

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### A.1 Background of the Research

Music is a universal language and is a tool for communication and is also used to express ideas, thoughts, desires, and feelings. Music from a psychological perspective has a broad meaning showing asynchronous methods in building self-actualization (Ji et al., 2021). The rhythmic and melodic components of music create an asynchronous tapestry that resonates with individuals on a deeply personal level, facilitating a diverse range of emotional and cognitive experiences. At the heart of this auditory art form lies the lyrical expression words woven into poetic verses, forming an indispensable element of songs.

According to (Michael, 2017) lyrics are representations of a recollected moment of being or experience, with the meaning and engagement with the world existing in the futurity of its reader. They can capture the essence of a moment, tell a story, or shed light on social issues in a way that resonates deeply with listeners. Song lyrics are a person's expression of something he has seen, heard, or experienced, using words and language to create attraction and uniqueness. Song lyrics serve as a canvas for their creators to express what is on their minds.

In today's era, lyricists channel the LGBTQ campaign into the song's verses, using the platform to articulate messages and themes related to LGBTQ advocacy music videos often incorporate subtle elements or implied meanings that can influence their audience. Song lyrics have the power to convey profound and emotionally impactful messages. In the context of LGBTQ campaigns, music can

serve as an effective medium to shift social perceptions and raise awareness about equality and individual rights (Hall, 2018). This research is driven by the increasing trend of music videos directly or indirectly incorporating visual representations of sensitive issues, such as racism and LGBTQ. The prevalence of these themes within the visual storytelling of music videos highlights a deliberate effort to engage with and potentially impact the audience on matters that go beyond the realm of music (Brettschneider et al 2016). This phenomenon suggests a growing recognition of the influential role that music videos play in shaping perceptions and conversations around sensitive social topics.

LGBTQ is a term used to describe lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals that affect their identities (Monro, 2020). It is replacing the phrase “gay community” as this term better represents the groups. The term 'lesbian' refers to women who are sexually attracted to other women, while 'gay' refers to men who are sexually attracted to other men. Bisexual is a sexual orientation characterized by sexual desire towards both men and women. Transgender is a term used to describe individuals who behave, feel, think, or appear different from the sex assigned to them at birth. In addition to the four terms mentioned, there is also Queer or Questioning, which is a term used to individuals in the process of determining their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Richmond and McKenna 2019).

These terms represent deviations from sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is a term that refers to one’s attraction, emotionally, physically,

sexually, and romantically, to a particular gender. The LGBTQ community has grown rapidly in various societal settings worldwide. However, nearly all social systems globally reject homosexual lifestyles. In some countries, laws formally legalize homosexual lifestyles, but they may still face rejection from the societal system or vice versa, as it has become a matter deemed private on a social level. In the context of social deviations, homosexuality is considered deviant because this phenomenon does not align with the norms and values prevalent in many social groups.

The study of LGBTQ in Lil Nas X's songs is one of many to be conducted. In the past ten years, there have been many studies on the topic of LGBTQ in Lil Nas X's songs, three of them are the study conducted by Addy Rose Merced discussed the topic of LGBTQ with the title "*The Impact of Catholic School Perspectives of Deviance in Lil Nas X's 'Montero'*". This study aims to analyze the impact of perspective on the deviation that occurred due to Lil Nas X's song entitled *Montero*, a song that is meaningful about the disclosure of the songwriter, Lil Nas X, as a gay. The data used in this research are lyrics in the song "*Montero*" by Lil Nas X. The results of this study show that several lyrics in Lil Nas X's songs have had an impact on changing the perspective of teenagers who listen to *Montero's* LGBTQ themed song (Merced, 2022).

Lil Nas X is an openly gay artist who publicly came out in June 2019, initially through hints in his song "*C7osure*" and later confirmed in interviews and on social media. His queer identity is frequently reflected in his public appearances, stage

performances, and personal style. In terms of fashion, he often blends masculine and feminine elements wearing gowns, sequined suits, corsets, high-heeled boots, and colorful, embellished outfits that deliberately subvert traditional male dress codes in hip-hop culture. Signature moments include his hot-pink Versace suit with a bondage harness at the 2020 Grammy Awards, elaborate camp-inspired costumes at the Met Gala, and gender-fluid couture on red carpets. He also employs performative visuals such as a pregnancy photoshoot to promote his *Montero* album and music videos depicting same-sex intimacy to assert queer visibility in mainstream media. Through these choices, Lil Nas X constructs a public persona that challenges heteronormative expectations, embraces fluid gender expression, and normalizes LGBTQ representation in popular music culture.

Another theme that discussed the same topic were (Jordan, 2023), conducted research with title *The Language of Resistance and Empowerment in Black Queer Femme Bravado within Hip-Hop: How Nicki Minaj and Lil Nas X Challenge Norms, Shatter Boundaries, and Foster Inclusivity*, This study aims to discuss how Lil Nas X challenge and redefine sexist and homophobic language that reflected as LGBTQ within hip-hop culture in his songs. This study concluded that Lil Nas X represents his language in his LGBTQ themed hip-hop song lyrics.

While Elizabeth Rusida (2024) focused on the songs "*Call Me by Your Name*" (Montero) by Lil Nas X is a song that portrays the breaking of social norms, particularly regarding sexuality. This research aims to analyze gay identity in the song lyrics. The researchers use descriptive qualitative method and multimodal

approach to analyze the song. The analysis uses Theo Van Leeuwen theory to analyze the visual, linguistic, auditory, intertextuality, and contextual factors. The result of this research is an increased awareness among listeners of song lyrics that contain LGBTQ campaigns, particularly in the Lil Nas X's songs lyrics. Based on analysis, the conclusion of Lil Nas X's "Call Me by Your Name" is a strong expression of self-acceptance, resistance to society and religious condemnation, and a celebration of LGBTQ identity, especially gay since Lil Nas himself is a gay.

Among the studies that use LGBTQ themes, the use of lyrics from three Lil Nas X songs "C7osure", "Industry Baby", and "That's What I Want" in the context of LGBTQ campaign research has been discussed before, but not specifically in terms of their LGBTQ aspects, even though many studies have used Lil Nas X's songs as research objects. The researches which use Lil Nas X as the research object often only focus on the video clip or music video, the visual elements shown in the music videos. Based on these facts, this research will further discuss and analyze the LGBTQ campaign as reflected in the lyrics of these three Lil Nas X songs, to raise awareness among listeners that the LGBTQ campaign is also expressed through one of the most accessible forms of media: music, particularly song lyrics. In Lil Nas X's song "That's What I Want" which is in the "Montero" album the lyrics offer a glimpse into the artist's personal experiences and desires, and they subtly touch upon LGBTQ themes. While the song primarily revolves around themes of love, longing, and the pursuit of genuine connection, it is essential to recognize the LGBTQ aspect embedded in Lil Nas X's narrative. In the

lyrics, Lil Nas X expresses his desires and dreams, seeking a love that feels authentic and genuine. While the song doesn't explicitly delve into LGBTQ issues, the mere fact that it is delivered by an openly gay artist adds a layer of significance.

Lil Nas X's openness about his sexuality contributes to the normalization and visibility of LGBTQ experiences within the broader context of mainstream music. The lyrics, which navigate the complexities of love and relationships, resonate universally, transcending sexual orientations. However, the LGBTQ aspect lies in the artist's authentic expression of his desires, reinforcing the importance of representation within the music industry. Lil Nas X's ability to convey his experiences through a lens that includes his LGBTQ identity serves to broaden the scope of narratives present in popular music, fostering a more inclusive and diverse musical landscape.

Throughout the song, Lil Nas X uses clever wordplay and metaphors to convey his messages, showcasing his lyrical prowess. The emphasis on individuality and authenticity is a recurring theme, encouraging listeners to embrace their true selves despite external pressures. Moreover, the reference to "*Industry Baby*" suggests a commentary on the challenges within the music industry, hinting at the need for artists to reclaim agency and control over their narratives. The song serves as an anthem for empowerment, urging individuals to stand firm in their beliefs and identity. In essence, Lil Nas X's "*Industry Baby*" not only captivates with its catchy beats but also resonates with listeners through its lyrical depth, addressing themes of self-empowerment and authenticity in the face

of societal expectations.

The specific lyrics of *“Industry Baby”* by Lil Nas X don’t explicitly address LGBTQ themes. However, the artist, Lil Nas X, is openly gay, and his presence in the music industry has been impactful in terms of LGBTQ visibility and representation. It is important to note that while the lyrics of a particular song may not explicitly reference LGBTQ themes, the mere visibility and success of an openly LGBTQ artist, like Lil Nas X, contribute to broader discussions about representation, acceptance, and diversity in the music industry.

The Lil Nas X’s song *“C7osure,”* the lyrics explore themes of self-discovery, authenticity, and the journey towards personal freedom. While the song doesn’t explicitly focus on LGBTQ themes, it gained attention for its release during Pride Month, and Lil Nas X later confirmed on social media that the song is about embracing his true self.

The reason the researcher conducted a study on these lyrics on the three Lil Nas X’s song is to analyze the campaign of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning). Many countries have advocated for the rights of the LGBTQ community, but the topic remains a subject of controversy in certain societies, including in Indonesia. The study aims to explore and analyze the representation of LGBTQ themes in the specific context of the mentioned music video, considering the broader discussions and debates surrounding LGBTQ issues globally

## **A.2 Problem of the Research**

Described from background of the study in this thesis, the problem of the study is defined: How are LGBTQ campaigns reflected in the three of Lil Nas X's songs lyrics?

## **A.3 Objective of the Research**

Based on research background that has been explained, this research aims to examine how the LGBTQ campaigns within the lyrics of Lil Nas X's songs. This includes observing LGBTQ campaign from three Lil Nas X's songs.

## **A.4 Significance of the Research**

### **1. Theoretical**

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of gender studies by exploring how contemporary music challenges traditional norms surrounding sexuality, gender identity, and the role of media in shaping LGBTQ identities. The study examines how contemporary music challenges traditional norms surrounding sexuality, gender identity, and the role of media in shaping LGBTQ identities (Vaughn, 2019). Lil Nas X's songs, which explicitly address themes like sexual freedom, coming out, and resistance to heteronormativity, become a vital source in academic discussions about LGBTQ representation in popular culture. Additionally, it may influence the music industry to be more inclusive of LGBTQ artists and can be applied in mental health contexts to empower LGBTQ individuals by providing them

a space to express their identities and build resilience against discrimination.

## 2. Practical

The practical significance of this research lies in its real-world implications across various fields, including social activism, education, and the music industry. This research can raise awareness about LGBTQ rights, support advocacy campaigns, and serve as an educational tool for inclusivity in school or university settings. By analyzing Lil Nas X's music within the context of an LGBTQ campaign, the research can raise awareness about LGBTQ rights and amplify LGBTQ voices, particularly for marginalized groups within the community, such as transgender individuals and people of color. It can also serve as an educational tool in schools and universities to foster discussions on sexual orientation, gender identity, and LGBTQ history, using Lil Nas X's lyrics as a resource to engage students in understanding queer identity, media representation, and allyship. Furthermore, the research could influence the music industry to adopt more inclusive practices, encouraging spaces where LGBTQ artists can express their identities freely, ensuring that they receive equal respect and visibility. Finally, it emphasizes the role of music as a powerful tool for mental health support, empowering LGBTQ individuals by affirming their identities and helping them build resilience against discrimination, especially in communities where acceptance is limited.

### **A.5 Limitation of the Problem**

The researcher decided to limit the focus of the study of LGBTQ Campaign in Lil Nas X's songs (*C7osure, That's What I Want, and Industry Baby*). The study on LGBTQ campaign that was carried out by the researcher focused on the lyrics of the Lil Nas X's Songs that contain LGBTQ. The LGBTQ campaign seen in the Lil Nas X's songs were identified by the researcher using Michael Riffaterre and Judith Butler theory.

### **A.6 Definition of Key Terms**

- **LGBTQ**

LGBTQ refers to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, or others on the spectrum of gender and sexual diversity (Smith, 2019). It represents people who have different sexual orientations and gender identities from what is traditionally considered "straight" or "cisgender." It's a way of recognizing and supporting the diversity of sexual and gender identities. porting the diversity of sexual and gender identities.

- **Lil Nas X**

Lil Nas X, born Montero Hill, is an American rapper, singer, and songwriter known for blending hip-hop, country, and pop music. He gained fame with his 2019 hit "Old Town Road," which topped charts for a record-breaking 19 weeks and became a viral sensation. Beyond his musical success, Lil Nas X is a prominent LGBTQ advocate, openly identifying as gay

and using his platform to challenge gender norms and homophobia, making him a trailblazer for LGBTQ representation in hip-hop. His debut album, *Montero* (2021), solidified his role in both the music and LGBTQ communities, with hits like “Montero (Call Me By Your Name)” and “*Industry Baby*,” which explore themes of self-acceptance, defiance, and love. Lil Nas X is celebrated for his creativity, confidence, and role in redefining what it means to be an LGBTQ artist in a traditionally conservative genre.

- Lyrics

Lyrics are the words or text of a song, often designed to convey emotions, tell a story, or express ideas through rhythm and melody. They serve as a crucial element in shaping the listener’s understanding and emotional response to the music (Perricone, 2018).

- LGBTQ Campaign

Campaign is a planned series of actions or strategies aimed at achieving a specific goal, often involving communication, advocacy, and public engagement. Campaigns are used in various contexts, such as marketing, politics, or social movements, to influence opinions, behaviors, or policies (Kotler, 2016).

- Deviation

Deviation refers to actions or behaviors that diverge from societal norms or expectations, often influenced by cultural, environmental, or

psychological factors. It can signify nonconformity or resistance to established standards in various social contexts (Brown, 2018).

- Cisgender

Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Unlike transgender individuals, cisgender people do not experience a misalignment between their gender identity and biological sex (Erickson, 2016).

- Hypogram

Hypogram is a pre-existing group of words or expressions—such as clichés, cultural phrases, literary texts, or linguistic conventions—that serve as a hidden model or underlying structure for a new text.

Riffaterre argues that a text becomes poetic when it refers to and transforms an established hypogram. The hypogram acts as the semantic foundation, often not visible on the surface but crucial in shaping the poem's deeper meaning. The reader is invited to reinterpret the text retroactively, uncovering layers of intertextual meaning that link the current expression to a prior cultural or literary reference (Michael Riffaterre, 2005).