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Analysis of Self-Acceptance In "The Greatest Showman Original Motion Picture Soundtrack" Album By Benj Pasek and Justin Paul

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ABSTRACT

This study examines self-acceptance in The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Sooundtrack (2017) By Benj Pasek and Justin Paul Album. The research aims to identify how the album represents self-acceptance through its lyrical expressions. Using a qualitative method, the data were collected through documentation and analyzed using a psychological approach grounded in humanistic perpectives. The album consists of nine songs, from which the researcher identified 83 relevant lyrical excerpts that reflect elements of self-acceptance, including unconditional acceptance, self-congruence, openness to experience, and personal growth. The findings show that the soundtrack consistently highlights messages of resilience inclusivity, and self-affirmation. These themes portray self-acceptance not only as a personal process but also as a shared experience shaped by social challenges such as stigma, discrimination, and identity struggles. The study concludes that the album functions as a medium of empowerment by offering narratives that encourage individuals to embrace their authentic selves. This research contributes to discussion in psychology culture, and education by demonstrating how popular song can serve as tools for emotional reflection, identity formation, and social support.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis representasi penerimaan diri dalam *The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Ppicture Soundtrack* (2017) karya Benj Pasek dan Justin Paul. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi bagaimana album tersebut menampilkan penerimaan diri melalui isi liriknya. Penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan teknik dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan psikologis berbasis perspektif humanistik. Album ini terdiri atas sembilan lagu, dan peneliti menemukan 83 data lirik yang mencerminkan elemen penerimaan diri, yaitu penerimaan tanpa syarat kesesuaian diri, keterbukaan terhadap pengalaman, dan pertumbuhan pribadi. Hasil penelitian menunjukan bahwa album ini menonjolkan pesan ketangguhan inklusivitas dan afirmasi diri. Tema-tema tersebut menggambarkan penerimaan diri sebagai proses pribadi sekaligus pengalaman kolektif yang dipengaruhi oleh stigma sosial, diskriminasi, dan pencarian identitas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa album tersebut berfungsi sebagai media pemberdayaan yang mendorong individu untuk menerima diri mereka secara autentik. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian psikologi, budaya, dan pendidikan dengan menunjukan bahwa lagu populer dapat menjadi sarana refleksi emosional, pembentukan identitas, dan dukungan sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Self-acceptance has become a global issue in the modern era, where social pressure, beauty standards and cultural expectations often trigger identity crises. (Maclness, 2020) states that self-acceptance forms the foundation of psychologycal well-being because it allows individuals to see themselves as worthy without relying on external validation or perfectionistic standards. (Rogers, 1961) defines that self-acceptance is a crusial element in the process of self-actualization, encompassing the unconditional acceptance of oneself, the reconciliation between expextations and reality, and the acknowledgement of past experiences and personal growth.

Previous studies have highlighted the significant impact of self-acceptance on psychological and behavioral outcomes, particularly among adolescents. (Linardon, 2020) found that low levels of self-acceptance in adolescents are strongly associated with unhealthy eating patterns and decreased self-esteem. Conversely, adolescents who participate in interventions that promote self-acceptance and self-compassion report lower levels of anxiety and develop a healthier relationship with their bodies. Collectively, these findings reinforce that self-acceptance is not only a personal preference but a fundamental psychological need that significantly influences mental health and overall life outcomes.

Furhter evidence also comes from research involving individuals with physical differences, such as vitiligo, didisabilities, ir visible scars. (Neff, 2019) notes that individuals who struggle with self-acceptance often experience persistent self-rejection and social withdrawl. In contrast, those who embrace their identity despite these diffeerences tend to exhibit higher life satisfaction, stronger self-confidence, and greater social engagement. This suggest that self-acceptance plays a crusial role in shaping positive self-image and reducing emotional distress enabling individuals to navigate daily life with greater resilience.

The issue of self-acceptance is not only evident in real life context but also reflected in various forms of literary expression, including songs. One example is 'The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack' by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (2017), which has become a cultural phenomenon. Its global commercial success and widespread popularity suggest that the album carries a powerful influence, funcioning as an anthem that encourages courage, resilience, and self-acceptance.

Given these obsservations, the study of self-acceptance through musical texts is important because it reveals how songs may shape an individual's psychological awarness and social identity. Academic inquiry into this topic can furhter contribute to the growing scholarship on the relationship between art, popular culture, and the psychology of self-acceptance. To understand how this album operates as a potential tool for psychological education and social empowerment, this research is conducted.

Previous studies have examined the "The Greatest Showman Soundtrack, yet they focus on different linguistic or stylistic aspects. (Dimela, 2023), for instance investigates the use of figurative language in "A Million Dreams," while (Wijayanti S. Zahrida, 2022) analyze lexical cohesion across several songs in the soundtrack. In contrast, the present study centers on self-acceptance as the primary thematic concern thorought the album. This gap provides an opportunity to connect self-acceptance as a psychological coonstruct with songs as a medium of social transformation.

In understanding how self-acceptance is represented in The Greatest Showman sondtrack, this study adopts Carl Rogers' humanistic psychology as the primary theoritical framework. (Rogers, 1961) explains that self-acceptance is a fundamental component of self-actualiation, a process through which individuals learn to accept themselves unconditionally reconcile their expectations with reality, and acknowledge both past experiences and personal growth. This form of acceptance enables individuals to live authentically, thereby supporting emotional stability and psychological well-being. According to (Rogers, 1961) self-acceptance consist of four interrelated elements that collectively shape an individual's capacity to understand and embrace their true self.

The first elemen is **unconditional acceptance,** refers to accepting oneself completely without imposing judgements. This acceptance reduces the gap between one's real and ideal self, allowing individuals to develop a more stable and authentic self-concept. The second elemen, **self-congruence,** highlights the harmony between self-concept and actual experience. When individual recognize their true emotions and thoughts without distortion they experience greater internal balance and reduced psychological conflict.

The third elemen, **openness to experience,** involves accepting both positive and difficult experiences without defensiveness. This openness helps individuals process emotions honestly reduce inner tension, and better understand

themselves. Finally, **personal growth** is the continuous motivation to develop onoe's potentian through learning and self-reflection. Individuals who pursue growth tend to understand themselves more fully, strengthening their overall self-acceptance. Through these four elements, Rogers' theory provides a clear framework for analyzing how the soundtrack communicates themes of authenticity, resilience, and psychological empowerment.

Building from the research problem, which question how the lyrics in the album represent the elements of self-acceptance according to Carl Rogers, the objective of this research is to examine and analyze the ways in which songs in The Greatest Showman: Oiginal Motion Picture Soundtrack portray Rogers' four elements of self-acceptance. Through this focus, the research aims to reveal how the album expresses themes of unconditional acceptance self-congruence, openness to experience, and personal growth.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

This research uses qualitative methods. The researcher applies the psychological approach, especially (Rogers, 1961) humanistic perpective, which is focused on observing the self acceptance in the song. The data are collected through documentation, in which it refers specifically to the lyrics of the album "The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack" released on December 8, 2017, consists of 9 songs, and all of them are written by the songwriting duo Benj Pasek and Justin Paul. The techniques of analyzing the data in this research is based on (Hubberman, 1994) consists of: 1) Data reduction, in which in this stage all the songs lyric in the album are analyzed to find parts that are relevant to the context of self-acceptance, and the inappropriate data are eliminated to make the analysis process more focused; 2) Data presentation, in which in this stage the data that has been analyzed is then presented in tabular form to make it easier for researcher to interpret the findings, which later in the table contains pieces of lyics that are in accordance with the focus of the concept as well as interpretations of each element; 3) Drawing conclusion, in which in this stage after all the data analyzed, the researcher draws the conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSON

The researcher identifies 83 pieces of data related to self-acceptance within Pasek and Paul's The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack. These findings are categorized into four key elements of Rogers' theory: unconditional acceptance, self-congruence, openness to experiences, and peersonal growth. Additionally, several contemporary studies support the interpretation of these findings, strengthening the relevaance of self-acceptance as a reflected in the album's lyrical content.

1. Unconditional Acceptance

Related to the aspect of unconditional acceptance, the researcher finds 32 pieces of data. Unconditional acceptance is reflected in lyrics that emphasize accepting oneself without conditions or dependence on external validation. One of the data is dexcribe below:

Table 01. Unconditional Acceptance

No.	Song Title	Data	Descriptions
1.	The Greatest Show - Song 1	Data 01 "Impossible comes true, it"s takin over you" (Line 26)	This lyric is sung by the person in the song The Greatest Show. It expresses their belief that the impossible can come true if one believes in it. The lyric shows optimism and acceptance of one's own potential.

In data 01, the lyric illustrates the moment where the person begins to accept themselves fully and recognize their own potential. The phrase "impossible comes true" sugnals the person's shift toward greater self-congruence, as they begin to see themselves beyond previous doubts or limitations. This align with (Rogers, 1961) view that unconditional acceptance refers to an individual's ability to accept themselves fully, without judging their weaknesses or faults. In line with this, (Ellis, 2020) concept of unconditional acceptance (USA) highlights that an individual maintains self-regard regardless of failures, mistakes, or external approval, representing a stable sense of self-value that is not contingent on achievements or others' evaluations.

Supporting this perpective, research on USA has demonstrated its relevance to psychological well-being. For example, (Chamberlain, 2023) developed a measure of unconditional self-acceptance and found that higher levels of USA were associated with lower anxiety and greater emotional stability, even after controlling for self-esteem levels suggesting that unconditional acceptance contributes uniquely to resilience and psychological health beyond normative self-evaluation processes.

Therefore, the analyzed lyrcis reinforce this principle by portraying a character who acknowledges previously unattainable outcomes as achievable, reflecting an internal shift toward self-acceptance that is grounded not in external validation butvin intrinsic evidence in the literature

2. Self-Congruence

In accordance with the aspect of self-congruence, the researcher finds 25 pieces of data. Self-congruence is reflected in the lyrics that show alignment between the character's inner feelings, beliefs, and outward actions. This aspect highlights the effort to live authentically by expressing true desires and identities, even when facing social pressure or internal conflict. One of the data is describe below:

Table 02. Self-Congruence

No.	Song Title	Data	Descriptions
1.	A Million Dreams – Song 2	Data 02 "I close my eyes and i can see, A world that"s waiting up for me, that i call my own" (Line 1-3)	This lyric describes an ideal world shaped by the person's imagination and hope. They see a world that fully reflects their true self.

The words in data 02, can be interpreted as a reflection of a person's awarness to create a life hat aligns with his true self. (Rogers, 1961) states that self-congruence occurs when an individual's experiences are in harmony with their self-concept, allowing thme to act authentically according to their inner desires. In this context, the person demonstrates alignment between his imagined world and his genuine aspirations, showing a balance between self-concept and experiential reality. This alignment indicates that the individual is not merely conforming to societal expectations but actively shaping a life based on personal values and inner motivations.

This interpretation is further supported by (Dammann, 2021), who argue that authenticity is a developmental process rooted in a congruous relationship between the self, others, and relevant social norms. They emphasize that congruence enables individuals to integrate personal desires with lived experiences, resulting in psychological well-being and a stable sense of identity. Similarly, (Joseph, 2010) explain that authentic functioning emerges when individuals are able to accept their internal experiences and express them consistently in their behavior, rather than suppressing them to meet external demands. Their study highlights that self-congruence plays a crusial role in positive psychological functioning, as it allows individuals to live in accordance with their true selves.

From these explanations, the lyric in the data above reflects self-congruence, where the person consciously shapes a life that is true to himself instead of following external expectations. The harmony between inner aspirations and outward expression illustrated in the lyric aligns with Rogers' perpective and reinforced by contemporary psychological studies on authenticity and congruence, confirming that self-congruence is a fundamental element of self-acceptance.

3. Openness to Experience

In accordance with the aspect of openness to experience, the researcher finds 18 data. Opennes to experience is reflected in the lyrics that show the character's willingness to embrace new experiences uncertainty, and change. This aspect highlights the readiness to step beyond comfort zones, accept life's unpredictability, and grow thorugh unfamiliar situantions. One of data is describe below:

Table 03. Openness to Experience

No.	Song Title	Data	Descriptions
1.	Come Alive – Song 3	Data 03 "Don't you stay that way, no more living in those shadows" (Line 31-32)	The person encourages breaking free from limitations and the shadows of the past, opening up to a bolder life.

In data 03, the words "Don't you stay that way, no more living in those shadows" emphasize the importance of stepping out of limiting feras in order to embrace new experiences. The lyric reflects a consious movement away from psychological avoidance toward self-exploration and change. This interpretationnaligns with (Rogers, 1961), who explains that openness to experience involves confronting past constraints and internal fears rather than denying or avoiding them. Through openness, individuals allow themselves to fully experience life events as they are, which is essential for personal growth.

This idea is further supported by (Maurer, 2020), who argues that openness involves learning to acknowledge and accept one's own emotional reaction within a given situatuin. By being open to internal experiences, individuals are able to engage more authentically with their environment and develop psychological maturity. In addition, (Kashdan, 2010) state that openness to experience is closely related to psychological flexibility, which enables individuals to adapt to change, face uncertainty and pursue meaningful goals despite discomfort. They emphasize that growth occurs when individuals willingly confront unfamiliar or challenging experiences istead of remaining within self-imposed limitations.

From these explanations, the reflects opennes to experience as the character is encouraged to leave behind fear and emotional restraint in order to engage with new possibilities. The act steppinng out of "The shadow" symbolizes a readiness to accept change and uncertainty, is a key element of self-acceptance and personal development.

4. Personal Growth

In accordance with the aspect of personal growth, the researcher finds 25 pieces of data. Personal growth is reflected in the lyrics that portray processes of change, self-development, and increasing self-confidence. This aspect highlights the individual's efforts to learn from experiences, overcome limitations, and move toward a more positive and empowered sense of self. One of the data is described below:

Table 04. Personal Growth

No.	Song Title	Data	Descriptions
1.	The Other Side – Song 4	Data 04 "Take your walls and start 'em breaking" (Line 44)	The lyric suggests that growth requires breaking down personal barriers and leaving the comfort zone.

As found in data 04, the lyrics *"Take your walls and start 'em breaking"* show that the individual encourages confronting and dismantling self-imposed limitations. The metaphor of "walls" represents internal barriers such as fear, doubt, and past habits that restrict personal development. (Rogers, 1961) explains that personal growth requires individuals to challenge entrenched fears and behavioral patterns that hinder movement toward self-actualization. Growth, in this sense, emerges when individuals actively engage in change rather than remaining psychologically defensive.

This interpretation is supported by (Bandura, 2021), who emphasizes that overcoming personal barriers is fundamental to the development of self-efficacy. He argues that individuals who believe in their capability to confront challenges are more likely to persist, adapt, and grow through difficulties. High self-efficacy encourages proactive behavior, which aligns with the act of "breaking walls" as portrayed in the lyric. Furthermore, (Luthans, 2007) state that personal growth is strengthened through positive psychological resources such as resilience and confidence, which enable individuals to confront internal obstacles and sustain continuous self-development.

Therefore, the lyric illustrates a proactive effort to remove internal limitations and embrace ongoing personal growth. By symbolically breaking down psychological barriers, the character demonstrates an active pursuit of self-improvement, reinforcing the idea that personal growth is a continuous process rooted in courage, self-belief, and openness to change.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions of this study are: 1) this study demonstrates that self-acceptance in *The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack (2017)* is consistently represented thorugh themes of resilience, inclusivity, and self affirmation. 2) The songs function as a medium of empowerment, encouraging listeners to embrace their authentic selves. 3) self-acceptance is positioned not only as an individual psychological issue but also as a collective cultural concern, particularly relevant in contexts where individuals face social stiggma, discrimination, and identity crises.

As for the implications: 1) Psychologically, popular songs such as *The Greatest Showman: Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (2017) might serve as the social therapeutic tools, helping individuals to build their self-acceptance, to overcome stigma, and to strengthen mental well-being. 2) Culturally, songs act as a collective narrative, reinforcing the importance of diversity, inclusivity, and authenticity in society. 3) Educationally, the album can be used as a learning resource, integrating humanistic values into classrooms e.g. through lyric analysis as a medium for self-reflection and identity discussions. 4) In case of identity & empowerment, songs as transformative tools contribute to positive identity formation, especially for groups vulnerable to discrimination.

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