

HUMAN VALUES IN MAHER ZAIN'S ONE BIG FAMILY

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Abstract

Human values are important to build a peaceful world. People around the world are calling for upholding human values in varieties of way. This study discusses how Maher Zain's conveyed human values in his song One Big Family (2013) by using author-oriented approach (Klarer, 2013). Types of human value in this study are distinguished by their motivational goals as proposed by Schwartz (1994). The method used is a qualitative study by examining the lyrics of the song and relate them to the songwriter's background. The results showed that One Big Family contains the value of Security, Universalism, and Benevolence. The value of Security is motivated by the importance of having safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self. The value of Universalism is motivated by the importance of having understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. The last value found in this study is Benevolence in which the motives are preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact. These values are in line with the songwriter's motivation in writing his songs, that is, to spread the peaceful messages of Islam. Clearly that the writer wants to inspire his listeners to spread love and peace toward humanity and that we need to care for one another in this world as a big family.

Keywords: Author-oriented approach, Maher Zain's song, human values.

1. Introduction

A literary work usually produces to entertain its audience. Music, as one of the literary works, plays a big part in human lives. Since prehistoric times, a person already sang a song, and that is said to be "the music of nature" (Diwase, 2018). A person started to listen to songs since s/he was a baby when her/his mother sang a lullaby at bedtime. Going to school, students are taught to sing the anthem, which is very important to keep their spirit of nationalism. They also taught to sing folk songs as a medium to learn their culture. This

means that songs have the power to affect their listeners' mood and emotion. It is can also be a tool to spread messages of humanity and values hold in a culture. Diwase (2018) claims that "Music is the universal language of humanity, the ubiquitous source of entertainment, the agency that transforms our moods".

Nowadays, songs are usually performed and accompanied by music equipment to reach their maximum goal as a source of entertainment. There were already lots of world singers who used their music not only to entertain their listeners but also as a powerful tool to spread messages to the world such as the late Michael Jackson. Through one of his songs, *Black or White* (Jackson, 1991), he sent message to erase racism toward black people. Another singer, Michael Heart was well-known for his song *We Will Not Go Down/Song for Gaza* (SongForGaza, 2009). He wrote the song to protest the brutality of Israel armies toward Palestinian civilians. Through the song, he also spread the spirit for the people of Palestine to keep fighting for their land. Another singer, Maher Zain, claimed that he dedicated all of his songs to spread the message of Islam, "My music is the message of Islam, but I want people to understand what Islam is about. It's a message of peace, brotherhood, humanity, respect and love" (theguardian.com). The messages mentioned by Zain are human values as classified by Schwartz (1994) which are needed in this life to keep a harmony society. This study chose *One Big Family* (Awakening Music, 2013), a song by Maher Zain, to find out human values conveyed through its lyrics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Human Values

Human values play a vital role in society for leading a better life and it is affected by different factors in the life of an individual and the society (Debbarma, 2014). Sotala (2016) suggested that, "... human values are concepts which abstract over situations in which we've previously received rewards, making those concepts and the situations associated with them valued for their own sake". Value is a benchmark of social behavior that symbolizes good or bad, right or wrong of an object in social life. It refers to something that humans and society see as the most valuable thing as their view of life. The view of life comes from human attitudes toward God, the universe and human, one to each other. Human attitude is formed through various experiences that mark the history of the life of the people concerned. The experience that forms a society varies from one nation to another so there are differences in what things are considered valuable among nations.

Spranger (1928 in Dinçel, 2017) classified human values into six core values, i.e.: social, political, economic, religious, theoretical, and aesthetic values. Schwartz (1994, p. 21) defines values as "desirable trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity" and that the concept of values is specified as they must be in a central position that can combine the diversity of all the sciences concerned with human behaviour. Later, Schwartz (2006) made a conceptual explanation of the five characteristics of values through the literature: Values (1) are concepts or beliefs, (2) are about desirable end states or behaviors, (3) transcend specific situations, (4) guide selection or evaluation of behaviour and events, and (5) are ordered by relative importance. Schwartz (1994) conducted a survey in 44 countries from 1988 to 1993 to find out values shared by people around the world. From the survey, Schwartz classified 10 basic values based on their motivational goals, those are: self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence and universalism.

2.2 Lyrics of Songs

Lyrics are the words of song. They are created by artists who know how to react not only in a physical environment but also through verbal symbols. Lyric of song is someone's expression about something they have seen, heard or experienced. The songwriter performs words and language to create attraction and distinctiveness towards the lyrics. Lyrics of song are written in rhyme to express feelings, emotions, using repeated statements (Boulle, 2011). The language of song lyric can be in the form of vocal, language styles and word deviations and reinforced by the use of melodies and musical notations that are tailored to the lyrics of the song so that listeners can feel what the author thinks. Song, either accompanied by music or not, is a medium to carry out communication activities through a voice that is expected to be able to convey messages in different ways and it is part of a work of art (Hidayat, 2014). Human experiences in their life influence the depth of message meaning in the lyric of songs. The meaning of lyric conveys messages of human values that can be learnt by the listeners as a positive reflection for them.

2.3 Author-Oriented Approach

The author-oriented approach focuses on the intention of the writer in producing her/his literary work. The socio-political history around the author and or author's biographical details are also studied to gain a full understanding of her/his artwork. Klarer (1999) claimed that author-oriented approach highlights the authors' background and making a connection with their literary works. Klarer (1999) further discussed that this approach bridges the literary text and the life experience of the author. Important dates, facts and events in the author's life are compared and contrasted with literary elements of his or her works in order to find aspects that become the foundation of such literary works were created. This study uses author-oriented approach to study the link between the content of *One Big Family song* and the intention of its songwriter, as well as the singer, Maher Zain.

2.4 The Biography of Maher Zain

Maher Zain, originally from Lebanon, is a Muslim Swedish singer, songwriter, and musician. When the war in Lebanon increasingly chaotic; Zain's family decided to migrate to Sweden when Maher was only 8 years old. Maher Zain marked his stardom in a conference for Swedish young Muslims when some people there knew that he has a talent in music, and they asked him to sing along with them on the stage for the closing of the conference. At the rehearsal before the performance, a volunteer liked what he heard. He then gave Maher a contact number of a Muslim producer based in Egypt and England. Maher then sent an email to the producer and the recording of his voice, singing a song he wrote himself. A while later, the producer contacted him and wanted to meet in Egypt. Soon, Maher signed a contract with them and released his first album, 'Thank You Allah' in 2009 followed by his second album 'Forgive Me' in 2012 and his third album 'One' in 2016. He has a major fan in Malaysia and by the end of 2010, he was the most-searched celebrity on 'Google' in that country. His fans also spread in Indonesia, Turkey and many other parts of the world (Maher Zain Algerian FC, 2016).

As a superstar, Zain realizes the responsibility that comes with his fame, "I believe that with every gift comes responsibility. Caring for others and sharing what you have is a duty" (onefamily.org.uk). It was therefore, he decided to be involved in many charity works. One of them was to donate all of the purchased of his music video, *Love Will Prevail* (Awakening Music, 2013), to Syrian humanitarian relief work. On 2017, Zain was chosen to be the ambassador of One Family Global, which vision is in line with Zain's, "One Family's vision

is very much in tune with my core values. One Family is all about love and family because these are things we all have in common, no matter where we are in the world” (onefamily.org.uk).

3. Research Method

The method of data analysis used in this study was a qualitative method by applying content analysis (Mayring, 2014). The process in this phase involved several phases, i.e.: preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo & Kyngas, 2008, p. 109). The preparation phase started by transcribing the lyric of the chosen song and then followed by listening to the song and trying to understand the meaning in general. Next, the lyrics were organized in stanzas to ease the process of analysing. The last step, each stanza was carefully re-read and analysed to locate the human values as proposed by Schwartz (1994) as the aim of the study.

Related information from books, e-books, and journals about literary work were added to strengthen the data. Since this study used author-oriented approach, the biography of the singer was also collected from online newspapers and online interview on the internet. The next step was to classify the data, focusing on the human values delivered by the singer in his song and relate them with the singer’s background. The last step was writing the draft based on the data obtained.

4. Results and Discussion

There are three values found in *One Big Family* song. The first one is *Security*. This value means that human desire to feel safety and harmony in this life by building a good relationship to each other (Schwartz, 1994), as shown in the first stanza of the song:

*“I wonder why you and me fight each other.
Don’t you see the similarities between us?”*

The singer wonders why people keep fighting and having wars with each other while in fact, they are from one family. They share similarities to each other which means they are from the same ancestors. Therefore, they ought to keep the stability in their society to have safety and harmony in their life.

The next stanza still about security when the singer continues:

*“Take a minute and see yourself in the mirror
You look like me, those eyes, lips, you can’t deny”*

Zain, the singer, asks his listeners to think about themselves and the people around them. They have similarities, they are from the same species of living creature, because of that, they need to build a sense of belonging to each other. It was as Zain claimed what his music is all about, “It’s a message of peace, brotherhood, humanity, respect and love” (theguardian.com). Therefore, people need to keep a good relationship one to another to have a stable and harmonious society.

Afterwards, stanza five continues to talk about security by building a relationship and national security in this world (Schwartz, 2012):

*“It doesn’t matter if you live far away from me
You feel I feel, you bleed I bleed, you cry and I cry”*

If we already have the feeling that we are brothers or sisters in humanity, then no matter how far the distance you live to each other, you will feel the pain your brothers' or sisters' feel. It is because you have that sense of brotherhood in you (Schwartz, 1994).

The second value found in this song is *Universalism*. It is about understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature (Shwartz, 1994). Then, stanza three in this *One Big Family* song reflects this value when the singer turns out saying:

*"Have you thought about why we look the same?
Why we feel the same?
Don't tell me it's by chance"*

The stanza invites the listeners to think about their similarities to each other, not only on the appearance but also on the hidden thing, such as feeling. This was because they are exactly the same human being. Zain said this in an interview that as human beings, people get affected in the same way because they are one family and one humanity" (Maher Zain Interview, 2017). Therefore, people need to be broad-minded, have wisdom, to build social justice in this life (Schwartz, 1994; 2012).

Stanza four continues to talk about the value of *Universalism*, where the desire is to live in a world of peace, a world of beauty, where human can feel inner harmony (Schwartz, 1994):

*"Oh, you're my brother, you're my sister
We're one big family"*

In fact that human comes from a big family from the same parents, therefore, we have to treat others as brothers or sisters. This is because they are brothers and sisters in a big family of humanity in this world.

Stanza six is still about honouring the principle of *Universalism* when the singer continues:

*"We sleep and dream
Sometimes we're sad sometimes we're happy"*

We, as human, need to live in a world at peace, where we can have a big dream for our future. As human, we have that sad and happy feeling in our life during our journey pursuing our dream.

Stanza seven is the last stanza about *Universalism*.

*"You breathe I breathe
We love, walk, talk and we smile"*

In this world of beauty, we share love and smile to keep this world in peace and harmony. The last value found in this song is *Benevolence* which "... emphasize voluntary concern for others' welfare such as helpful, honest, forgiving, responsible, loyal, true friendship, mature love (Schwartz, 2012, p. 7) as can be found in stanza eight:

*"I care about you and I wish you could realize
There's no difference between us two"*

A true friendship between human is that one care to each other because of that feeling of brotherhood inside them. This is because *Benevolence* promotes "... cooperative and supportive social relations" (Schwartz, 2012, p. 7).

The last stanza is still about the value of *Benevolence* and the importance of true friendship with all of the meaning it covers:

"No matter how far you are
And even if we don't know each other
Oh, you and me, me and you, we are one"

The distance that separates will not be a barrier for someone to care about what happens to others. Even though they never met before, someone still needs to care for another because they realize that they are family. It is as Zain said, "We have differences, yes, but let's set the differences aside and see what we have in common, and let's capitalize on that" (Maher Zain Interview, 2017).

5. Conclusions

Many ways can be done to share messages concerning human values to raise awareness about humanity. Maher Zain chose to convey human values through the lyrics of his song, *One Big Family*, which the main theme is about universal brotherhood as Zain expected, "I hope my music can inspire others, Insha'Allah" (theguardian.com). It was found out that the song contained three values: *Security*, *Universalism* and *Benevolence*. In this song, the value of *Security* is about keeping safety, harmony, stability of society, and to maintain relationships with others. *Universalism* is needed to build understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people in this world. The last value in this song, *Benevolence*, is about concern for others' welfare, such as helpful, honest, forgiving, responsible, loyal, true friendship, and mature love. The values were in line with Zain's purposes in producing his music, "It's a message of peace, brotherhood, humanity, respect and love" (theguardian.com). These values need to be maintained in this global life to create a harmonious life, where people can feel safe and secure in their society as a big family as Zain claimed, "One Family is all about love and family because these are things we all have in common, no matter where we are in the world" (onefamily.org.uk).

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