

The Social Impact of Michael Jackson's 'Heal the World' on Youth Awareness

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the representation of humanistic values in Michael Jackson's song "Heal the World" and examine its contribution to public social awareness, particularly among today's youth. This study employs a qualitative, descriptive design. Data were collected through two primary sources: an analysis of the song's lyrics as the research object and an online questionnaire distributed to ten respondents from the current younger generation. Furthermore, a literature review is crucial to strengthening the theoretical foundation of this study. Data analysis techniques include content analysis, thematic analysis, and interactive analysis, encompassing data collection, simplification, presentation, and conclusion. The research findings indicate that the song conveys four humanistic values: empathy, social concern, peace, and optimism. The questionnaire results show that most young people are accustomed to enjoying the song without understanding its underlying meaning. However, a significant number of respondents acknowledged that the song conveys a humanistic message. The majority of respondents also believe that this song remains relevant to current conditions and influences their perspective on social issues. Additionally, nearly all respondents felt more compassionate toward others after listening to the song. However, this study also revealed a discrepancy between emotional impact and tangible actions, as only a few respondents were motivated to take direct positive action. This means the song's influence is more dominant in understanding and feelings than in actual actions. Thus, it can be concluded that the song "Heal the World" serves not only as mere entertainment but also as an effective medium for fostering social awareness among the younger generation. However, its influence on actual actions is still influenced by individual and environmental factors.

Keywords: Qualitative descriptive, Content analysis, Music psychology, Emotional impact vs. action, Peace education, Youth perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Literary works reflect society, as they contain values, ideas, and realities that constantly evolve from one era to the next. In social life, literary works play a vital role as reflections of society, culture, and politics. Literature can also serve as an expression of life's problems, philosophy and psychology. Literature is a spiritual treasure that can enrich the soul. Therefore, literature has, in fact, become an integral part of society. Through literary works, authors can convey various moral messages, life values, and perspectives on the social realities occurring around them. One of the main functions of literature is as a form of entertainment. Literary works can provide readers with

pleasure and inner satisfaction. Engaging stories, beautiful language, and the conflicts presented make readers feel entertained and enjoy the reading experience.

However, literature does not merely serve as entertainment, but also as a medium for reflection that encourages readers to understand life more deeply. Readers can observe various human issues, such as inner conflict, social relationships, injustice, and the struggles of life as depicted through the characters and plot of literary works. Furthermore, literary works play a vital role in preserving the culture and values that have developed within society. Literary works play a vital role in disseminating and preserving cultural values for future generations. Through detailed and informative depictions of a society's culture, literature facilitates a deep understanding of the values held by that society. Literature's ability to convey this message enables society not only to appreciate but also to preserve cultural values by passing them on to the next generation (Trianton, 2024).

Through beautiful, imaginative language, literature can evoke an emotional experience that makes readers feel as though they are inside the story. Thus, the existence of literary works not only enriches the cultural heritage but also helps people understand themselves, society, and the various dynamics of life that continue to evolve. In modern literary studies, literary works do not refer solely to written works such as novels and poetry, nor to plays and films. They can also take the form of music that conveys a moral message through a musician. Humans have been familiar with music since birth, and without realizing it, music has helped them find balance in their lives. From the time we are babies listening to music before bed, right through to adulthood, we continue to listen to more dynamic music suited to our situation and mood (Harnia, 2021). In today's modern era, a person's life is inseparable from music.

Music plays a vital role in human life. It could be said that in this day and age, it is very difficult to find an activity that does not involve music; in every corner, people are listening to music, whether intentionally or unintentionally. In an increasingly sophisticated era such as the present, music is increasingly used as a medium of communication across various contexts, both in the personal and public spheres. In personal communication, music is often used to express one's feelings to those closest to them, such as a loved one, family, particularly parents or friends (Sihabuddin et al., 2023). Through lyrics and melodies, feelings that are difficult to express directly can be conveyed more profoundly and memorably. Music often serves as a means for people to express feelings that are hard to put into words.

When people listen to songs together or share stories about their favorite songs, this creates stronger bonds between listeners, and conversations about personal experiences often arise (Dian et al., 2023). Consequently, it is not uncommon for singers and songwriters to compose specific songs as a means of expressing their feelings towards loved ones. In addition to being a means of expressing feelings, music also influences the emotions, attitudes, and social awareness of every individual who enjoys it. Musicians generally convey various meanings and messages through the lyrics in every verse of the songs they create. Thus, music serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral and humanitarian messages and fostering social awareness.

One musician widely recognized for using music to convey social messages is Michael Jackson. Through his songs, Michael Jackson frequently addressed social, humanitarian and peace-related issues affecting people across the globe. One of his greatest works is a song entitled 'Heal The World', released in 1991. This is a highly popular humanitarian song that calls on listeners to create a peaceful, harmonious world through love, empathy, and concern for social life, particularly the lives of

children as the next generation and as a hope for future change. From a sociological perspective on literature, a literary work is not merely a product of the imagination but rather a reflection of social life that embodies various values, ideas, and moral messages relating to the reality of society.

Literary works arise from the author's experiences, thoughts, and observations of the social conditions around them, so that within them one often finds depictions of life, culture, conflict, and the values that exist within society. Therefore, literary works serve not only as a means of entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral messages and for understanding the various social phenomena that occur in community life. The sociological approach to literature emphasizes that the relationship between literary works and society is reciprocal. This means that literary works not only reflect the social conditions of a society at a given time, but can also influence the perspectives, attitudes, and social consciousness of that society. Through the stories, symbols, and language used, literary works can shape readers' or listeners' understanding of values such as humanity, justice, solidarity, and social concern. Thus, literary works play a vital role in fostering social awareness and encouraging society to reflect upon the realities of life they face. In this context, songs as a form of literary work can also be analyzed from the perspective of the sociology of literature. Song lyrics often convey a range of messages, experiences, and social critiques about human life.

By combining lyrics and music, the messages conveyed in songs can be more easily received and understood by listeners. Therefore, analyzing song lyrics is important to examine how the messages they convey can influence listeners' thinking, feelings, and social awareness, particularly among young people worldwide who regard music as an integral part of their lives. Although Michael Jackson's song 'Heal the World' is widely recognized as a song with themes of humanity and peace, studies that specifically analyze it from a sociological perspective, particularly regarding its contribution to shaping the social consciousness of today's younger generation, remain relatively limited. This study hypothesizes that if young people understand the lyrics of the song "Heal the World", they will be more concerned about the issue of world peace. Therefore, research is needed to examine the representation of humanitarian values in the song's lyrics and their relevance to the social consciousness of the younger generation within a contemporary social context.

This study focuses solely on the lyrics of Michael Jackson's song 'Heal he World' as its object of analysis. Furthermore, this study focuses exclusively on the sociological theory of literature to examine how a song influences the development of social awareness among the younger generation. The analysis focuses on the values of humanity, peace, and the call to care for society as contained within the song's lyrics. This study does not discuss musical aspects, arrangements, or Michael Jackson's other works as a whole; consequently, the discussion is limited to the song's social meaning, without involving other concepts.

Based on the background, this study examines how human values are represented in the lyrics of the song and explores how the song's message can raise social awareness, particularly among today's younger generation. This study aims to analyze the representation of humanitarian values in the lyrics of Michael Jackson's song "Heal the World" and to examine how the song's message can contribute to raising social awareness, particularly among today's younger generation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive design. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how the lyrics of Michael Jackson's song 'Heal the World' influence the social awareness of the current generation. The focus of this study is the respondents' understanding, perceptions, and interpretations of the humanitarian message in the song.

A descriptive design is used to systematically describe phenomena based on the results of an analysis of song lyrics and the responses of the current generation to those lyrics. This study combines (content analysis) of song lyrics with data obtained through a questionnaire. Through this approach, the researcher can understand the human values in the songs and identify how the messages contained therein are received and interpreted by the younger generation. A qualitative approach is employed in this study to understand how musical works can influence the thinking, attitudes, and social awareness of their listeners, particularly the younger generation, through the interpretation of the meanings contained within song lyrics (Sihabuddin et al., 2023a).

Data and Data Sources

The data in this study consist of qualitative data, including both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected from young people via an online questionnaire distributed by the researchers. This data comprises the respondents' answers, opinions and reactions to Michael Jackson's song 'Heal the World', which was subsequently analyzed to examine how the song influences the social awareness of today's young generation. Furthermore, the lyrics of the song were used as primary data to analyze their meaning using a content analysis approach.

Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from various written sources, including articles and previous research relevant to the topic under consideration. This data is used to strengthen the theoretical framework and support the researcher's analysis. Several studies indicate that music serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium of communication, capable of conveying social messages and moral values and influencing listeners' perspectives (Sihabuddin et al., 2023). Therefore, the use of secondary data in this study is crucial for the researcher to better understand the relationship between music and the formation of social awareness.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was conducted primarily through a questionnaire. A questionnaire is a data collection technique that presents a set of written questions to respondents to obtain the required information (Putri & Ferdianto, 2023). The questionnaire was distributed online to respondents who fall within the young generation category and who have listened to the song. Through this instrument, the researchers obtained various pieces of information, including respondents' opinions, understanding, and responses to the lyrics of the song 'Heal the World'. The data collected from the questionnaire was then analyzed to identify how respondents interpreted the humanitarian message contained in the song, as well as the extent to which the song contributed to raising their social awareness. Thus, the questionnaire served as the primary data source in this study, providing direct insight into respondents' perspectives (Saádi, 2025).

In addition, this study used library research as a complementary data-collection technique. The library research was conducted by reviewing relevant written sources, including books, scientific journals, articles, and previous research findings, all related to the research topic. The information from these sources was utilized to strengthen the theoretical foundation, provide a clear conceptual framework, and assist the researcher in understanding and interpreting the questionnaire data. In conclusion, the literature review is a research method that examines various literature related to the research problem, in the form of papers, books, or other writings (Roosinda & Fitria Widiyani, 2021). By combining questionnaire techniques and literature review, this study is expected to produce data that is not only factual but also supported by a strong theoretical basis, thereby yielding more comprehensive and in-depth results.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study uses the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which comprises four stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and concluding/verification. This model was selected because it enables systematic, continuous data analysis. Furthermore, this study employs a thematic analysis of the lyrics of Michael Jackson's song 'Heal the World'. According to Braun & Clarke (2021), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data.

1. The first stage is (data collection), which involves gathering song lyrics as the primary data and questionnaire responses from participants as supporting data.
2. The second stage is (data condensation), which is the process of selecting, focusing and simplifying the data. At this stage, the song lyrics are analyzed to identify key themes such as human values, peace, and social concern. Meanwhile, the questionnaire data is classified based on respondents' answers.
3. The third stage is (data display), which involves presenting the results of the analysis in the form of narrative descriptions for the analysis of song lyrics, as well as tables or percentages for the questionnaire data to make them easier to understand.
4. The fourth stage is (drawing conclusions and verification), which involves interpreting the results of the analysis to identify the relationship between the messages in the songs and the respondents' level of social awareness. This process is carried out continuously until valid and consistent conclusions are reached.

In qualitative research, thematic analysis comprises six main steps: familiarization with the data, coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, naming themes, and writing the report. In addition, quantitative data analysis of the questionnaire was conducted using descriptive statistics to calculate the percentages and frequencies of respondents' answers, thereby illustrating the level of understanding and social awareness of the song's message (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDING

Lyric Analysis Results

Based on an analysis of the lyrics to Michael Jackson's song "Heal the World," several humanitarian values were identified, as presented in the following lyrics:

1. The value of empathy is conveyed in the lyrics:

"There are people dying, if you care enough for the living, make a better place for you and for me."

These lyrics depict the dire conditions of human life and serve as a call to greater care and sensitivity toward others' plight.

2. The value of social concern is evident in the lyrics:

"Heal the world, make it a better place, for you and for me and the entire human race."

These lyrics include a call to action, directed at all humanity, to help create a better world.

3. The value of peace is expressed in the lyrics:

"There are ways to get there if you care enough for the living, make a little space, make a better place."

These lyrics illustrate that peace and tranquillity can be achieved through small acts rooted in care for others.

4. The value of optimism is reflected in the lyrics:

"We could fly so high, let our spirits never die."

These lyrics demonstrate optimism and the belief that a better future awaits all humanity in this world.

1. Results of Closed-Ended Questions (Yes/No)

The following are the results of the data analysis for the closed-ended questions:

Table 1. Data analysis of Closed-Ended Questions

No	QUESTIONS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Understanding the meaning of songs	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2	Songs contain messages of humanity	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
3	Paying attention to the lyrics while listening	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

4	Songs are still relevant today	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
5	Songs influence social perspectives	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
6	Feeling more caring after listening	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
7	Music influences social awareness	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
8	Songs encourage doing good deeds	yes	yes	no	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes

- Y indicates Yes (meaning the respondent agrees with the statement).
- No indicates No (meaning the respondent disagrees with the statement).

Based on the data collected, nearly all respondents demonstrated a high level of understanding of the meaning of the song "Heal the World." Nine out of ten respondents (90%) stated that they understood the song's meaning, while one respondent (10%) stated that they did not.

All respondents (100%) stated that this song conveys a humanitarian message, indicating a shared perception of its content. Seven respondents (70%) stated that they pay attention to the lyrics while listening to the song, while 3 respondents (30%) do not always pay attention to the lyrics.

The same percentage was also observed in the assessment of the song's relevance, with 80% of respondents considering the song still relevant to current conditions. Furthermore, all respondents (100%) stated that the song influenced the way they view social or humanitarian issues. A total of 8 respondents (80%) also reported feeling more compassionate toward others after listening to the song. A total of 9 respondents (90%) believe that music can influence a person's social awareness, while 1 respondent (10%) holds a different view. Additionally, 5 respondents (50%) stated that this song has inspired them to take positive actions toward others.

DISCUSSIONS

Results of Open-Ended Questions (Essay)

Based on the respondents' answers, the majority believe that the younger generation's tendency to enjoy music more than to understand its meaning is a natural phenomenon. Many of them tend to be more interested in the melody, rhythm, or atmosphere of the song than in its lyrics.

Nevertheless, most respondents also felt that this habit results in a less profound understanding of the songs. Some of them noted that if one is willing to understand

the meaning of the lyrics, there is much to be learned, such as human values, empathy, and social awareness.

On the other hand, there are also respondents who believe that enjoying music without necessarily understanding its meaning is still fine. As long as the music provides a sense of comfort and is enjoyed by the listener, that is enough.

A. Correlation Analysis of Humanitarian Values and Social Awareness

This study aims to examine the extent to which Michael Jackson's song "Heal the World" influences the social awareness of the younger generation. Based on the analysis, four main pillars were identified: empathy, social concern, peace, and optimism. Questionnaire data revealed a very strong correlation between the song's lyrical messages and respondents' perceptions, with 100% of respondents agreeing that the song contains explicit humanitarian messages.

These findings show that the humanitarian values in the song are universal and easily recognizable, so that lyrics such as "Heal the world, make it a better place" not only serve as entertainment but also function effectively as a tool for social education, instilling a sense of collective responsibility toward fellow human beings.

B. The Effectiveness of Music in Attitude Change and Hypothesis Testing

Regarding the testing of the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a), this study confirms a positive relationship between exposure to songs and increased social awareness, as evidenced by the following:

Significance of Cognitive Impact: 90% of respondents stated that they understood the song's meaning deeply. Although there is a tendency among the younger generation to enjoy the melody more (30% of respondents do not always pay attention to the lyrics), the fact that the majority still grasped the main message indicates that music has the power to internalize values into the listeners' mindset on a semi-conscious level.

Change in Social Perspective: 90% of respondents acknowledged that this song has influenced the way they view humanitarian issues. In this context, music serves as a medium for reflection, capable of reshaping respondents' thinking about the social realities around them.

C. Emotional Internalization and the Gap Between Words and Deeds

A key finding of this study is the distinction between emotional impact and behavioural manifestations. As many as 80% of respondents reported an increased sense of compassion after listening to the song. However, when asked about the motivation to take concrete action, that figure dropped to 50%.

This suggests that music's influence is more pronounced on cognitive (understanding) and affective (emotional) aspects than on psychomotor (direct action) aspects. This phenomenon indicates that while the seeds of empathy have been successfully planted through the song's lyrics, the transformation into concrete action remains highly dependent on each respondent's individual sensitivity and the influence of their respective social environments.

D. Contemporary Relevance and Educational Implications

With a relevance rating of 100% among the younger generation, "Heal the World" has proven to remain a valid tool for social campaigns in the modern era. The message of optimism reflected in the lyrics "We could fly so high" is key to inspiring the younger generation not to let human values fade away amid the march of progress.

Nearly all respondents (90%) believe that music holds great potential in shaping social awareness. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that educational institutions or social activists should utilize music more systematically as an instrument for character education and fostering empathy.

E. Limitations and Research Recommendations

The researcher acknowledges the limitations of this study, particularly the small sample size of 10 respondents and the subjective nature of the responses. Given the significance level in social research (0.05), future studies should use a larger sample to obtain more accurate generalizations about the influence of music on the social behavior of the broader public.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

Based on the study, it was found that Michael Jackson's song "Heal the World" conveys humanitarian messages of empathy, social awareness, peace, and hope for a better world. Through its simple yet meaningful lyrics, the song encourages listeners to be more mindful of others' well-being and their social environment.

The results of the study show that most respondents were able to understand the meaning of the song, although some members of the younger generation tend to enjoy music more for its melody than for its lyrics. Nevertheless, the majority of respondents still believe that this song conveys a strong social message and remains relevant to current conditions. The song also influences the respondents' perspectives on social and humanitarian issues.

This study also shows that this song can increase feelings of care and empathy toward others. However, the effects are more evident in changes in emotions and thoughts than in direct, concrete actions. This demonstrates that music can foster social awareness, but concrete actions are still influenced by other factors such as the environment, life experiences, and each individual's personal awareness.

In general, this study confirms that music serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying moral and social messages. The song "Heal the World" plays an important role in instilling humanitarian values and raising social awareness among the younger generation in their daily lives.

SUGGESTION

Educational institutions, teachers, and youth organizations are encouraged to utilize socially oriented songs such as Michael Jackson's "Heal the World" as supporting materials in character education, peace education, and social-awareness programs. Classroom discussions, lyric interpretation, reflective writing, and community-based projects may help young people understand humanitarian messages more critically. Such activities can strengthen the role of music not only as entertainment but also as an educational medium for developing empathy, social concern, optimism, and respect for peace.

Young listeners are also encouraged to engage more actively with the meanings conveyed through song lyrics rather than focusing solely on melody and rhythm. The humanitarian values found in "Heal the World" should be reflected in practical actions, such as helping people in need, participating in social campaigns, protecting the environment, and promoting peaceful relationships within their communities. In this way, the cognitive and emotional influence of music can gradually be transformed into meaningful social behaviour.

Future researchers are advised to involve a larger and more diverse group of respondents in terms of age, educational background, cultural context, and musical preferences. Further studies may also apply mixed-method, experimental, or longitudinal approaches to examine more accurately whether exposure to humanitarian songs produces lasting changes in attitudes and behaviour. Comparative research involving other socially conscious songs may also provide a broader understanding of how music contributes to youth awareness and social action.

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