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REPRESENTATION OF PATRIARCHY IDEOLOGY IN THE LYRICS OF THE SONG "LABOUR" BY PARIS PALOMA: A STUDY OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH MODEL

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Abstract

This study examines the representation of criticism of patriarchy in the lyrics of the song "Labour" by Paris Paloma using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model. The method employed is qualitative descriptive analysis with three dimensions of analysis: microstructural, mesostructural, and macrostructural. The results show that the lyrics of "Labour" systematically represent the exploitation of women through strong physical imagery, degrading labels, and rhetorical statements that dismantle patriarchal ideology within domestic relationships. The process of digital distribution has transformed this song from a personal work into a collective discourse of global feminist resistance. At the macrostructural level, these lyrics depict a shift in women's position from passive victims to conscious and active subjects resisting an oppressive system. This study demonstrates that "Labour" constitutes a discursive practice that employs language as a tool of resistance against gender injustice.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, feminism, song lyrics, Norman Fairclough, patriarchy

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji representasi kritik patriarki dalam lirik lagu "Labour" karya Paris Paloma menggunakan pendekatan Analisis Wacana Kritis model Norman Fairclough. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan tiga dimensi analisis, yaitu mikrostruktural, mesostruktural, dan makrostruktural. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lirik "Labour" secara sistematis merepresentasikan eksploitasi perempuan melalui diksi fisik yang kuat, pelabelan degradatif, dan kalimat retoris yang membongkar ideologi patriarki dalam relasi domestik. Proses distribusi digital mengubah lagu ini dari karya personal menjadi wacana kolektif perlawanan feminis global. Secara makrostruktural, lirik ini menggambarkan pergeseran posisi perempuan dari korban pasif menuju subjek yang sadar dan aktif melawan sistem yang menindas. Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa "Labour" merupakan praktik wacana yang menggunakan bahasa sebagai alat perlawanan terhadap ketidakadilan gender.

Kata kunci: *analisis wacana kritis, feminisme, lirik lagu, Norman Fairclough, patriarki*

INTRODUCTION

The feminist movement is one of the most influential social phenomena in the history of human civilization, beginning to develop around the 18th century. Knowledge of the concept of feminism then became widely known through literary works, particularly with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) and Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929) in the 19th century. Feminism itself is a social, political, and ideological movement aimed at fighting for women's rights and achieving gender equality in various aspects of life, including political, economic, and social (Hariati, 2017). This movement emerged as a response to the injustices experienced by women in a patriarchal society, where the male perspective is often prioritized (Hidayati, 2019). Therefore, the primary goal of feminist ideology is equality in all areas of life (Aini, 2019), as well as the protection of women from various forms of violence and discrimination.

One of the most effective mediums for expressing feminist issues is literature. Literary works serve as a vehicle for expressing the experiences and challenges women face in society, while also encouraging readers to reflect more critically on their position (Annisa Suhendra et al., 2023). Through literary works, writers can explore themes such as identity, power, and gender inequality, making literature not only a means of entertainment but also a tool for education and social change (Slamet, 2018).

Songs are a form of literary work that serves as a medium for expressing ideas, emotions, and concepts (Susanti & Nurmayani, 2020). As both literary works and entertainment, songs are composed in a combination of vocals and instruments, designed to be enjoyed and expressed by listeners. More than mere entertainment, songs also serve as a means of communication between musicians as communicators and listeners as recipients, containing aesthetic elements, messages, and even ideological representations reflected through their lyrics (Dzarna et al., 2022).

Songs are essentially a form of poetry known as lyric poetry. As literature has developed, the language of poetry has often been linked to the art of music, giving rise to what are known as song lyrics (Daningwati et al., 2023). The main characteristic of lyric poetry is that it is a direct expression of the poet's voice, reflecting deep and complex personal attitudes, feelings, and aspirations (Siswantoro, 2020). In its creation, style plays a crucial role because language itself is a vital means of communication for human survival (Vardani, 2017). Thus, a song can be understood as a continuum, namely the connection between thoughts, feelings, and musical instruments that form a unified whole.

It's important to emphasize that a song is more than just a series of sounds and melodies. There's a hidden meaning behind each lyrical structure that shouldn't be taken lightly, as this meaning can shape the listener's cognition and shape their opinion on a particular issue or figure (Mubarok, 2013). The language in popular music often lacks explicit meaning, but rather contains layers of meaning that only certain groups can understand (Fajri, 2014). Therefore, music is often used as a tool of resistance, a vehicle for revealing social realities, and a medium for voicing injustices in society.

Song lyrics resemble poetry, conveying implicit meanings about human life (Humaira, as cited in Vira & Prihat, 2023). Furthermore, lyrics are a way for someone to express their feelings through beautiful and communicative wordplay (Sarasw, in Nisa' et al., 2023). Through their aesthetic and symbolic power, song lyrics become relevant objects for critical study, particularly in discussing social issues such as gender inequality and patriarchy. The song "Labour" by Paris Paloma is interesting to explore as a representation of women's

resistance against a patriarchal system that exploits women's labor and feelings in social relations. In this context, gender inequality is a condition that reflects the unequal treatment between men and women, which then gives rise to discriminatory practices. Forms of this inequality can include marginalization, subordination, labeling (stereotypes), violence, and even unequal workloads. Gender inequality can be found in various aspects of life, such as economics, politics, entertainment, religion, social issues, culture, and even education. In many cases, women's contributions are often underestimated and less appreciated than those of men. This situation is more common in environments that still uphold a patriarchal social system, where men occupy dominant positions and are considered worthy of leadership, while women tend to be marginalized.

The issues of gender inequality, domestic exploitation, and the perpetuation of patriarchal systems normalized in everyday relationships are closely linked to the global sustainable development agenda, particularly Goal 5 on Gender Equality (SDG 5: Gender Equality) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). This global target emphasizes the importance of ending all forms of discrimination against women, eliminating all forms of violence in public and private spaces, and recognizing and valuing unpaid domestic and care work (Kabeer, 2016). However, in social reality, achieving gender equality targets is often hampered by cultural bias and emotional exploitation wrapped in romantic narratives. Therefore, popular media such as music presents a crucial space for voicing criticism of these injustices, while simultaneously fostering public awareness (public engagement) to achieve social justice (Bobbette et al., 2021).

The representation of women is a complex issue that is frequently at the center of debate across various fields, including media, culture, politics, and society. Portrayals of women in media and culture often reflect and shape societal views of gender norms and social values, with even different wordings impacting different representations (Fowler, in Mills, 2004). In many cultures, women are still portrayed in traditional roles such as housewives, sexual objects, and male companions, ultimately limiting society's understanding of the diversity of women's roles and identities.

Over time, women around the world continue to strive for self-actualization by entering public spaces, demonstrating their capacity for action, and gaining opportunities to voice their opinions. Today, many women are involved in various fields such as politics, development, economics, law, industry, and even the entertainment world. According to Harris (2019, cited in Astuti, 2023), the behavior of women in executive positions does not show significant differences compared to men in terms of conveying ideas and opinions to optimally achieve goals. Furthermore, women also voice their rights through various media, including campaigns, advertising, art, and music. In this modern era, more and more musicians are creating works independently without the constraints of the mainstream music industry, allowing them to freely address themes they feel, including criticizing social systems deemed unjust. As Nurahim (2009:128) points out, music, to raise awareness in society, must be able to act as an independent platform, because artistically, it should be able to break free from the constraints of hegemonic power.

One concrete expression of this resistance can be found in the song "Labor" by Paris Paloma. This song is not simply an outpouring of feelings, but a feminist ballad that sharply exposes the exploitation of women in romantic relationships perpetuated by patriarchal structures. Through its lyrics, Paris Paloma depicts how women in heterosexual relationships are often functioned as servants, caregivers, providers of emotional comfort, and even reduced

to mere "machines" working tirelessly to meet the needs of their male partners. The burdens women bear in this song are twofold: the physical burden of domestic labor and the emotional burden of being constantly present, understanding, and supporting their partners, without equal recognition for all of this work. In other words, "Labor" represents a direct critique of the patriarchal system that normalizes the exploitation of women's labor and emotions in supposedly equal relationships.

The song "Labour" is 3 minutes and 57 seconds long and was released on March 24, 2023, as the lead single from Paris Paloma's debut album, Cacophony (2024). In the indie folk and alternative folk ballad genre, the song features a bass-and-guitar-based acoustic arrangement layered with harmonized backing vocals, creating an intimate yet emotionally charged atmosphere. Unlike more upbeat, feminist pop songs, "Labour" delivers its critique slowly and deeply, building tension from the first verse to a climax in the explosive bridge.

The song's profound message has touched millions of listeners worldwide. Before its official release, a snippet of its lyrics went viral on TikTok, sparking incredible enthusiasm. Within the first 24 hours of its release, "Labour" achieved one million streams on Spotify and one million views on YouTube, and debuted at number 29 on the UK Singles Chart a week later. This phenomenon is no ordinary commercial success. The song sparked a viral trend in which women around the world posted videos on TikTok sharing their personal experiences with sexism, making “Labor” not just a song, but a collective movement. As of October 2025, “Labor” had garnered over 344 million streams on Spotify, while its music video had been viewed over 69 million times on YouTube. Critics have called the song a feminist anthem and linked it to the phenomenon of female rage, a response to the inequality of domestic and emotional labor in heterosexual relationships. Paris Paloma herself asserts that the song arose from the reality she observed: women are continually expected to fulfill archaic, traditional roles as caregivers, servants, wives, mothers, and homemakers, while men contribute little to the legacy of their roles.

To examine the critical content within these lyrics, a critical discourse analysis approach is required. According to Rahmawati et al. (2024), critical discourse is a means of revealing the meaning or purpose behind phenomena or events developing in society, where the discourse itself reflects the values and ideologies that shape perspectives on the world. In feminist ideology, the representations presented are usually linked to social coherence, namely whether an individual or group is represented as they should be or is actually demonized (Eriyanto, 2001). This negative representation of women is often found in song lyrics, and is the basis for critical examination of the lyrics of "Labor."

Of the many critical discourse analysis models developed by experts, this study uses Norman Fairclough's model. Fairclough's model was chosen because it focuses not only on linguistic text analysis but also on how texts are produced and consumed within a broader sociocultural context, making it highly relevant to examining song lyrics that contain gender ideology and power relations (Fairclough, 1989). Fairclough proposed a critical discourse analysis framework based on three dimensions: text (microstructural), discourse practice (mesostructural), and sociocultural practice (macrostructural). The microstructural dimension is analyzed by examining linguistic concepts such as vocabulary, semantics, and syntax used in the lyrics. The mesostructural dimension is analyzed by tracing how the text is produced and how it is consumed by society. Meanwhile, the macrostructural dimension is analyzed by examining the relationship between the text and the sociocultural context outside it (Fairclough, 1995). The method applied in Fairclough's model is determined by three components:

description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 1989). Researchers will then uncover three things: first, the microstructural dimension in the form of word choice and language construction that represent the exploitation of women in a patriarchal system; second, themesostructural dimension in the form of the discourse behind the song's creation and how thissong is received and interpreted by the global community; and third, the macrostructural dimension in the form of the sociocultural situation depicted, the institutional relationship between women and patriarchal structures, and social criticism of the system that perpetuates gender inequality. Thus, this research is expected to provide new contributions to contemporary gender discourse, particularly in analyzing the representation of patriarchal criticism through the medium of international popular music, which has not been widely studied using Fairclough's approach.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a library research using descriptive qualitative methods. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to explore and interpret meaning in depth through descriptive data collection, not quantitative measurements. The approach used is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model, which views language as a social practice that is never neutral but always contains power relations and ideologies at work behind the text (Fairclough, 1989). This approach was chosen because it can reveal the relationship between language, power, and ideology hidden within a text, particularly in analyzing the representation of patriarchal critique contained in song lyrics.

The primary data in this study are the lyrics of the song "Labour" by Paris Paloma, released on March 24, 2023. Secondary data were obtained from theoretical books, scientific journals, articles, and online sources relevant to Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis theory and gender issues in international popular music. Secondary data also includes information on the socio-cultural context behind the creation of "Labour," including the global community's response to the song through various digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram.

This research technique consists of three stages: data collection, data analysis, and presentation of results. During the data collection stage, the lyrics of the song "Labor" were listened to repeatedly on the streaming platforms Spotify and YouTube. The lyrics were then read, recorded, and translated into Indonesian for contextual analysis. The data collection technique used the "simak" method (Sudaryanto, 2015), which involves listening to and documenting the lyrics as the primary source of analysis, complemented by a literature review to build a theoretical and conceptual foundation that supports the analysis.

In the data analysis phase, the song "Labor" was listened to and its lyrics read repeatedly, utilizing linguistic sensitivity and sensitivity to the sociocultural context. The analysis was conducted using Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional framework: microstructural (text), mesostructural (discourse practice), and macrostructural (sociocultural practice), with three method components: description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 1989). In the microstructural dimension, the analysis focused on vocabulary choice, semantics, syntax, metaphor use, and rhetorical strategies in the lyrics. In the mesostructural dimension, the analysis focused on how the lyrics were produced and how they were consumed and interpreted by the public. In the macrostructural dimension, the analysis placed the lyrics within a broader sociocultural context, encompassing the situational, institutional, and social dimensions underlying the issue of patriarchy in the song.

In the presentation phase, the data were presented descriptively and analytically. The researcher presented relevant lyric excerpts and systematically analyzed them based on Fairclough's three dimensions. To test the validity of the data, this study uses technical

triangulation, namely the researcher uses different data collection techniques to obtain data from the same source simultaneously (Sugiyono, 2013).

2. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

1.1.Microstructural Dimensional Structure Analysis

1.1.1. Word Choice (Diction)

Lyrics:

(1) “The calloused skin on my hands is cracking”

This sentence focuses on a physical object (cracked skin). This sentence structure depicts the real impact of domestic violence/workload, which is not only mentally painful but also physically damaging.

Lyrics:

(2) “So that he never lifts a finger”

The word “so that” suggests that all the woman’s hard work is aimed at pampering the man. The word “never” emphasizes her total and absolute laziness.

Lyrics:

(3) “If we had a daughter, I’d watch and could not save her”

The use of the phrase “If-Then” demonstrates a profound pessimism. This sentence structure reflects the awareness that gender-based violence is a cycle that will impact the next generation (daughters), and the mother feels powerless in the face of it.

Lirik:

(1) “*Apologies from my tongue, and never yours*”

This structure sharply contrasts the two parties. It demonstrates a power imbalance, with women portrayed as always "guilty" (having to apologize), while men have untouchable egos.

Lyrics:

(2) *"Who tends the orchards? Who fixes up the gables? Who fetches the water...?* "

The repetition of the word " *who* " aims to reveal facts that have been hidden. This sentence demands recognition for the hard work of women who have been considered "invisible" or as if they don't exist.

Lyrics:

(3) “ *Why are you hanging on so tight to the rope that I'm hanging from?* ”

This sentence reverses logic. The man is trying to "survive" the bond (rope), but to the woman, the rope is a strangling/killing device. This demonstrates the perpetrator's indifference to the victim's suffering.

Lyrics:

(4) " *If our love died, would that be the worst thing?* "

This choice of sentence represents a form of ideological resistance. It challenges the doctrine that "breakup is the worst thing." This sentence structure implies that ending a love is far better than continuing to struggle.

Lyrics:

(5) " *Just an appendage, live to attend him* "

The choice of short, sharp sentences reflects how women's identities are reduced or narrowed down to mere servants. The phrase " *live to* " suggests that her entire existence has been sacrificed for the benefit of others.

1.1.2. Sentence Structure

Lyrics:

“ *The calloused skin on my hands is cracking”*

The thickened skin on my hands is starting to crack.

“ *Calloused skin... cracking* ”: Rough physical diction, a metaphor for the real wounds resulting from constant (domestic) forced labor.

" *is cracking* ": Indicates a process of destruction that is taking place right now.

Lyrics: "*So that he never lifts a finger* "

So he never lifted a finger

"*Lifts a finger*": In an attempt to show the contrast of male laziness amidst the overwhelming workload of women.

" *Never* ": Affirms total and permanent injustice in the distribution of roles.

Lyrics:

"If we had a daughter, I'd watch and couldn't save her"

If we had a daughter, I would watch and not be able to save her.

" *If... I'd...* ": Awareness of the bad fate that will be passed down generationally (systemic violence against women).

" *Could not save her* ": Shows that the patriarchal system is considered so strong that even a mother's love is not enough to fight it.

Lyrics:

" *All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid* "

All day, every day, therapist, mother, helper

" *All day, every day* ": Describes a cycle of exploitation that has no time to rest.

" *therapist, mother, maid* ": Chain *labeling* , Reducing women's identity to just a collection of service functions for others.

Lyrics:

" *Apologies from my tongue, and never yours"*

Apologies from my tongue, and never from yours

" *My tongue... never yours* ": The sentence structure contrasts by showing the imbalance of power relations where women are always positioned as the party who must feel guilty/apologize.

Lyrics:

" *Who tends the orchards? Who fixes up the gables? Who fetches the water...?* "

Who tends the orchard? Who repairs the roof? Who fetches the water?

" *Who...?*": Structure sentence ask rhetorical emphasize on agency Woman as support main life, but his role often not seen or No valued.

" *Orchards, gables, water* ": The term manual labor refers to hard physical labor that is traditionally claimed as the domain of men, but is actually done by women in this lyric.

Lyrics:

" *Why are you hanging on so tight to the rope that I'm hanging from?* "

Why are you holding on so tightly? To the rope I use to hang?

" *The rope* ": A double metaphor, namely the rope as a binding relationship and the rope of the gallows (death of character/freedom).

" *Hanging from* ": A visual image of despair to show that the relationship has reached a very toxic and deadly stage for the woman.

Lyrics:

" *The capillaries in my eyes are bursting / If our love died, would that be the worst thing* "

The capillaries in my eyes are bursting / If our love ends, is that the worst thing?

" *Capillaries... bursting* " : The diction in this section contains a biological metaphor for extreme mental stress or sadness that has reached the body's physical limits.

" *If our love died...* ": A rhetorical question in the form of resistance to the idea that the end

of a “toxic” relationship is not a tragedy, but rather liberation.

Lyrics:

“ *Nymph, then a virgin, nurse, then a servant / Just an appendage, live to attend him* ”

Nymph, then virgin, nurse, then servant / Mere accessory, living to care for him

“ *Nymph... virgin... servant* ”: Evolutionary *labeling* depicts how women’s identities are transformed according to men’s needs (from sexual object to servant).

“ *Just an appendage* ”: A biological idiom (additional member) of total dehumanization, positioning women not as complete human beings, but merely as an appendage to men’s lives.

1.1.3. Mention (*Labeling*)

Lyrics:

(1) *“Therapist, mother, maid, nurse, servant”*

This label implies that a woman’s value in a relationship is limited to her “usefulness.” She must simultaneously act as an emotional healer (therapist), a caregiver (mother/nurse), and a domestic worker (housekeeper/maid).

Lyrics:

(2) *“Nymph, then a virgin”*

This reflects gender stereotypes in which women are forced to fulfill men's fickle fantasies. This label suggests that a woman's body is public property (or her partner's) to be judged and categorized.

Lyrics:

(3) *“Just an appendage”*

This label diminishes a woman's "human" status. She isn't seen as an independent individual, but rather as a small part or "accessory" attached to a man's life to make him appear complete.

Lyrics:

(4) *“24/7 baby machine”*

This is a label of utter dehumanization. Women are labeled as tools of production, working automatically, without feeling, tirelessly, and without the right to stop. This label focuses solely on reproductive function.

1.1.4. Tone

Lyrics:

(1) *“The calloused skin on my hands is cracking / The capillaries in my eyes are bursting”*

The use of words referring to physical damage (*cracking, bursting*) creates a sense of exhaustion that has reached its limit. This is not just ordinary exhaustion, but a painful exhaustion. The audience is invited to feel the "heavy burden" carried by the female character, thus fostering empathy for her long-standing suffering.

Lyrics:

(2) *“So that he never lifts a finger / So he can live out his picket-fence dreams”*

There's a sardonic tone when she refers to " *picket-fence dreams* ." Paloma mocks the concept of a "happy family," which is built on emotional slavery. This tone aims to expose the hypocrisy of a couple who appears "nice" on the outside but is actually exploitative inside.

Lyrics:

(3) *“If we had a daughter, I'd watch and couldn't save her”*

The mood is very dark. The realization that she can't even protect her own child from the same system shows a deep sense of despair. This creates a very sad and heavy atmosphere, while also emphasizing that this gender issue is a vicious cycle that is difficult to break.

Lyrics:

(4) *“All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid”*

The repetition of the phrase " *all day, every day* " creates a monotonous and boring

atmosphere, as if the woman's life has no variety or hope beyond serving. The audience feels the pressure and suffocation of the endlessly repetitive activities.

Lyrics:

(5) *"If our love died, would that be the worst thing? / You haven't seen the worst of me yet"*

Eventually, her tone changes to threatening and assertive. Rhetorical questions about the death of love indicate that the subject no longer fears losing the relationship. This culminates in a micro-analysis of her tone, depicting the transformation of the victim into a resisting subject. This tone reinforces the message that women's patience has its limits.

Repetition phrase this along song intended For emphasize continuous burden pile up being hit by women. Not this one just fatigue physical, but rather fatigue existential.

1.2.Mesostructural Dimensional Structure Analysis

Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, the mesostructural dimension or discourse practice, emphasizes the stages of production, distribution, and consumption of a text in society. In the song "Labour" by Paris Paloma, released on March 24, 2023, this aspect emphasizes how the discourse of gender inequality is produced by its creator and how it is then received, disseminated, and understood by audiences worldwide. This discourse practice serves as a link between the lyric text and the broader social reality of patriarchal actions, demonstrating that this song is not only a work of art, but also a communication tool that raises collective awareness.

1.2.1. Production process

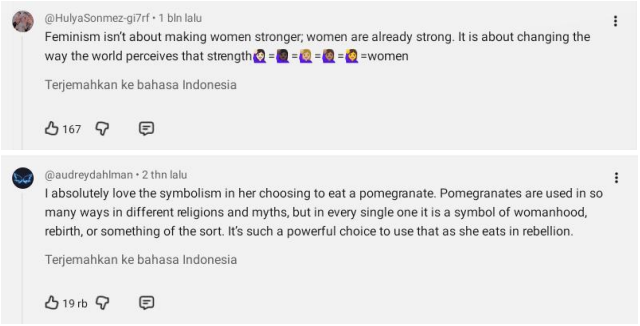
In the context of discourse production, the creation of the song "Labor" was driven by Paris Paloma's critical observation and rejection of the imbalance of power and exploitation in heterosexual relationships. Paloma deliberately created these lyrics as an artistic expression that firmly opposes the position of women who are always minimized in the patriarchal system of society. The theme underlying the writing of these lyrics is the oppressive sociological conditions, where women have long been forced to carry out various exhausting dual roles ranging from being therapists who must bear the emotional burden of their partners, being mothers and maids who take care of the entire domestic sphere, to being treated as if they were merely servants or "baby machines" without proper recognition. Furthermore, Paloma created this text to expose the psychological manipulation of men who often use hidden domination, such as the tactic of pretending to be unable (*false incompetence*), to avoid responsibility. This song emerged from the desire to describe the physical, mental, and emotional suffering of women who for hundreds of years were seen as obligations and sacrifices that could be accepted.

1.2.2. Consumption and Distribution

Entering the distribution and consumption phase, the song "Labor" experienced an extraordinary increase in acceptance and transcended the boundaries of conventional music listening experiences. The global community responded and consumed this song not only as a melancholic alternative ballad, but also interpreted it as an anthem for the current feminist movement. Audiences, mostly women, used the lyrics rich in metaphor and emotional language as a mirror to reflect on the experiences of oppression and injustice they face in their daily lives. This song was used as a means to validate domestic exhaustion both in invisible labor, emotional suffering validated by systems of power, and an expression of despair witnessing the cycle of injustice that continues from generation to generation.

Ultimately, the global audience's understanding of the narrative in "Labor" transformed into a collective impetus for resistance. The public understood the song's call for escape not as a sign of fear, but as a bold and radical way of rebellion against patriarchy. Audiences understood that escaping an exploitative relationship was the only way to prevent the same fate from befalling future generations of their daughters. This dialectical interaction between Paris

Paloma's production motif and the high level of global consumption demonstrates that the lyrics of "Labor" have successfully transcended the text itself. They serve as a highly effective literary medium for evoking empathy, voicing social criticism, and fostering collective awareness in support of the struggle for gender equality.



1.3.Macrostructural Dimensional Structure Analysis

The macrostructural dimension in Fairclough's (1995) model places text within a broader sociocultural context, encompassing ideology, social meaning, and the power relations at work behind a discourse. In this dimension, analysis no longer focuses solely on language, but rather on how the text reflects and reproduces existing social structures in society (Fairclough, 1989). In the lyrics of Paris Paloma's song "Labour," the macrostructural dimension reveals three main points: the systemic patriarchal ideology, the social meanings contained in the representation of women's suffering, and the shifting power relations that occur throughout the song's narrative.

1.3.1. Ideology: Patriarchy and *Double Standard*

The dominant ideology at work in the lyrics of "Labor" is patriarchal. Sakina and Siti (2017) define patriarchal culture as a social system that limits women's roles and places them in a subordinate position, preventing them from having equal access to various aspects of life. This ideology is not explicitly present in the lyrics, but rather naturalized through the division of roles considered normal in a romantic relationship. This is most evident in the song's bridge:

" *All day, every day, therapist, mother, maid / Nymph, then a virgin, nurse, then a servant / Just an appendage, live to attend him / So that he never lifts a finger / 24/7 baby machine / So he can live out his picket-fence dreams* "

The lyrics systematically list the roles assigned to women in patriarchal heterosexual relationships, such as therapist, mother, maid, nymph, virgin, nurse, servant, and even "24/7 baby machine." This list of roles represents what gender studies calls women's double workload: domestic and emotional labor historically imposed on women without equal recognition (Hochschild, 1983, as cited in Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021). Patriarchal ideology works by normalizing this burden as if it were a natural part of women's roles.

double standards are also evident in the lyrics of " *Apologies from my tongue, and never yours,* " which depict how women are expected to always give in and apologize, while men are not subject to similar demands. This inequality is exacerbated by double standards that burden women with submissive and defeatist roles in relationships (Ananta et al., 2024). Furthermore, the lyrics "The *false incompetence, it's dominance under a guise* " directly expose the male dominance strategy of feigning incompetence so that women continue to take over all the work. The lyrics "It's *not an act of love if you make her* " then emphasize that what has been perceived as true devotion is coercion disguised as a romantic narrative.

1.3.2. Social Meaning: Normalizing Women's Wounds as Critique

In terms of social meaning, the lyrics of "Labour" can be read on two levels: as a depiction of the normalization of women's experiences of pain, and as a sharp critique of that normalization itself. Fairclough (1995) asserts that discourse has an ideological function in establishing or challenging unequal social relations. In this case, "Labour" fulfills the second function: challenging and dismantling these unequal relations.

The normalization of women's wounds is evident in the lines " *The calloused skin on my hands is cracking* " and " *The capillaries in my eyes are bursting* ," two metaphors depicting women's bodies literally broken by excessive workloads. These depictions reflect the reality that women bear a much greater burden of domestic and emotional labor, yet are often not recognized as real "work." In a broader social context, this condition represents a form of long-standing structural injustice in patriarchal societies (Sakina & Siti, 2017).

But what makes “Labor” go beyond mere complaint is how Paris Paloma positions suffering not as a fate to be accepted, but as a condition to be questioned and rejected. The lines “If *our love died, would that be the worst thing?* ” and “ *If our love ends, would that be a bad thing?* ” repeated throughout the song are ideologically subversive rhetorical questions. They challenge the dominant narrative that women must maintain relationships at all costs. Thus, the social meaning constructed in this song is that women’s pain is not something to be normalized, and that leaving an exploitative relationship is a legitimate, even necessary, act.

1.3.3. Power Relations: Shifting from Victim to Conscious Subject

The power relations dimension in the lyrics of "Labor" demonstrates a dynamic that is not static. Fairclough (1989) emphasized that discourse not only reproduces power relations but can also become an arena for resistance and transformation. Power relations themselves are conditions in which a superior party uses their attributes of power to control individuals or groups perceived as inferior (Aryana, 2022). In this song, there is a significant shift in subject position: from women as passive victims to women as conscious and active subjects of resistance.

In the opening of the song, women are depicted as trapped and exhausted: “ *And I'm getting fucking tired* ” and “ *walk back down again to feel your words / And their sharp sting* .” The power relations here are highly asymmetrical: the man sits at the head *of your high table* , while the woman works tirelessly to serve him. This subordinate position reflects a hierarchical pattern formed based on gender differences, where women are placed lower and under the control of men (Ananta et al., 2024).

However, a shift begins to occur in the lines " *I know you're a smart man / And weaponize / The false incompetence, it's dominance under a guise* ." These lyrics mark a crucial moment where women no longer simply suffer but understand the mechanisms of oppression that have plagued them. They recognize that the false incompetence displayed by men is a disguised strategy of domination, not true weakness. This awareness aligns with what Apriliandra and Krisnani (2021) call women's critical awareness in recognizing and rejecting discriminatory behavior perpetuated by patriarchal culture.

The peak of this shift in power relations is seen in the line “ *So now I've gotta run, so I can undo this mistake* ” and in the most politically powerful line: “ *If we had a daughter, I'd watch and could not save her / She'd do what you taught her / She'd meet the same cruel fate* ”. This lyric demonstrates an intergenerational awareness that the patriarchal system not only harms her individually, but will continue to reproduce itself through the next generation if not stopped. By choosing to leave and “ *undo this mistake* ”, the woman in this lyric is no longer positioned as a passive victim, but as an agent who actively refuses to perpetuate the cycle of patriarchy. This is what Fairclough (1995) means as the transformative function of discourse, the text not only reflects social reality, but also opens up the possibility to change it.

2. MUSIC AS A CRITICISM OF THE PATRIARCHICAL SYSTEM

2.1.Critique of Invisible *Labor*

In macrostructural analysis based on Norman Fairclough's approach, the dimensions of social practice encompass not only the ideology at work behind the text, but also how the text functions as a medium of resistance to established power structures. Fairclough (1993) asserts that Critical Discourse Analysis aims to uncover how practices, events, and texts are ideologically shaped by power relations, and how the opaque relationship between discourse and society operates as a factor that perpetuates power and hegemony. In this context, the lyrics of Paris Paloma's "Labour" do not merely represent a woman's personal experience, but at a macro level function as a systemic critique of the unfair workload experienced by women in patriarchal domestic relations.

The lines " *Who tends the orchards? / Who fixes up the gables? / Who fetches the water from the rocky mountain spring? / And walk back down again to feel your words and their sharp sting* " contain a sharp rhetorical challenge to the invisibility of women's labor. Paloma questions who actually carries out the physical and emotional labor in the domestic sphere, while also showing that this labor is repaid not with appreciation, but with hurtful words (*their sharp sting*). Unacknowledged emotional labor is a powerful engine of patriarchy, as it keeps one group performing necessary work without equal reward (Hochschild, 1983). Thus, these lyrics operate at a macro level as a critique of a system that structurally exploits women's labor and emotions while considering them normal and natural.

An analysis of the lyrics of "Labour" identifies the song as a critique of patriarchal expectations in domestic relations, where its lyrical structure and metaphorical language frame the domestic space as a site of exploitation (Yanti et al., 2025). This is important within Fairclough's framework because it demonstrates that the discourse within the song is not simply an artistic expression but also a discursive act that challenges the existing social order.

2.2.Critique of Double Standards and the Normalization of Women's Roles

The social critique in "Labor" becomes even sharper when Paloma elaborates on the lengthy list of roles imposed on women simultaneously in the verse: "All *day, every day, therapist, mother, maid / Nymph, then a virgin, nurse, then a servant / Just an appendage, live to attend him / So that he never lifts a finger.* " These lyrics explicitly criticize the normalization of the double burden *that* women accept as something that is considered normal in society. Senol (2025) states that one of the most prominent parts of this song is the list of social roles mentioned in sequence, therapist, mother, maid, nurse, servant which reflects the patriarchal pressure to fulfill multiple identities simultaneously for the benefit of men.

The use of the word " *appendage* " in the lyrics linguistically positions women not as independent subjects, but as extensions of male existence. This is a form of criticism conveyed by Paloma against the construction of female identity in a patriarchal system, where a woman's value is measured by how well she serves, not from her existence as a whole individual. In this song, Paris Paloma constructs a clear narrative about a woman trapped in the burden of emotional and physical labor, where women's identities are shaped by roles that serve the interests of men, so that women become complements or even tools in the household structure (Putri et al., 2025).

This critique is relevant to Fairclough's concept of discourse, which understands that language is not a neutral medium, but rather an arena for ideological struggle. Yuliansyah (2015) states that using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, which views the crucial role of language as an arena for ideological and power struggles, a text can be analyzed to uncover power relations for egalitarian social change. With this logic, Paloma's choice of diction from " *maid* " to " *baby machine* " is not accidental, but rather a deliberate discourse strategy to

dismantle and expose the roles that have been perpetuated as social norms.

2.3.Critique of Covert Power Manipulation

The most complex critique in “Labor” lies in exposing the manipulation of power that operates behind a mask of love and false competence. The line “ *I know you're a smart man / And weaponize / The false incompetence, it's dominance under a guise* ” reveals the mechanism of weaponized incompetence, a strategy in which men pretend to be incapable of domestic work so that women are forced to take over the entire burden. This is a form of domination that is invisible yet highly effective in perpetuating inequality.

Sarino (2024) argues that the word “labor” in this song not only refers to the tasks imposed on women as if their only value were cooking and cleaning, but also implies how women’s worth is reduced based on their ability to give birth. This layered meaning strengthens the song’s position as a multidimensional social critique, going beyond the narrative of a single personal relationship and touching on the broader social construction of how women’s bodies and capacities are controlled and valued by the patriarchal system.

The hidden manipulation within a romantic relationship or marriage is also criticized through the lyrics " *It's not an act of love if you make her / You make me do too much labor,"* which emphasizes that what is happening is exploitation, not an expression of love (Yanti et al., 2025). At the macrostructural level, this statement has far-reaching social implications, namely that the patriarchal system operates not only through overt physical violence, but also through the normalization of exploitation disguised as obligation, devotion, and even love. Thus, "Labor" performs a social critique function that aligns with the view that popular music functions as a discursive practice that can create critical awareness and negotiate social values in modern society (Gunawan & Kurnia, 2023).

Furthermore, the song's existence in the digital space extends its critical reach beyond individual boundaries. Sarino (2024) states that the song becomes a voice for all who identify with its lyrics, giving or restoring their strength to fight, and uniting them with a shared anthem filled with collective feminine anger. This suggests that at the macro level, "Labor" is not merely an individual cultural artifact, but has transformed into a collective discourse of women's resistance against a system that has exploited them in silence.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the lyrics of Paris Paloma's song "Labour" using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, which encompasses three dimensions: microstructural, mesostructural, and macrostructural. Based on the analysis presented, three main conclusions are obtained as follows.

First, in the microstructural dimension, the lyrics of “Labor” show a systematic and planned linguistic strategy in representing the exploitation of women under the patriarchal system. Through the choice of diction that is full of physical imagery such as “ *calloused skin* ” and “ *capillaries bursting* ”, the use of repetitive rhetorical sentences such as “ *Who tends the orchards?* ”, as well as degrading labels *such* as “ *appendage* ”, “baby *machine* ”, and “ *24/7 servant* ”, Paris Paloma consistently builds a narrative about women who are exploited physically, emotionally, and socially in unequal domestic relations. The tone of the lyrics that moves from exhaustion to resistance also shows the transformation of the character from a passive victim to a conscious and courageous subject.

Second, in the mesostructural dimension, the song "Labor" was produced from Paris Paloma's critical awareness of the power imbalance in heterosexual relations perpetuated by patriarchal culture. The process of distribution through digital platforms such as TikTok, Spotify, and

YouTube not only expanded the song's reach globally but also transformed its function from an individual work of art into a medium for collective discourse. People, especially women around the world, consumed this song as a means of validating their experiences, expressing previously silenced feminine anger, and encouraging resistance against oppressive social structures. This proves that the song's lyrics do not stand alone, but rather live and are meaningful within a broader network of social practices.

Third, in the macrostructural dimension, the analysis shows that the lyrics of "Labor" both reproduce and actively challenge the patriarchal ideology that has been naturalized in women's domestic lives. Three main findings were found in this dimension. At the ideological level, the lyrics expose the workings of patriarchy and the gender double standard that burden women with multiple roles without equal recognition. At the level of social meaning, the song does not simply depict the normalization of women's wounds, but subversively questions and rejects the dominant narrative that women must endure exploitative relationships to comply with social norms. At the level of power relations, there is a significant shift from women's position as passive victims to conscious subjects, who understand the mechanisms of oppression and actively choose to break out of the patriarchal cycle to protect themselves and the next generation of women. All of these findings are in line with Fairclough's (1995) view that discourse not only reflects social reality but also has a transformative function to change it.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the lyrics of contemporary popular songs, particularly Paris Paloma's "Labour," constitute a rich and relevant object of linguistic and social study. This song is not merely a work of art, but rather a discursive practice that consciously uses language as a tool of resistance against gender injustice rooted in the global patriarchal system. Thus, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach proves effective in uncovering the layers of ideology, power, and social meaning hidden behind the aesthetic beauty of a song's lyrics.

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