

Female and Male Students' Perception on Bruno Mars' Song "Versace on the Floor"

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Abstract

A song is a set of phrases that is accompanied by musical rhythms contain message in the lyrics and can be sung. These days, there are many popular songs that have negative value for listeners. Conveying message about sex, love or portrayal of women is still a social debate because of cultural differences as well as rules in the environment. "Versace on the Floor" was one of the Bruno Mars' famous songs which contain sexual message in its lyrics. In this case, this study aims at discovering of students' perception on Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor" about different gender regarding language used in the song and allegedly contain elements of sex. This study used qualitative research methods to provide a detailed perspective of people about social phenomena such as culture or song. The researcher used students of University Muhammadiyah Malang as research subjects. The number of participants consisted of 20 female students and 20 male students. This research used questionnaire, interview guideline and document analysis to get data. The result indicated that most of students agreed that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" conveys sexual message. Both female and male students agreed that the song conveyed sexual message (female scored the greater number). However, several students thought that "Versace on the Floor" did not imply sexual message. They thought that it was a romantic song, which was expressed like having sexual message. Moreover, more than a half of the respondents (female scored greater number) thought that "Versace on the Floor" had a good melody. Moreover, the song should not be banned in Indonesia because the song was only heard as entertainment.

Keywords: gender; perception, qualitative research; song; versace on the floor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender has become an important part of life and an inseparable part of globalization. According to WHO (World Health Organization), gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in families, societies or/and cultures. Gender equality is achieved when women and men have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities [1].

One of the contexts related to gender is listening music. Most research on gender and music has focused on genre preferences. According to Colley (2008), males tend to prefer harder and non-mainstream forms of popular music such as rock, hard rock and heavy metal. On the other hand, female have a stronger preference for softer and more mainstream genres such as pop, folk, and classical music. Similarly, Schwartz and Fouts stated that males are raised to be tough, independent and competitive [2]. Rock and heavy metal are cognitive linked to aggression and assertiveness. It is important aspects in male socialization which explains why males prefer these genres. Then, females are brought up to be romantic, social, flexible and popular. Softer music is associated with feminine traits as emotions and relationships. The conclusion from both opinions is that men prefer music that can be an identity or portrayal of characters while women prefer songs that can describe feelings and romance. According to Hotlzman and Sharpe, generally songs that are enjoyed by men usually tell more about a man's strength and more inclined to an interest in sex while women are more interested in listening to songs that are more likely to be romantic [3].

Song is a set of phrases that have musical rhythms, contain message in the lyrics and can be sung. Song can make people feel comfortable to listen many times even song is from many cultures and languages. A song must have part of words or lyrics that have powerful meaning to influence listener's feeling. Nowadays, song becomes part of trend and it has many genres. These

days, there are many popular songs that have negative value for listeners. Some song references try to explain about crime, drugs even sex. Not all listeners can receive values or message from song because of differences in culture and community values, so lyricist normally will use or create new words to cover up the purpose of the song made. One of the purposes of song that recently spread in the society and considered part of the expression of love is sex. In 2011, nine of the top twenty Billboard hits contained an overall theme of sex and explicit sexual reference in the entire song. However, song that sounds very good can influence listeners to keep listening to the song and ignore the meaning of the song. Song has two important elements: sounds and lyrics. Lyrics are a collection of words that contain messages to listeners. Ackerman says that lyrics are words that make people think [4]. It means lyrics should have an impression or message behind the words contained in the song. Furthermore, song lyric is also somebody's form of expression from their soul about something they have seen, listened or experienced [5].

Every song contains lyrics with the delivery of different expressions to convey such as, friendship, love even crime and drugs. Since music is part of the trend, culture also participates in making good songs. According to Friedlander [6], love songs have been a majority of all songs written and it is important signpost of cultural development. Over time, the expression of love reflected in song lyrics have changed as an individualistic culture or adult life such as portrayal of women, life in relationships, even sexual activities that not all people consider to be part of culture. As stated by Kalof , sexual imagery of many songs is so powerful that it ultimately defines what is masculine and what is feminine [7]. Therefore, songs that express love and sex cannot be distinguished and become pro-cons for listeners. Because of the many criticisms, the delivery of song lyrics was made hidden in words or phrases in song lyrics.

One of the singers who is famous composing song that tells about women and love is Bruno Mars. Bruno Mars released album *24K Magic* in 2018 with retro style and pop electro funk genre. It is different from his previous album and it is the third album after four years his comeback as a singer. From his third album, he received a plaque commemorating after following the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) certification. His album, *24K Magic* also remained in the top ten on the Billboard 200 for an impressive 44 consecutive weeks. From now on, Bruno Mars has four albums since he debuted as a songwriter and singer which also has many achievements. Bruno Mars released single song with entitled "Versace on the Floor" which has ballad genre with the nuances of the 80s.

"Versace on the Floor" tells about the admiration of a man and a woman who is expressed by praising her beauty. Not only by praising, the man also invites women to do things like dancing, kissing even having to take off women's clothes. This song describes Eros love or erotic love. Erotic love is an inclination to form attachment arising from the impression of beauty. Bruno Mars is a superstar singer and song writer from Hawaii who began his career in the early 2000s. His album has many popular songs which mostly talk about women, love also sex in an explicit manner. The listener probably does not know that he uses unusual phrases or words in his song. One of the popular problems that occur in Indonesia is the limitation on broadcasting of songs. Based on Jakarta Post (2019), some of songs from singer like Agnes Monica, Bruno Mars, Ed Sheeran and other get censored from Commission of Regional Broadcasting (KPID), West Java. Local people judge that their songs lead to theme of adult life or vulgar content. According of the head of KPID, there are seventeen songs censored in West Java broadcast. From a list of seventeen songs that are censored in West Java, there are four Bruno Mars' songs that were banned. Some Bruno Mars songs contained in the broadcast ban list are "That's What I Like" and "Versace on the Floor".

This research focused on knowing opinions of students especially on different gender regarding the sexual message in the song. Perception can be defined etymologically and opinion of experts. The word perception comes from the Latin word '*percipio*' which means receiving or collecting. According to Adler perception is something beyond a physical being and many important

clues can be obtained through examining what a person perceives and the way he or she perceives it [8]. In other words, both women and men have different ways of thinking about something that happens around them and various forms of ideas from perception. According to Sunaryo and Bahari, perceptions are divided into two types, namely external perception and self-perception [9]. External perception is the perception that occurs due to the arrival of stimuli from outside the individual. Then, self-perception refers to the perception that occurs due to the arrival of stimuli from within the individual.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research method because it is appropriate for research to provide a detailed perspective of a few people about social phenomena such as songs and culture. It also guides the researcher in exploring and capturing the social situation to be studied thoroughly, widely and intensively. This study also uses descriptive qualitative method because the data were in the form of words or written language. The participants from this research are students from English Language and Education Department especially in third and fifth semester. In this study, researcher uses Google forms as tool of collecting data about perception of song. The questionnaire contained ten questions about Bruno Mars' song entitled "Versace on the Floor". The researcher also conducted the interview to students, which aims to know deeper their perception on Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor".

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To simplify analyzing the data, the researcher made a table about students' responses to Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" from both male and female students.

Table 1 Result of Questionnaire on Bruno Mars in General

No.	Item(s) of Questionnaire	Percentage (%)					
		Yes	No	Female		Male	
				Y	N	Y	N
1	I know Bruno Mars as a singer	100%	0%	100%	0	100%	0
2	I know Bruno Mars' songs	100%	0%	100%	0	100%	0
3	I know one of Bruno Mars' song entitled "Versace on the Floor"	72.5%	27.5%	85%	15%	60%	40%
4	I know the meaning of the song title "Versace on the Floor"	52.5%	47.5%	70%	30%	35%	65%
5	I understand about the lyrics in Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor"	52.5%	47.5%	65%	35%	40%	60%

Table 1 explained students' general understanding about Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor". It can be seen that all of the participants knew the song. It is shown by 100% of the participant answer "yes" on the question about Bruno Mars as a singer and Bruno Mars' songs in item 1 and 2. The existence of social media and music platforms help many students easily get music's information and listen to it like YouTube, Instagram, Spotify, and etc.

Although all participants claimed that they knew the songs of Bruno Mars, in fact there were some students who did not know one of Bruno Mars's popular song "Versace on the Floor". This is proven by item 3 which shows that 29 (72.5%) participants who knew the song while the

other 11 (27.5%) participants did not know it. This item is dominated by 17 (42.5%) female students who knew "Versace on the Floor" while male students were 12 (30%) people.

Item 4 about understanding the meaning of the title song Bruno Mars' "Versace on the Floor" indicate that 21 participants (52.5%) knew the meaning of the song title. This answer was mostly from female students of 14 (70%) participants. Compared to the number of female students, the number of male students who knew the title song "Versace on the Floor" was only half of the number of female students who answer "yes". The numbers of male students who know the meaning of the song title "Versace on the Floor" were only 7 (35%) participants.

Item 5 also showed results that are almost similar to the results in item 4. There are 21 (52.5%) participants who answered know about the meaning of the song lyrics "Versace on the Floor". The answer is still dominated by female students as many as 13 (65%) participants. Meanwhile, there were only 8 (40%) participants by male students who knew the meaning of the song lyrics "Versace on the Floor".

Table 2 Result of Questionnaire on Students' Perception on the Content of Song "Versace on the Floor"

No.	Item(s) of Questionnaire	Percentage (%)		
		Overall	Female	Male
1	I agree that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" conveys sexual message.	62.5% Agree	65% Agree	60% Agree
		37.5% Disagree	35% Disagree	40% Disagree
2	The reason I am listening to the Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor".	61.5% Good melody	70% Good melody	50% Good melody
		7.7% Interesting with the lyrics	5% Interesting with the lyrics	10% Interesting with the lyrics
		30.8% Other reason	25% Other reason	40% Other reason
3	My feeling when I am singing (karaoke) Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor".	62.5% Confident	65% Confident	60% Confident
		Confident	35% Not confident	40% Not confident
		37.5% Not confident		
4	My opinion after listening to the Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor".	52.5% Romantic song	55% Romantic song	50% Romantic song
		47.5% Erotic song	45% Erotic song	50% Erotic song
5	I agree if Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" is banned in Indonesia.	22.5% Agree	25% Agree	20% Agree
		77.5% Disagree	75% Disagree	80% Disagree

Table 2 described students' perception of Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" which related to the content of the song. Item questionnaire includes I agree that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" conveys sexual message, The reason I am listening to the Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor", My feeling when I am singing (karaoke) Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor", My opinion after listening to the Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor", I agree if Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" is banned in Indonesia. The result can be summarized in the following explanation.

3.1 Sexual message on Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor"

Almost participants thought that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" conveys sexual message. There are 62.5% of the participants who answered "agreed" that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" had an erotic message. 65% and 60% of the students (female and male students respectively) agreed the chorus part of the song has closed meaning about sexuality. In Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" there are a beginning part, a chorus or refrain part and also an ending. The chorus in the song "Versace on the Floor" is written in the following:

"Underneath the chandelier, we're dancin' all alone. There's no reason to hide what we're feelin' inside right now. So, baby let's just turn down the lights and close the door. Ooh I love that dress but you won't need it anymore. No, you won't need it no more. Let's just kiss 'til we're naked, baby, Versace on the floor. Ooh take it off for me, for me, for me, for me now, girl. Versace on the floor."

However, some students disagreed (female 35%, male 40%) that the song "Versace on the Floor" has sexual message on the lyrics. They explained that because Bruno Mars' song entitled "Versace on the Floor" is a song about love so the lyrics of the song should be romantic. Because of the song is romantic, so it impressed excessively like having sexual messages.

Most of the students approved Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" conveys sexual message. Many of the students listened "Versace on the Floor" because it had a good melody. Almost total of students feel confident when they are singing or karaoke "Versace on the Floor". Students thought that "Versace on the Floor" is both erotic and romantic song. Almost of the students disagree if "Versace on the Floor" is banned in Indonesia. Furthermore, most of students agree that sexual message contained in the lyrics of "Versace on the Floor". It is proven by the number of female students and male students who are not too significantly different and agree that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" has a vulgar and mature side contained in the lyrics. Almost half of the participants admitted that the lyrics to "Versace on the Floor" had a sexual message. Most of them agree that the chorus part is a part that is more intense in showing its sexual purpose than other parts in the song "Versace on the Floor". As stated by Kalof (1993), sexual imagery of many songs is so powerful that it ultimately defines what is masculine and what is feminine. Therefore, songs that express love and sex cannot be distinguished and become pro-cons for listeners. Because of the many criticisms, the delivery of song lyrics was made hidden in words or phrases in song lyrics.

3.2 "Versace on the Floor" had a good melody

More than half of subjects (61.5%) choose "Versace on the Floor" which has a good melody because the song such a slow beat tempo and it suitable to be heard for every situation. In this case, female students scored greater number (70%) rather than male students (50%). In addition, there were 3 (7.7%) participants including 2 (5%) female students and only 1 (10%) male student who claimed to listen to the song "Versace on the Floor" because of curiosity about the contents of the song's lyrics.

The result of interview from students said that they liked Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" because the song is catchy and easy listening. Students claimed to have listened to the

song "Versace on the Floor" many times when in a public place such as a department store or mall. Students also claimed that listening to it when the song "Versace on the Floor" was trending then the song usually would be on the top main page of social media such as YouTube, Instagram or Twitter.

Students also show that they listen more to songs because the songs are easy listening. This is shown that almost all participants chose listening to the song "Versace on the Floor" because of the good melody of the song. Female students became the most participants and dominated these reasons. This proven that this genre of song is more loved by women than men. According to Colley, males tend to prefer harder and non-mainstream forms of popular music such as rock, hard rock and heavy metal; while female have a stronger preference for softer and more mainstream genres such as pop, folk, and classical music [10]. Many students recognized the song "Versace on the Floor" had sexual message. More than half of the total participants of female students and male students still feel comfortable when they sing the song. This is because those who are not too concerned with what the lyrics are. Even so, the other participants chose uncomfortable because they felt stiff or strange when singing the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor" especially if they had to sing the song when there were friends of different genders. Alonso (2012) says that lyrics are words that make people think. It means lyrics should have an impression or message behind the words contained in the song for listeners.

3.3 "Versace on the Floor" is erotic and romantic song.

Half of the number of participants (52.5%) answered the song Bruno Mars was a romantic song while 19 (47.5) other participants answered the song was an erotic song. They even realized that due to differences about culture it seemed like a vulgar song but it does not even change the opinion of most participants who thought the song "Versace on the Floor" is a romantic song. 11 (27.5%) female students claimed the song "Versace on the Floor" is a romantic song because this song was about a love song with a slow tempo that made the song sound sweet and it was suitable for lovers. In this case, female students thought that the song was romantic 55% and erotic 45%. Male students shared the same opinion (50% for both romantic and erotic song). Male students think the song "Versace on the Floor" tells about how a man adores his partner.

In addition, students chose the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor" as a romantic song rather than an erotic song. Although the majority of students agree that this song has a sexual message contained in the lyrics, students think that it is still normal because this song is about love song. Female students again constituted the majority of participants who chose the song "Versace on the Floor" as a romantic song. Likewise, half of total number male students gave the same opinion as female students. The difference in numbers is not so significant, but this shows that female students more prefer romantic songs to male students. In addition, generally songs that are enjoyed by men usually tell more about a man's strength and more inclined to an interest in sex while women are more interested in listening to songs that are more likely to be romantic (Hotlzman, 2000).

3.4 Most of the students disagreed if "Versace on the Floor" is banned in Indonesia.

Majority of students (77.5%) disagreed with a ban on listening to the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor". Fifteen (75%) female students chose not to agree if the song had to be banned because they thought the song could be heard alone and most of the listeners are teenagers who listened to the Bruno Mars' song. The same opinion is also identified from 16 (80%) male students who disagreed with the ban on listening to Bruno Mars's song "Versace on the Floor". They thought that Bruno Mars' song is only heard as entertainment. Even if the song is played in a public place, most people just ignored it. At the end of the interview session, two students even gave advice about the ban on the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor". Rather than having to be banned,

students ask for guidance for certain age restrictions on listening to songs such as the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor".

Students are aware that there are differences in culture, the song is still considered become a song that is still reasonable and acceptable for listeners. Students also argue that even "Versace on the floor" song have sexual content, it does not need to be banned from being played. Students prefer to have an age guide that allows listening to songs like the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor". It can be seen from how students give their opinions about the Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor", students tolerate song that have elements of western culture. This is very relevant to the theory of perception by Lev Vygotsky (1962), who explains that perception come from social influences such as language, other people's thought, or cultures. Social interaction influences how a person thinks and responds so that self-perception is formed based on the social environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, the results of this study highlighted the students' perceptions of Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" that which has meaning romantic or/and erotic. As a result, 9 out of 10 items is revealed that the majority of students' perception choose Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" as a romantic song than erotic song. They stated that although the lyrics of Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor" had a sexual message, most students claimed like the melody of the song that seemed sweet, melodious and nice. Furthermore, students claimed to be more confident and comfortable singing the song "Versace on the Floor" because the melody of the song so, as not to think too much about the meaning of the song's lyrics which clearly had a sexual meaning. They perceived that the Bruno Mars song "Versace on the Floor" has a fairly intense sexual message in the chorus of the song. However, students still considered the song as a romantic song. Then, they said that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" is still worth listening to and do not need to be banned in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, beside students who perceived Bruno Mars' song as a romantic song, there are also few students thought that Bruno Mars' song "Versace on the Floor" is an erotic song. They stated that Bruno Mars' song lyrics "Versace on the Floor" as a whole look intense and overly sexual. One of the reasons the song "Versace on the Floor" banned is not appropriate with Indonesian culture. Moreover, things related to sex through song are still quite taboo and might lead to unintended arguments.

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