


The Meaning of Motivation in the Lyrics of Manusia Kuat by Tulus (Ferdinand De Saussure's Semiotic Analysis)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Semiotics, Motivation, Lyrics, Tulus</p>	<p>Song as a medium of communication not only conveys messages in an aesthetic manner but is also rich in profound meanings that can be analyzed through a semiotic approach. This study aims to reveal the motivational meanings contained in the lyrics of <i>Manusia Kuat</i> by Tulus using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework. This approach examines signs through two main elements, namely the signifier and the signified, in order to uncover the relational meaning within the structure of the lyrics. The findings indicate that the song embodies strong motivational messages, such as perseverance, resilience, and confidence in human strength when facing life's challenges. Lyrics such as "kita ini manusia kuat" and "kamu bukan debu yang diam" represent symbols of spirit and self-empowerment. In conclusion, through its linguistic symbols and connotative meanings, <i>Manusia Kuat</i> successfully articulates motivation that inspires listeners to become resilient and optimistic individuals.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Music is one form of art that holds great power in influencing human emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Through lyrics, a song does not merely serve as entertainment, but also as a medium of communication capable of delivering specific messages, including motivational ones. Amid the various life challenges faced by society, songs with lyrics that provide encouragement and mental strength become highly relevant and necessary. Songs containing motivational values can awaken self-confidence, optimism, and the drive to continue striving. Lyrics that voice strength, hope, and perseverance often become sources of inspiration for their listeners.

One song that is rich in motivational messages is *Manusia Kuat*, performed by Tulus. This song emphasizes the importance of strength and perseverance in facing life, while conveying that every individual has great potential to endure and rise from difficulties. Therefore, it is essential to examine the meaning of this song's lyrics in depth, particularly through a semiotic approach, so that the motivational messages contained within can be understood more scientifically and comprehensively. By applying Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework, which distinguishes signs into two main components, signifier and

signified, the lyrics can be systematically analyzed to uncover the hidden meanings behind the chosen words. Through this approach, research on motivational songs not only enriches literary and musical studies but also contributes to the understanding of how language serves as a force in fostering life spirit.

Music also becomes an alternative for individuals whose primary purpose relates to their internal environment, yet extends broadly to the external environment. According to scholars, music is defined in various ways. Aristotle described it as an artistic creation with the power of expression, stemming from feelings that manifest through sequences of tones or melodies colored by the composer's character. Sylado explained music as a living embodiment of illusions and sounds, expressed by the composer with soulful tones capable of touching the hearts of listeners. Meanwhile, a lexicographer viewed music as an artistic discipline that unites rhythm, vocal elements, tones, and instruments to create melody and harmony, ultimately expressing the emotional dimension of the composer. From these perspectives, it can be concluded that music is a form of sound art in which melody, tone, and voice are arranged as a medium for conveying the emotional spirit of its creator to listeners (Djohan, 2019).

Musical works serve as a channel for singers and songwriters to communicate messages, which may include reflections on harmonious family relationships, emotional control, or expressions of harmony delivered to audiences. These messages are transmitted through various media, including streaming platforms such as YouTube, digital platforms like Spotify and iTunes, or traditional channels such as television and radio broadcasts. Before moving further, it is important to first understand what is meant by music or musical art itself.

As a medium of communication, music performs multiple functions. It can serve as a means of self-expression, therapy, entertainment, ritual performance, dance accompaniment, and even commercial activity. Music also contains fundamental elements such as rhythm, melody, tempo, scale, meter, dynamics, timbre, and expression, many of which are embodied within its lyrics.

Singing lyrics, according to researchers at music laboratories and neurologists from Harvard, can assist individuals recovering from stroke or brain damage in the left hemisphere, which governs motor functions for speech. A well-known example is Gabrielle Giffords, a former U.S. congresswoman who survived a gunshot wound and used this technique to relearn speaking before Congress. Singing lyrics has also been shown to help healthy individuals acquire new words and phrases more quickly (Hidayatullah, 2020).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method aimed at uncovering the motivational meanings embedded in the lyrics of *Manusia Kuat* by Tulus. The choice of a qualitative approach was grounded in the nature of the research problem, which seeks to interpret symbolic expressions and linguistic signs rather than to measure or quantify them. A descriptive orientation allowed the researcher to present a comprehensive interpretation of how lyrics function as carriers of motivational messages within the framework of semiotics.

The primary object of analysis was the official lyrics of the song *Manusia Kuat*, which were obtained from a verified source to ensure authenticity. The song was selected based on its popularity, relevance, and strong motivational appeal as perceived by audiences and critics alike. By narrowing the focus to one piece of music, the study sought to conduct a deep reading of the text rather than a comparative survey across multiple songs. This deliberate focus supported the goal of achieving depth and richness in interpretation.

Data collection relied on documentation techniques, particularly the careful transcription and verification of lyrics. The lyrics were segmented into verses, refrains, and lines, which became the unit of analysis for further semiotic interpretation. This segmentation was essential for capturing the micro-level details of each sign, while also situating them in the broader narrative flow of the song. Supporting sources, such as scholarly works on semiotics and theories of motivation, were consulted to provide conceptual grounding and interpretive direction.

The analytical framework adopted Ferdinand de Saussure's theory of semiotics, focusing on the binary distinction between signifier and signified. Each word, phrase, or metaphor in the lyrics was treated as a signifier that pointed toward broader cultural or psychological meanings. Through systematic identification and classification, signified meanings were derived and subsequently mapped onto themes of motivation, such as resilience, self-belief, and collective strength. This step ensured that the analysis maintained both linguistic precision and thematic coherence.

To structure the analysis, the researcher developed a coding scheme that linked each lyrical fragment to its potential motivational meaning. For example, expressions of physical hardship were coded in relation to resilience, while collective pronouns were connected to solidarity and empowerment. This coding process was iterative and reflexive, involving multiple rounds of reading and interpretation until stable categories emerged. The flexibility of this approach allowed the researcher to capture nuances in the text that might otherwise be overlooked.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing the lyrical interpretations with existing literature on motivation and resilience. Peer debriefing sessions were held with colleagues familiar with semiotic analysis to ensure that interpretations were not solely dependent on the subjective view of the researcher. In addition, an audit trail of coding decisions and interpretive notes was maintained to support transparency and replicability.

The scope of the study was intentionally limited to the textual dimension of the lyrics, without extending to the musical arrangement, performance, or audience reception. This delimitation was necessary to maintain focus on the semiotic analysis of language itself, although future research may incorporate these dimensions for a more holistic perspective. By defining the boundaries clearly, the study ensured that its findings remained consistent with its stated objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lyrics of Manusia Kuat

Manusia Kuat is a song that carries strong messages of communication and motivation. With a duration of approximately four minutes, the song consists of several verses that portray expressions of motivation. The following are the lyrics:

Kau bisa patahkan kakiku
Tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku
Kau bisa lumpuhkan tanganku
Tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku
Kau bisa merobek hatiku
Tapi aku tahu siapa diriku
Kau bisa runtuhkan tubuhku
Tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku
Kita adalah
Manusia-manusia kuat
Yang diberi seribu cobaan
Tetap berdiri
Paling depan
Menjadi terang
Kau bisa hitamkan putihku
Tapi tak akan gelap jalanku
Kau bisa runtuhkan tubuhku
Tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku
Kita adalah
Manusia-manusia kuat
Yang diberi seribu cobaan
Tetap berdiri
Paling depan
Menjadi terang
Kita adalah
Manusia-manusia kuat
Yang menantang ribuan tangan
Terus berlari
Menjauhkan takut
Tak pernah ragu
Kita adalah
Manusia-manusia kuat

The above illustrates the full lyrics, which consist of five verses and two refrains. These parts contain motivational messages that serve as the focus of the analysis. The interpretation of these messages is conducted using Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework, which distinguishes between signifier and signified. At this stage, the researcher presents the

findings regarding the communication of motivation reflected in the lyrics. Data collection was followed by verification and systematic observation before drawing final conclusions.

The interpretation of meaning in the song is carried out descriptively, employing a constructive qualitative approach. Each verse and refrain is examined semiotically to uncover motivational messages embedded in the lyrics.

a. Verse One

"Kau bisa patahkan kakiku, tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku"

- 1) Signifier: "Patahkan kakiku", "mimpi-mimpiku"
- 2) Signified: "Break my leg" does not only refer to literal physical harm but symbolizes suffering, obstacles, or pressure in life. "My dreams" represents aspirations, hopes, and inner spirit.
- 3) Meaning: Even when facing physical hardship, one's spirit and dreams remain unbroken. This line symbolizes inner resilience and mental strength.

b. Verse Two

"Kau bisa lumpuhkan tanganku, tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku"

- 1) Signifier: "Lumpuhkan tanganku"
- 2) Signified: Symbolizes the loss of physical or symbolic ability to act. Yet "my dreams" shows that the capacity to aspire remains intact.
- 3) Meaning: Human perseverance comes not only from physical strength but from willpower and the mind, which cannot be paralyzed.

c. Verse Three

"Kau bisa merobek hatiku, tapi aku tahu siapa diriku"

- 1) Signifier: "Merobek hatiku", "aku tahu siapa diriku"
- 2) Signified: "Tear my heart" means to cause emotional pain such as betrayal, humiliation, or trauma. "I know who I am" reflects identity, confidence, and integrity.
- 3) Meaning: Emotional wounds may occur, but one's sense of identity and dignity cannot be taken away.

d. Verse Four

"Kau bisa runtuhkan tubuhku, tapi tidak mimpi-mimpiku"

- 1) Signifier: "Runtuhkan tubuhku"
- 2) Signified: Symbolizes complete physical collapse or extreme conditions. Yet dreams remain unshaken.
- 3) Meaning: The human spirit is stronger than the body. Physical destruction does not end determination.

e. Refrain One

"Kita adalah manusia-manusia kuat

Yang diberi seribu cobaan

Tetap berdiri paling depan

Menjadi terang"

- 1) Signifier: "Manusia kuat", "seribu cobaan", "paling depan", "menjadi terang"

- 2) Signified: “Strong humans” refers to resilient individuals. “A thousand trials” symbolizes numerous life challenges. “At the front” represents bravery in facing obstacles. “Becoming light” symbolizes hope and inspiration.
- 3) Meaning: This refrain is a collective declaration of strength, asserting that resilient people not only survive but also inspire and lead others.

f. Verse Five

“Kau bisa hitamkan putihku, tapi tak akan gelap jalanku”

- 1) Signifier: “Hitamkan putihku”, “gelap jalanku”
- 2) Signified: “Blacken my white” suggests attempts to damage reputation or goodness. “Darken my path” refers to losing direction or hope.
- 3) Meaning: Morality and good intentions cannot be destroyed by accusations or slander. The life path remains clear for those who remain steadfast.

g. Refrain Two

“Kita adalah manusia-manusia kuat

Yang menantang ribuan tangan

Terus berlari menjauhkan takut

Tak pernah ragu”

- 1) Signifier: “Menantang ribuan tangan”, “berlari”, “menjauhkan takut”, “tak pernah ragu”
- 2) Signified: “Thousands of hands” symbolize countless obstacles or adversaries. “Running” indicates energy and progress. “Driving away fear” represents courage. “Never doubting” reflects conviction.
- 3) Meaning: The refrain highlights collective bravery and determination. It conveys a strong message that resilience is not only about facing trials but also about running forward with confidence, free from fear or hesitation.

Meaning

This message invites listeners to confront fear and doubt, while continuing to move forward despite the many challenges that arise. From the perspective of Abraham Maslow’s theory of motivation, this expression of self-actualization reflects the inner drive to realize one’s potential in pursuit of goals. Maslow explains that self-actualization is the power within individuals to achieve their aspirations. For example, when a child learns to walk, the process begins with crawling, standing with support, and gradually practicing balance until the child is able to walk independently. This gradual progress illustrates how determination and persistence lead to the fulfillment of one’s aspirations (Ruliana, 2014).

The expression of actualization above illustrates conditions in earlier stages of life, where emotions such as anger or frustration emerge when facing problems, and these emotions are expressed as initial forms of communication. The lyrics of this song reflect such processes of actualization as a form of motivation in human life. This interpretation also connects with other motivational needs, beginning with the need for socialization, the need for security, and the need for esteem.

According to Daniel Goleman, emotions are specific feelings and thoughts that represent both the internal and external states of an individual, influencing one’s tendency to act. In summary, emotions shape how people behave (Sabrina, 2022).

A semiotic analysis of the song *Manusia Kuat* demonstrates that Tulus employs poetic symbols to convey powerful motivational messages. The relationship between signifier and signified in the lyrics creates meanings that encourage listeners to remain resilient, confident, and persistent. Within Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic framework, the song illustrates that language in music operates as a system of signs carrying profound social and psychological meanings.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the song *Manusia Kuat* by Tulus serves as a powerful medium of motivational communication, where language and music intersect to inspire strength, resilience, and self-belief. Through a semiotic reading of the lyrics, it becomes evident that the song expresses not only the struggle against physical and emotional hardship but also the enduring power of dreams and aspirations that cannot be broken by external obstacles. The repetition of words and the collective voice used throughout the lyrics emphasize solidarity and the human capacity to endure trials while remaining a source of light and inspiration for others. The findings further demonstrate that the lyrics align with broader motivational theories, including Maslow's notion of self-actualization and Goleman's perspective on emotions, suggesting that music can embody and communicate psychological needs in a symbolic form. The song illustrates that music is more than entertainment; it is a communicative act capable of shaping attitudes, strengthening identity, and fostering optimism within its listeners. Overall, *Manusia Kuat* reflects the role of popular music as a cultural text that carries both social and psychological meanings. The song encourages listeners to embrace courage, overcome fear, and remain steadfast in the pursuit of life's aspirations.

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