrics whether or not they are aware of them. According to Gill (2007), "globalization of music has blurred cultural boundaries, but also made interpretation more complex," especially for multicultural or multilingual audiences.

Niki Zefanya, also known as NIKI, is a prominent Indonesian singer-songwriter who writes and performs in English under the international label 88rising. Her music combines Western pop, R&B, and indie styles with deeply personal and emotional lyricism. The songs in her 2023 album "Buzz" are notable for their introspective tone and indirect moral themes, expressed through poetic imagery and emotional metaphors. Rather than stating her values plainly, Niki invites listeners to interpret her experiences and reflections making her work ideal for moral analysis.

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Despite NIKI's growing global influence, there has been limited academic discussion on how her music conveys moral messages especially in relation to non-native English-speaking audiences like Indonesians. This research seeks to fill that gap by exploring the ethical and emotional content of the "Buzz" album. As Bennett (2001) notes, "popular music studies should not only focus on sound and style but also on how songs affect listeners' ethical understanding and emotional growth."

Previous research conducted by Munawaroh (2024) and Marsela (2023) also focused on analysing moral messages in song lyrics, although with different singers. Their studies examined how moral messages were conveyed by the artists and how these messages were received and understood by listeners. According to Wasitoh (2022), moral messages are teachings or advice, whether spoken or written, that are conveyed from the source to the recipient. However, as she said previously, many listeners of English-language songs still do not fully understand the moral messages the artists intend to communicate. Instead, they often enjoy the music solely for its melody or rhythm, without grasping the deeper meaning of the lyrics.

The objective of this research is not only to understand what messages are conveyed in NIKI's lyrics, but also to promote deeper engagement with music among listeners encouraging them to go beyond surface-level enjoyment and reflect on the values embedded within the songs. Based on the background of the research above, the research question that can be summed up in this study is: What moral message does Niki Zefanya seek to impart to her audience through the lyrics of her album "Buzz" in an educational context?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring phenomena that require in-depth understanding and interpretation, particularly when

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dealing with subjective elements such as language, emotion, and meaning. Creswell (2013) defines qualitative research as an approach that explores and understands the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He emphasizes its interpretive nature, where researchers collect data in natural settings, analyze it inductively, and focus on participants' perspectives. Creswell identifies five primary qualitative approaches: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. Each approach has distinct methods but shares common features, such as emergent design, researcher reflexivity, and a focus on context. The primary method used in this study is content analysis, specifically applied to the lyrics of songs in Niki Zefanya's "Buzz" album. Content analysis enables the researcher to systematically examine textual contentsuch as song lyrics to identify patterns, themes, and implied messages. Since the objective of this research is to uncover the moral messages embedded within poetic and often figurative language, qualitative analysis is the most suitable approach.

The collected data were analysed using the Narrative Analysis for Moral Values theory by Riessman (2008). It is a way to study how stories in texts, like song lyrics, share moral ideas and show who people are. It says that songs tell stories through their words and the way they are sung, and these stories can carry important messages about right and wrong, such as being honest or caring for others. This theory helps researchers understand these messages by looking at the emotions and cultural background of the song. It focuses on the singer's voice and personal experiences in the lyrics to find moral lessons and see how listeners might feel or think about these lessons. This method helps connect the song's story to big ideas like ethical choices or values that everyone can understand.

Once the messages interpreted, they were classified into thematic categories, such as:

- Empathy: when there is concern or understanding for others Rogers (1980), a humanistic psychologist, defines empathy as entering the perceptual world of another person, being

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sensitive to their feelings without judgment.

- Self-awareness: when the songwriter questions their own emotions or choices. Shelley and Wicklund (1972) introduced the Objective Self-Awareness Theory, which posits that self-awareness occurs when attention is directed inward, prompting individuals to evaluate themselves against internal standards or social norms.
- Resilience: when themes of endurance or recovery are present Masten (2001) defines resilience as a process of positive adaptation despite significant challenges, emphasizing it as an ordinary, not extraordinary, human capacity.

Finally, each message was explained in the context of the song considering the personal experience shared by the artist and how the audience might relate or respond morally to the lyrics.

FINDINGS

The lyrics' meaning and moral value for the songs "Did You Like Her in the Morning?", "Tsunami", "Paths", "Too Much of a Good Thing", "Buzz", "Colossal Loss", "Focus", "Take Care", "Magnets", "Blue Moon", "Strong Girl", "Heirloom Pain", and "Nothing Can" are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Summary of The Lyrics' Meaning and Moral Value

Song	Empathy	Self-Awareness	Resilence
Did You Like Her in The Morning	Empathizes with the pain of jealousy and betrayal, resonating with those who've questioned a partner's loyalty post-breaku	Reflects self-awareness of insecurities and doubts, confronting painful questions about a former partner's new relationships.	Promotes resilience by processing jealousy and moving toward self-acceptance, reclaiming personal worth.
Buzz	Captures the excitement and nervousness of new	Reflects on the personal excitement of new beginnings,	Promotes embracing uncertainty and taking risks in love,

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	love, empathizing with the universal thrill of anticipation. Encourages understanding the emotional highs of others in similar situations.	recognizing the emotional rush of falling for someone. NIKI uses metaphors like "the first line of a fucking bestseller" to convey self-awareness of her emotional state.	showing resilience by choosing to dive into new experiences despite potential heartbreak.
Too Much of a Good Thing	Shows empathy for fleeting romantic connections, acknowledging the shared human desire for passion. The song's playful tone understands the allure of indulgence.	Displays awareness of the dangers of overindulgence in fleeting romance, with NIKI reflecting on the consequences of chasing temporary highs.	Encourages resilience by accepting the impermanence of some relationships and moving forward with confidence.
Colossal Loss	Empathizes with the pain of betrayal and the pettiness that follows a breakup, resonating with those who've felt scorned. The lyric "petty feels pretty awesome" validates these emotions.	Demonstrates self-awareness by openly acknowledging petty feelings and the desire to play the "blame game," reflecting on post-breakup emotions	Reflects resilience through embracing and processing negative emotions like anger, using them as a cathartic step toward healing.
Focus	Shows empathy for those stuck in denial about unhealthy relationships, with sarcastic lyrics like "he's not emotionally unavailable, he's just traumatized" reflecting shared experiences.	Highlights self-awareness by questioning one's own judgment in love, recognizing the tendency to make excuses for a partner's flaws.	Promotes resilience by advocating for a reality check and moving on from denial, encouraging strength to see things clearly.
Take Care	Empathizes with mutual respect in parting ways, acknowledging the shared humanity in	Demonstrates self-awareness by reflecting on the mature decision to part amicably, recognizing both	Shows resilience by choosing to move forward with grace and self-respect after a breakup.

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	letting go without blame.	parties' roles in the relationship's end.	
Magnets	Empathizes with the magnetic pull of a soulmate-like connection, understanding the universal longing for deep love.	Reflects self-awareness of being drawn to intense relationships, with NIKI noting the song's "artsy" and unconventional structure as a personal exploration.	Shows resilience by embracing the uncertainty of intense connections, choosing to pursue them despite potential risks.
Tsunami	Captures empathy for the overwhelming emotions of a consuming crush, resonating with those swept away by love's intensity.	Demonstrates self-awareness by acknowledging the uncontrollable nature of a crush, likening it to a natural force	Encourages resilience by navigating the emotional overwhelm and finding strength to ride out the wave of feelings.
Blue Moon	Empathizes with the pain of a "right person, wrong time" breakup, understanding the shared sorrow of lost love. The song's astrological imagery connects to universal themes of fate.	Reflects deep self-awareness of the slow demise of a significant relationship, with NIKI processing the heartbreak of a four-year love.	Shows resilience by accepting the end of a meaningful relationship and finding closure through vulnerability.
Strong Girl	Empathizes with those under pressure to always be strong, particularly resonating with cultural expectations (e.g., Asian household dynamics) to hold it together for others	Displays self-awareness of the burden of perfectionism and the expectation to be "everybody's strong girl," confronting personal struggles with vulnerability.	Promotes resilience by affirming inner strength to push through personal and professional challenges, even when feeling overwhelmed.
Paths	Shows empathy for amicable separations, understanding the bittersweet hope of reconnecting with	Reflects self-awareness of personal growth and change, musing on the possibility of future reunions while	Encourages resilience by embracing the transient nature of relationships and

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18253474

	someone after growing apart.	accepting current distance.	staying open to future possibilities.
Heirloom Pain	Shows empathy for inherited emotional struggles, connecting with those dealing with generational or personal trauma	Demonstrates self-awareness by exploring the roots of personal pain, acknowledging its deep-seated impact on identity.	Encourages resilience by confronting and working through inherited pain, finding clarity and catharsis.
Nothing Can	Empathizes with the universal desire for hope and renewal, offering an uplifting perspective for those seeking light after darkness	Reflects self-awareness of personal growth, recognizing the ability to find joy and optimism despite past struggles	Promotes resilience by embracing a forward-looking mindset, choosing to focus on possibilities and catharsis.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings from the analysis of Niki Zefanya's "Buzz" album reveal a compelling array of moral messages woven into the fabric of its 13 songs. The qualitative content analysis, guided by a moral criticism approach, identifies three dominant moral themes empathy, self-awareness, and resilience that permeate the album's lyrics. These themes, conveyed through poetic imagery, metaphors, and emotional storytelling, resonate deeply with listeners and align with the theoretical frameworks. This discussion reflects on how these moral messages contribute to the listeners' understanding of human experiences, particularly in navigating relationships and personal growth, and connects these findings to the literature review to highlight their significance in a broader academic and cultural context.

Empathy emerges as a central moral message across the "Buzz" album, encouraging listeners to connect with others' emotional experiences and fostering compassion. Songs like "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" capture the pain of jealousy and insecurity, empathizing with those grappling with the emotional weight of a partner's past. Similarly, "Blue Moon" resonates

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with the sorrow of a mistimed love, acknowledging the shared human experience of heartbreak due to incompatible circumstances. “Heirloom Pain” extends this empathy to those burdened by generational trauma, offering a lens into inherited emotional struggles. These songs align with Rogers’ (1980) definition of empathy as entering another’s perceptual world without judgment. By presenting narratives that mirror universal emotional experiences, Niki’s lyrics invite listeners to relate to others’ vulnerabilities, fostering a sense of shared humanity. Hall’s (2003) encoding/decoding model further supports this, suggesting that listeners, including Indonesian audiences, interpret these empathetic messages through their own emotional and cultural lenses, potentially deepening their compassion despite linguistic barriers noted by Rahmi (2019). This empathetic thread underscores music’s role as a cultural artifact that bridges personal and collective experiences, as argued by Hall (2003), making “Buzz” a powerful tool for fostering understanding in a globalized media landscape

Self-awareness is another dominant moral theme, with Niki’s lyrics encouraging introspection and honest reflection on one’s emotions and choices. In “Focus,” the speaker confronts their tendency to make excuses for an emotionally unavailable partner, highlighting a critical awareness of personal denial. Similarly, “Paths” reflects on the speaker’s youthful entitlement and its role in a relationship’s end, showcasing a mature acknowledgment of personal growth. “Strong Girl” grapples with the pressure to embody strength while questioning one’s identity, aligning with Duval and Wicklund’s (1972) Objective Self-Awareness Theory, which posits that self-awareness arises when individuals evaluate themselves against internal standards. This introspective quality encourages listeners to examine their own emotional landscapes, a process DeNora (2000) describes as music’s ability to shape moral perspectives through relatable narratives. For Indonesian listeners, as Rahmi (2019) notes, linguistic barriers may obscure these nuanced messages, but critical engagement with the lyrics, as facilitated by this study, can

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18253474

enhance self-reflection. Niki's use of poetic devices, as discussed by Brown (2010), makes these messages emotionally engaging, inviting listeners to confront their vulnerabilities and grow through self-awareness, thus fulfilling the album's role as a literary work that communicates intellectual and emotional meaning (Hirsch, 2002).

Resilience stands out as a cornerstone moral message, urging listeners to persevere through emotional and personal challenges. "Colossal Loss" exemplifies this by embracing empowerment and self-respect after betrayal, with the speaker's defiant tone encouraging listeners to move forward despite pain. "Nothing Can" champions self-reliance in the face of loneliness, with the speaker's persistence in routine actions like writing songs reflecting an enduring strength. "Strong Girl" further reinforces this theme, blending vulnerability with a fierce resolve to "swing it" despite self-doubt, aligning with Masten's (2001) definition of resilience as a process of positive adaptation to challenges. This message resonates with Kramer's (1997) view that music prompts moral reflection by encouraging listeners to question their behaviours and find strength in adversity. For Indonesian youth navigating globalized media, as Nugroho (2020) suggests, these resilient narratives can subconsciously shape their perspectives, offering guidance in a world where emotional and cultural complexities abound. The album's emphasis on resilience, delivered through Niki's "Aries moon" energy and fiery conviction (DIY Magazine, 2024), inspires listeners to embrace life's uncertainties, reinforcing Wasitoh's (2022) assertion that moral messages in music guide behaviour, particularly for young audiences.

The dominance of empathy, self-awareness, and resilience in "Buzz" aligns seamlessly with the theoretical frameworks. Abrams' (1999) moral criticism framework, rooted in Plato's (2008) and Aristotle's (1997) views, evaluates art's ability to promote virtuous behavior, which is evident in the album's encouragement of compassionate understanding (empathy), introspective growth (self-awareness), and perseverance (resilience). These virtues guide listeners

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toward ethical reflection, fulfilling the album's role as a literary work, as Santosa (2016) argues, where lyrics function as poetry with aesthetic and moral value. Hall's (2003) encoding/decoding model highlights the interpretive challenges for non-native English speakers, particularly Indonesians, who may miss the depth of these messages due to linguistic barriers, as Rahmi (2019) notes. However, the universal themes of love, loss, and growth in Niki's lyrics transcend cultural boundaries, as Gill (2007) suggests, making them accessible through emotional resonance. DeNora's (2000) and Kramer's (1997) theories further underscore the album's role in shaping moral and emotional landscapes, as the songs provide narratives that encourage listeners to navigate personal challenges with courage and empathy. By blending global themes with personal storytelling, Niki's "Buzz" serves as a cultural artifact that fosters moral reflection, particularly for Indonesian audiences, bridging the gap between surface-level enjoyment and deeper ethical understanding, as emphasized in the research objective

The prominence of empathy, self-awareness, and resilience in "Buzz" has significant implications for listeners, particularly in the Indonesian context where English-language music dominates global platforms like Spotify and YouTube. As Frith (1996) argues, popular music shape's identity and morality, and Niki's album offers Indonesian youth a framework for reflecting on their emotional and ethical lives. The songs' universal themes, combined with Niki's Southeast Asian perspective, address the research gap, where prior studies focused on Western artists like Billie Eilish and Ed Sheeran. Niki's cross-cultural identity, as an Indonesian artist performing in English, makes her work uniquely positioned to resonate with multicultural audiences, fostering a dialogue between global and local values. By encouraging critical listening, as advocated in this study, "Buzz" not only entertains but also educates, aligning with the research's practical benefit of helping listeners, especially non-native English speakers, uncover deeper meanings in lyrics. This process enhances linguistic and moral education, promoting

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thoughtful engagement with music in a globalized world.

In conclusion, the moral messages of empathy, self-awareness, and resilience in Niki Zefanya's "Buzz" album offer listeners a roadmap for navigating the emotional and ethical complexities of life. These themes, supported by the theoretical frameworks of moral criticism, audience reception, and music's role in moral formation, highlight the album's significance as a cultural and literary work. By addressing universal human experiences through a Southeast Asian lens, "Buzz" bridges cultural and linguistic divides, encouraging listeners to reflect on their values and grow through life's challenges, thus fulfilling its role as a powerful medium for moral and personal development.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study addresses the research question: What moral message does Niki Zefanya seek to impart to her audience through the lyrics of her album "Buzz" in an educational context? Through qualitative content analysis, the "Buzz" album's 13 songs reveal dominant moral messages of empathy, self-awareness, and resilience. Songs like "Did You Like Her in the Morning?" and "Blue Moon" foster empathy by exploring universal emotions of jealousy and heartbreak, while "Focus" and "Paths" encourage self-awareness through introspection about personal choices. "Colossal Loss" and "Nothing Can" promote resilience, urging perseverance through betrayal and loneliness.

In an educational context, these messages, conveyed through poetic imagery and emotional storytelling, serve as a valuable tool for fostering ethical reflection and emotional intelligence, particularly for Indonesian students navigating linguistic barriers. By encouraging critical listening, the album bridges cultural and emotional divides, guiding learners toward deeper understanding of relationships and personal growth in a globalized media landscape.

The suggestion for future research, several directions can deepen the understanding of

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moral messages in Niki Zefanya's "Buzz" album. A cross-cultural comparative analysis could explore how native and non-native English-speaking audiences, particularly Indonesian listeners, interpret themes like resilience and empathy to address linguistic and cultural interpretive challenges. Additionally, examining the interplay of musical composition and visual elements, such as music videos and album artwork, could reveal how they amplify the lyrical moral messages. Further studies could focus on other Indonesian artists performing in English, such as Rich Brian or Stephanie Poetri, to address the research gap, investigating how they navigate global and local identities to convey universal moral themes. Lastly, a longitudinal study could track how repeated exposure to the album influences listeners' personal and ethical development over time, aligning with Abrams (1999) moral criticism framework to evaluate music's long-term impact on fostering virtuous behaviour.

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