

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MORAL MESSAGES IN MAROON 5 SONG LYRICS

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### Abstract

This research has two main objectives: (1) to analyze the moral messages conveyed by Maroon 5 in their songs using critical discourse analysis, and (2) to explore the hidden meanings behind these moral messages. The study adopts a Descriptive Qualitative research design and applies Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach. The research subject includes the lyrics of Maroon 5 songs from the albums released between 2012 and 2021, specifically 'Overexposed,' 'V,' 'Red Pill Blues,' and 'Jordi.' The focus is on identifying and interpreting the moral messages embedded in these lyrics. Data collection was conducted through observation and document analysis, and the data were analyzed using Miles & Huberman's framework, which involves three stages: (a) data reduction, (b) data presentation, and (c) conclusion drawing. The study revealed 40 moral messages in Maroon 5's songs from the selected period. These moral messages were categorized into three groups: (a) human relations with oneself, (b) human relations with the social environment or others, and (c) human relations with God. These categories reflect the broad range of moral themes Maroon 5 addresses in their music, spanning personal, social, and spiritual dimensions.

**Keywords:** *Moral Message, Critical Discourse Analysis, Songs, Lyrics*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is considered the most complete and effective communication tool to convey ideas, messages, intentions, feelings, and opinions to others. Devitt & Hanley (2006) and Noermanzah (2019) explain that language is a message conveyed through expression to communicate in certain situations and activities. Communication will be less effective if others do not accept or understand the language. Meanwhile, the way music is used as a form of expression is called "language." This is because music has elements that allow people to express feelings, ideas, or stories without words.

English is a communication tool in a universal society that helps communicate with people from other countries. This is undeniable because English is an international language. This policy prepares them to adapt and live in a global society. It can provide great opportunities to obtain information that will add insight (Burhanuddin et al., 2022). Communication is essential for human life, especially when dealing with or interacting daily. Grognet A.G. states that speaking is a crucial communication tool (Puspitasari, 2016). Good communication is also essential even in the smallest community, namely the family. The existence of feedback is something that is expected in communication. The intended purpose of communication can likely be achieved. (Rahayu et al., 2021)

Music is also considered a universal language that everyone can understand. This shows that music has a significant role in human life, both as a source of happiness, self-expression, and a means of communication (DeNora, 2013). Music is a social practice involved in forming individual and social identities. Music is used for various reasons and plays a vital role in society. Music is used in society because of its diversity and flexibility as an artistic medium that can bring change, joy, and unity in various contexts of daily life.

In addition, music can also contain moral messages or values that are integrated into the composition, melody, and lyrics. Moral messages can be stated directly or hidden. According to (Tommy Suprpto, 2009), songs can be considered the same media as mass communication, so it is suitable and sufficient to convey ideas, hopes, and messages to the audience because it

meets five conditions: the recipients are diverse, the information is general, the communicator is organized, the message comes from one direction, and there is spontaneity.

Moral messages can influence a broad audience by analyzing moral messages. In addition, each album may address a specific theme, such as love, relationships, change, or everyday life. Using moral message analysis to understand the moral messages contained in these themes. Song lyrics allow people to share emotions, intentions, and meanings. Song lyrics contain meanings that the songwriter wants to convey and can be analyzed through Critical Discourse Analysis.

Discourse analysis is a method of studying and analyzing written or spoken texts. This method does not analyze a text in terms of its structure and syntax but rather the meaning behind the sentences. The approach is frequently referred to as going “beyond the sentence.” Discourse analysis is not only valuable for the field of linguistics, but it is also used in other fields such as social studies, psychology, and anthropology (Uzokova, 2020) (Sari, 2023)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical approach that aims to understand how language reflects and shapes ideologies, social structures, and societal power. This method involves a thorough examination of spoken or written texts, as well as the social context in which they are created. CDA aims to discover and uncover the power relations embedded in language and how language supports or opposes existing social structures.

CDA is also an essential method for analyzing language practices related to social and power.

Maroon 5 is one of the well-known groups in the community, and the pop rock music genre originates in Los Angeles, California, United States. Maroon 5 has various songs with various themes, and the moral messages in the songs in each album can be interpreted subjectively by the listeners. For example, the moral message may be contained in the song “She Will Be Loved,” one of Maroon 5’s popular songs. The lyrics “It’s not always rainbows and butterflies” reflect the recognition that life is full of challenges and uncertainties.

The moral messages that can be taken from these lyrics include the understanding that every relationship and life must have difficult times, and sometimes, we are faced with situations that are not always pleasant. However, this expression can also encourage remaining realistic and resilient and overcoming these difficult times. The moral message can teach the importance of grit and readiness to face various aspects of life, including challenges and difficulties.

Researchers believe that there are moral messages or hidden goals behind Maroon 5’s songs. Especially moral messages related to society and love. In addition, by researching the moral messages in Maroon 5’s songs, researchers hope to increase the general public’s understanding of how music influences worldviews and increase appreciation of art as a means of expression and social communication.

## **Method**

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method regarding the object of study. Researchers used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a research framework. The type of CDA used is based on Fairclough’s theory. Fairclough’s three-level social theory and three-part methodology offer an in-depth framework to explore the complex relationship between language, power, and society. This method invites researchers to investigate how language can be used to develop and maintain social structures and ideas in addition to communicating.

According to (Şükran Gölbaşı, 2017), critical discourse analysis is a three-step process that includes textual analysis, production, consumption, and distribution of texts called interaction, as well as interpretation of texts in their social context called contextual analysis. The analyzed discourse is looked at broadly to answer the questions listed above. The same set of questions can be studied at micro, meso, and macro levels to reveal different levels of

interconnectedness. Text is just one aspect of social interaction, according to Fairclough, who uses the term “discourse” to describe the whole process.

In this study, researchers used three types of moral messages, namely, (a) human relation with the self, (b) human relation with social environment/others, and (c) human relation with God. The data in this study were analyzed using the method of Miles and Huberman (1984) define analysis as three streams of operations that occur concurrently: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. In this study, researchers used Miles and Huberman’s theory to analyze data, including data reduction, data display, and conclusions drawing.

## Result and Discussion

Table 1: Quantity of Moral Message in Maroon 5 Songs Table

No	Kinds of Moral Message	Quantity
1	Human Relation with The Self (HRS)	19
2	Human Relations with Social Environment (HOS)	65
3	Human Relation with God (HRG)	3
	Total	87

The data was obtained from the lyrics of the songs from the Maroon 5 album, which are widely spread on the internet. The researcher first listened to Maroon 5’s songs on the Spotify app and watched the music video for the album title track on the YouTube app. The researcher focused on songs in the last five Maroon 5 albums (2012-2021) to examine the data. These selected lyrics were considered to have moral messages in them, and the lyrics were then categorized into three types of moral messages based on the theoretical review in chapter two. Based on the conclusions drawn on the theoretical evaluation of moral messages, the researcher found that there was a total of 87 selected lyrics containing moral messages, 19 lyrics included in moral messages related to self, 65 lyrics included in the relationship with social life or others, while 3 lyrics included in the relationship with God.

### Kinds of Moral Message in Maroon 5 Songs

#### Human Relations with The Self

Morals in human relations with oneself can be interpreted as humans always wanting to get the best in life and their beliefs without having to depend on others. Indicators of morals in human relations with the self can include honesty, patience, death, longing, selfishness, hard work, demanding knowledge, courage, ingenuity, self-esteem, pain, pride, doubt, disappointment, firm, tenacious, cheerful, firm, open, visionary, independent, firm, reflective, responsibility and discipline.

According to Nurgiyantoro (1998), issues can vary in type and level of intensity. These issues may relate to self-existence, self-esteem, self-confidence, fear, death, longing, revenge, loneliness, indecision between choices, and other aspects involving the self and individual psychology. An example of this can be seen in the song lyrics “One More Night” from the album “Overexposed.”

01\_EX\_One More Night

“...making me love you...” (Maroon 5, 2012)

In the lyrics, the realization and acknowledgment that someone makes us fall in love show honesty with oneself about the feelings being experienced. It reflects emotional integrity and a willingness to face those feelings honestly.

01\_EX\_One More Night

“I’m feeling stupid, feeling stupid...” (Maroon 5, 2012)

This lyric is the same as the lyric above, the song “One More Night.” These lyrics show the honesty of individuals in acknowledging their feelings. Admitting that feeling “stupid” is a form of honesty to oneself, where a person does not try to cover up or hide their emotions, which is associated with the previous lyrics. It can be interpreted that there is honesty when someone is in love, and they feel stupid because they feel the meaning of falling in love itself.

01\_EX\_One More Night

“*So, I cross my heart and hope to die...*” (Maroon 5, 2012)

Based on that phrase above, these are not just words but a promise that carries the meaning of loyalty and sacrifice. It reflects a sincere and unconditional commitment, where they are ready to give their all for their loved ones. This phrase describes their love as eternal and unwavering, showing that the feeling is so deep that they are willing to do anything, even if it means risking their own lives.

### **Human Relations with Social Environment/Others**

Morals in human relations with oneself can be interpreted as humans always wanting to get the best in life and their beliefs without having to depend on others. Indicators of morals in human relations with the self can include honesty, patience, death, longing, selfishness, hard work, demanding knowledge, courage, ingenuity, self-esteem, pain, pride, doubt, disappointment, firm, tenacious, cheerful, firm, open, visionary, independent, firm, reflective, responsibility and discipline.

As Nurgiyantoro (1998) suggests, issues can differ in type and intensity. These might involve self-existence, self-esteem, self-confidence, fear, death, longing, revenge, loneliness, indecision between choices, and other aspects of the individual's self and psychology. An example of this can be found in the song “One More Night” lyrics from the “Overexposed” album.

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### **Human Relations with God**

Nurgiyantoro (1998) reveals that “Religious morals uphold the human traits of deep conscience, dignity and personal freedom possessed by humans. In the context of the relationship between man and God, humans are considered spiritually meaningful beings and tend to seek and establish a relationship with the Almighty. They seek meaning and guidance in their lives through religion and spirituality. An attitude of gratitude is a moral indicator in this relationship. It is a way of expressing your appreciation for the blessings and direction that

God has given you. In the face of life's challenges, trusting in God is a firm foundation of faith. Praying is a critical way to communicate spiritually as it is a way to interact and surrender to God. In addition, obeying God creates a solid moral foundation that leads people to behave according to their moral and religious values. Therefore, man's relationship with God is a spiritual connection and an ethical foundation that directs daily life. An example from the explanation above is the lyrics entitled *Lost Stars* in *V album*, 2014.

02\_V\_Lost Stars

*"... and, God, tell us the reason ..."* (Maroon 5, 2014)

The lyrics above show the spiritual activities carried out by someone. Asking his God that he is asking for guidance and direction in dealing with something that happens. In this context, it can be interpreted as a category of moral messages related to God because of the word "God," which is a complete reference that indicates someone who has faith.

02\_V\_Lost Stars

*"... it's hunting season, and the lambs are on the run searching for the meaning ..."*

(Maroon 5, 2014)

"Searching the meaning" for a deeper understanding or purpose is an example of the symbolic search for meaning in lyrics. It reflects an intellectual and spiritual journey to find answers to questions about the purpose of life and its connection to the world or higher. This metaphor shows the active efforts of humans to find meaning in their life experiences through introspection and a better understanding of who they are and how they exist.

02\_V\_Lost Stars

*"... Who are we? Just a speck of dust within the galaxy..."* (Maroon 5, 2014)

The lyrics are more of an existential reflection on the place of humans in the vast universe. It poses questions about human identity and their existence in the vast cosmos and emphasizes the powerlessness of humans before the greatness of the universe.

### **Hidden Meaning Toxic Relation in Maroon 5 Songs**

#### **Representation in the lyrics of Maroon 5 songs (02\_V\_Animals)**

This discourse representation focuses more on the text that will be analyzed in depth. This is because the text is a form of representation of something that contains a particular ideology, so the text is dismantled linguistically, or by looking at linguistic aspects, namely vocabulary, semantics, sentence structure, coherence, and cohesiveness, that form an understanding. In this text analysis, researchers analyzed song lyrics. In-depth analysis of lyrics:

*First Verse:*

*"Baby, I'm preying on you tonight, hunt you down, eat you alive."*

The lyrics describe relationships as a form of hunting and predation, indicating a very unhealthy and toxic power dynamic.

*Chorus:*

*"Maybe you think that you can hide. I can smell your scent for miles."*

Indicates unhealthy obsession and excessive control, creating a picture of a relationship dominated by one party.

*Second Verse:*

*"Yeah, you can start over, you can run free, you can find other fish in the sea"*

While there is an acknowledgment that the couple can leave the relationship, there is also an implication that they will continue to be pursued, signaling manipulative control.

*Bridge:*

*"Baby, I'm preying on you tonight"*

This repetition emphasizes the obsession and unhealthy intensity of the relationship.

Adam Levine and the rest of the songwriting team often explore relationship themes, using personal experiences or observations about human relationships. This time, in the song "Animals," Adam Levine wants to describe it through parables as if he were an animal that

would hunt its prey. These lyrics allow the listener to feel connected to or at least fascinated by the intensity of the emotions portrayed. However, perhaps not all listeners will feel comfortable with the dynamics portrayed through the intent or lyrics of the video.

The song reflects the power dynamics in relationships, where one party dominates and controls the other through obsession and predation. It can be seen as a critique of unhealthy and toxic relationships. Language such as “preying” and “hunt” highlights the harmful aspects of these relationship dynamics, which can influence how listeners view and understand their relationships.

### **Discourse Practice in the lyrics of maroon 5 song (02\_V\_Animals)**

The song “Animals” may be inspired by personal experiences or observations about intense and complex relationships. Adam Levine and his co-writers combined these elements to create a narrative that reflects the dynamics they observed or experienced. The song was produced in the context of pop music, which often explores dramatic and emotional themes of love. However, in this case, love is portrayed in a darker and more toxic way, exposing obsession and predatory behavior in relationships.

The song is received differently by listeners, depending on their experience and knowledge of relationships. Some listeners may see it as a reflection of a toxic relationship, while others may see it as an artistic expression of obsession and desire. The song was also widely distributed through various music media and digital platforms, influencing different walks of life with multiple interpretations of the meaning of love and obsession in relationships. Its popularity was evident as it reached number three on the US Billboard Hot 100 and became one of the ten most famous singles in the United States of its time.

Maroon 5’s song “Animals,” released on August 25, 2014, as the second single from the album V, depicts a man who secretly loves a woman, likening the woman to his prey. The song was criticized in the United States for being demeaning to women and likening them to animals, and it featured an animal trapping scene in the music video. Despite this, the song achieved high popularity on the charts, showing a wide range of interpretations and acceptance from the public.

### **Socio-Cultural Practice in the Lyrics of maroon 5 songs (02\_V\_Animals)**

In 2014, the song faced criticism in the United States for demeaning women and likening them to animals. In a society that is increasingly aware of issues of gender and representation, the lyrics and music video of “Animals” can be considered problematic as they depict women as objects of hunting. This issue is relevant in a broader social context where there are efforts to improve gender equality and eliminate harmful stereotypes. Criticism of the song reflects a shift in social values towards tremendous respect for women’s dignity and agency.

The song “Animals” was released in an era where pop music often featured intense and dramatic love themes. In many cases, passionate and conflicted relationships were the central theme. However, “Animals” stands out for using the predator and prey metaphor, creating an image of a very unhealthy relationship. The music video, which features Adam Levine as a butcher stalking a woman, further reinforces this narrative. The visuals used in the music video reinforce the lyrics’ message of obsession and predatory behavior.

The song “Animals” by Maroon 5 powerfully represents the dynamics and impact of a deeply unhealthy and toxic relationship through its representation of language and social context. The song depicts unhealthy power dynamics, obsession, and excessive control, all of which are signs of a toxic relationship. The social critique of the song demonstrates a growing awareness of gender issues and representation in popular culture.

From all these explanations, it can be seen that there is a hidden meaning in Maroon 5’s songs that may be enjoyed and interpreted textually can be interpreted about love. However,

when approached using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it is revealed that there is an indication of the meaning of a toxic relationship behind the textual meaning.

## Conclusion

Based on the data analysis explained above, it can be concluded that regarding moral messages, the researcher found that out of the 87 selected song lyrics, 87 song lyrics contain moral messages. Nineteen lyrics fall into human relationships with themselves, 65 lyrics fall into human relationships with society/other humans, and 3 lyrics fall into human relationships with God. From all these findings, it can be concluded that Maroon 5's songs contain many moral messages related to self, such as honesty, love, and disappointment.

Furthermore, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach found a hidden meaning, namely toxic relationships, revealed in several Maroon 5 songs that can be seen and understood beyond the text. In this case, it can be concluded that besides Maroon 5's songs containing messages more directed towards the self, they also have hidden meanings. Essentially, these songs contain moral messages that are very good and empowering, which can be implemented in daily life, and those that are not good should certainly not be followed.

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