

## Juvenile Delinquency Problems in “Pumped up Kicks” Song's Lyrics

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Email: shifasalsabila420@gmail.com **Abstrak** - Masalah sosial sering terjadi dalam kehidupan setiap orang. Tidak hanya terjadi di dalam film, namun juga terjadi di kehidupan nyata. Beberapa orang menceritakannya melalui lirik dan menjadikannya sebuah lagu, seperti permasalahan yang peneliti temukan dalam lirik lagu 'Pumped up Kicks'. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas salah satu masalah sosial, yaitu kenakalan remaja, dalam lirik lagu "Pumped up Kicks". Metode yang digunakan untuk menganalisis kenakalan remaja dalam lirik lagu "Pumped up Kicks" adalah metode deskriptif, dengan mengkaji lirik dan menginterpretasikan makna simboliknya. Peneliti menggunakan teori dari Stuart Hall, yaitu representasi konstruksionis. Penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana lagu tersebut menggambarkan tema kekerasan remaja dan konsekuensi dari pengabaian. Melalui lensa kajian budaya, kami membedah lirik lagu tersebut untuk memahami cerminan mereka terhadap norma-norma budaya, nilai-nilai, dan kecemasan yang lebih luas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kenakalan remaja yang terungkap dalam lirik lagu tersebut adalah anak di bawah umur yang sedang berjuang dengan masalah kesehatan mental dan pikiran untuk bunuh diri, kekerasan di sekolah, dan kekerasan dengan senjata api pada remaja. Kesimpulannya, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan membawa kesadaran akan isu-isu remaja, sesuatu yang semakin sering kita dengar di berita saat ini.

**Kata kunci:** Kenakalan Remaja, Masalah Sosial, Pumped Up Kick, Lirik Lagu

**Abstract** - Social issues often happen in everyone's life. Not only happened in the movies, but it also happened in our real life. Some people tell it through lyrics and make it into a song, just like the problems researchers have found in the lyrics of the 'Pumped up Kicks' song. This study aims to address one of the social issues, namely juvenile delinquency, in the lyrics of the "Pumped up Kicks" song. The method used to analyze the juvenile delinquency in "Pumped up Kicks" song's lyrics involves descriptive, examining the lyrics, and interpreting their symbolic meanings. Researchers use the theory from Stuart Hall, which is the constructionist representation. This study examines how the song portrays themes of youth violence and the consequences of neglect. Through the lens of cultural studies, we dissect the song's lyrics to understand their reflection of broader cultural norms, values, and anxieties. The study showed that the juvenile delinquency revealed in the song's lyrics is a minor who is struggling with mental health issues and homicidal thoughts, school violence, and gun violence in teenagers. In conclusion, this research aims to increase knowledge and bring awareness to the issues of teenagers, something that we have been hearing more and more about in the news at the time.

**Key words:** Juvenile Delinquency, Social Issues, Pumped up Kick, Song Lyrics

### INTRODUCTION

One of the great arts of humanity is music, which is a really global endeavor. Although those who refer to it as a "universal language" overlook the variations across the languages, they are not entirely off. Instrumental music definitely transcends linguistic and national boundaries, regularly and effortlessly. However, whether it has accompanying instruments or not, vocal music is the type of music that most people enjoy. Songs are the main focus of the enormous "music industry" of today. And even when there are talented instrumentalists, singers nearly invariably receive top attention.

Every culture has its own songs, which people sing both in their native tongues and in English. The song features people of various ages, from the young to the old, from the city to the country. Human rituals have frequently included singing, either on its own or in conjunction with dance and theater. Songs can be sentimental, satirical, secular, or sacred. Most people's cultural and linguistic identities include song, which is also a part of many cultural occasions including weddings, funerals, and festivals. Barker (2011) said songs are a good platform to discuss with children about things that should not be ignored, such as expressing feelings or problems that are being experienced, to be filled with love and care. The truth is that song is present everywhere, despite the fact that we may connect some locales with it more than others, example Italy and Wales (Low, 2017). Most people have music they cherish, and many people can list their "favorite songs," which are tunes they find particularly memorable, exquisitely lovely, extraordinarily emotional, inspiring, or insightful.



Social issues are the pressing concerns and challenges that impact the well-being, quality of life, and interactions of individuals within a society. These issues are multifaceted, often deeply rooted in historical, cultural, economic, and political contexts, and they can affect various aspects of people's lives, from their access to basic needs like food and shelter to their rights, freedoms, and opportunities for personal and collective growth. And one of the social issues that occurs a lot is Juvenile Delinquency. Juvenile Delinquency is the participation by a minor child, usually between the ages of 10 and 17, in illegal behavior or activities" (Siegel & Welsh, 2016, p. 13). And some musicians tell the issues through lyrics and make it into a song. Because people's experiences differ, what they hear in the music will be different, and how they relate it to broader life experiences will also be different (Robinson, 1997).

"Pumped up Kicks" is a song by American indie pop band Foster the People. The song was officially released as the band's debut single in September 2010, and was also one of the most popular songs of 2011. The song was written and recorded by their vocalist, Mark Foster, while he was working as a commercial songwriter. Until then the song received critical attention online after a man named Cultivate posted it on his site as a free download, which eventually went viral through various blogs and received positive reviews from bug hunters. Pumped up Kicks' is about a kid that basically is losing his mind and is plotting revenge. He's an outcast. Foster feels like the youth in our culture are becoming more and more isolated. It's kind of an epidemic. Instead of writing about victims and some tragedy, he wanted to get into the killer's mind, like Truman Capote did in *In Cold Blood*. In most murder cases, most people know of the evil intent before the incident occurs (Borum et al., 2010).

Not only because of the deep meaning behind the song's lyrics, researchers choose this song because it has a catchy tone and some time ago went viral again on the TikTok platform. Although this song is used as a dance song, it has a dark meaning and some social issues and not everyone knows about that fact. Due to that reason, the researchers want to give a little positive contribution to the readers. We want to analyze the social issues in this song to increase our knowledge. Examining "Pumped up Kicks" in the context of American Studies allows for a deeper exploration of the song's cultural significance and its reflection of American society, values, and challenges. According to the explanation above, it becomes the reason of the researchers to analyze of Social Issues in "Pumped up Kicks" Song's Lyrics.

The researchers made a comparison with a scientific journal entitled "JUVENILE DELINQUENCY IN JAY ASHER'S NOVEL THIRTEEN REASONS WHY" written by Alda Dwi Afangka and Purwano Purwano (2007), which discusses juvenile delinquency from a novel. Even though they discuss different figures, researchers found that these journals have something in common, namely that they both discuss juvenile delinquency. In research conducted by Alda Dwi Afangka and Puwano Puwano, they explained that juvenile delinquency committed by the characters in the story included several factors such as bullying, drinking alcohol, having free sex and having intimate relationships, as well as sexual harassment. It was also explained in the journal that several factors causing juvenile delinquency occurred because they were accustomed to holding parties drinking alcoholic beverages which led to bullying, promiscuity and sexual harassment. All forms of juvenile delinquency as stated in the scope of the research (Afangka & Purwano, 2021).

An article entitled "Juvenile Delinquency in Nicholas Sparks' Novel *The Last Song*" written by Desy Rahmadhani and Purwano Purwano discussed about juvenile delinquency in the novel. They used theories which proposed by Steinhart (1996) and used qualitative descriptive methods by Kothari (2014). The research results showed that there are three forms of juvenile delinquency: drug abuse, shoplifting and violence, and all are done by the major characters, namely Veronica Miller, Blaze and Marcus. They carry out acts of juvenile delinquency without reasons, but they are accustomed to doing so, mainly for their desires and satisfaction. Juveniles spend more time with peers and less with families during their transition into adulthood; peers have the most important influence on their day-to-day behaviors. Both parents and peers, however, have been found to contribute to adolescent development but in different ways (Rahmadhani and Purwano, 2021).

In an article entitled "Music Therapy for Delinquency Involved Juveniles Through Tripartite Collaboration: A Mixed Method Study" written by Hyun Ju Chong and Juri Yun introduces a music therapy project for young offenders called Young and Great Music. In this paper, researchers present an efficacy evaluation of the project's implementation with 178 adolescents involved with the juvenile justice system: 115 youth was on suspension of indictment and 63 youth was under supervised probation. The music therapy program was developed for 15 sessions based on the use of music to prompt positive resources through music making and song writing. The results of this project are promising and suggest that other arts-based rehabilitation services and programs should be developed and implemented in juvenile justice system. For this, strategies for program sustainability for long-term facilitation are needed (Chong and Yun, 2020).

Meanwhile, in the Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency Problems in the lyrics of the Song "Pumped up Kicks" the researchers discusses juvenile delinquency which originates from real events that occurred in America. This song tells the story of an ostracized teenager named Robert who carried out a brutal shooting, this happened because the person he was targeting was experiencing bullying and a lack of love from his parents. In the lyrics, pumped kick juvenile delinquency begins with the desire to know something new or try something that has never been tried. The impact can sometimes be satisfying or have an impact that creates unrest in some countries. Juvenile delinquency is considered taboo, such as lyrics that want to try to kill someone which causes unrest in the world inside.

Apart from that, the researcher also agrees with a quote from another article which is used to reveal juvenile delinquency in a literary work, in the novel *Clockwerk Orange* written by Anthony Burgess, which states that in the transition period of human physical and psychological development, which is called Adolescence or also known as the period of rebellion, a child who has reached puberty often shows various kinds of emotions, distances himself from his environment, family, and usually has a lot of emotions and problems, both at home, school, or in the surrounding environment (Salagaev, 2003). Because after all, children are the main subjects that must be paid attention to, and juvenile delinquency is not something that happens without a cause.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used to analyze the juvenile delinquency in "Pumped up Kicks" song's lyrics involves descriptive, examining the lyrics, and interpreting their symbolic meanings. Researchers use the theory from Stuart Hall (1989). Furthermore, Hall divides representation into three forms; Reflective Representations, Intensiveional Representations, and Constructionist Representations. Reflective representation is language or various symbols that reflect meaning. Intensiveional representation is how language or symbols embody the personal purpose of the speaker. While the constructionist representation is how meaning is reconstructed 'in' and 'through' language. Specifically for constructionist representation, Hall coined two approaches to study it, namely the semiotic approach and the discourse approach. This thinking likens its form to the concepts of encoding and decoding that Hall spawned in media studies. In this study, the researchers use the constructionist representation. The data taken is based on articles by interpreting the meaning of words in songs that refer to juvenile delinquency about a child who loses his mind and plans revenge. "He's an outcast, I feel like young people in our culture are becoming more isolated," said Foster.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Encoding

After the researchers listened the Pump-up Kicks and examine the lyrics, the researchers found 7 lyrics which contained one of the social issues, juvenile delinquency. The following table is to present the representative of the lyrics of 'Pumped up Kicks' that has been analyzed by the researchers.

No.	Lyrics	Meaning	Encoding
1.	"All the other kids with the pumped up kicks"	A representation of young individuals who may be troubled or on a destructive path. The "Pumped up Kicks" are not just shoes but represent the privileges or advantages that some youth possess.	Constructing a representation in Constructiconist terms for the lyrics "All the other kids with the pumped up kicks" could involve visualizing a scene with stylized, enhanced footwear worn by the rest of the children, emphasizing the notion of standing out or being different.
2.	"You better run, better run, faster than my bullet"	These lyrics highlight the anxiety and danger in a situation where youth feel the need to outrun the bullet. This reflects potential violence among teenagers.	In Constructiconist terms, this lyric might be represented as an image of a swift, bullet-like element chasing or surpassing an individual, illustrating the urgency and speed conveyed in the words "You better run, better run, faster than my bullet."
3.	"Robert's got a quick hand, He'll look around the room, he won't tell you his plan"	The lyrics create an image of a young man, Robert, who may have plans unknown to others,	In a Constructiconist representation, envision an illustration of Robert with a dexterous hand, subtly observing his surroundings, emphasizing the secretive nature of his intentions expressed in the lyrics "Robert's got a quick hand, He'll look around the room, he won't tell you his plan."

		indicating instability or a tendency towards mental illness.	
4.	“He’s got a rolled cigarette, Hanging out his mouth; he’s a cowboy kid”	The mention of ‘a rolled cigarette’ and the description of him as a "cowboy kid" suggest a rebellious and nonchalant attitude. Smoking is often associated with youthful defiance, and the cowboy imagery implies a sense of adventure and independence.	One could classify the line "He's a cowboy kid; he's got a rolled cigarette, Hanging out his mouth" as a constructionist representation. With a rolled cigarette hanging out of their mouth, the lyrics create a particular image or portrayal of a person in this line who is called a "cowboy kid." These descriptions focus more on conjuring up a vivid and imaginative image.
5.	“Yeah, he found a six-shooter gun, In his dad's closet with the box of fun things”	The lyrics reveal that Robert has discovered a firearm in his father's closet. The "box of fun things" implies that his father may have kept the gun as a novelty or collector's item. The presence of the gun introduces the element of potential violence into the narrative.	In Constructiconist terms, envision an image featuring a six-shooter gun emerging from a mysterious box labeled "fun things" found within a dad's closet, encapsulating the lyrics "Yeah, he found a six-shooter gun, In his dad's closet with the box of fun things." This illustration emphasizes the discovery of a potentially dangerous item in an unexpected context.
6.	“I don’t even know what But he’s coming for you; yeah, he’s coming for you”	This line creates a sense of impending danger. The ambiguity of not knowing what Robert is planning heightens the tension in the song, as the listener is left to wonder about his intentions.	A Constructiconist representation could feature an enigmatic figure approaching, surrounded by question marks or ambiguity, capturing the uncertainty expressed in the lyrics "I don't even know what, But he's coming for you; yeah, he's coming for you." The imagery should evoke a sense of impending arrival with an unclear motive.
7.	“Daddy works a long day, He be coming home late; yeah, he's coming home late”	The mention of Robert's father working late adds a layer of family dynamics to the narrative. It suggests that Robert may not have a strong parental presence in his life, which can be a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency.	Create a Constructiconist depiction showcasing a weary figure representing the father working a long day, arriving home late. Use visual elements like a clock, tired expressions, and a late-night setting to convey the sentiment in the lyrics "Daddy works a long day, He be coming home late; yeah, he's coming home late”.

## 2. Representation

Based on the topic raised and also the lyrics studied, it provides a lesson that juvenile delinquency must be overcome, especially juvenile delinquency which tends to cause social impacts along with negative responses from society. In the lyrics, pumped kick juvenile delinquency begins with the desire to know new things or try something that has never been tried, the impact can sometimes be satisfying or have an impact that creates unrest in several countries. Juvenile delinquency is considered taboo, as described in the lyrics of the song, which gives the impression of wanting to try new things, especially killing someone who causes unrest within them. Wardhaugh (2006: 238-239) explained, taboo words are certain things that people cannot talk about. It is avoided not because it cannot be talked about, but because it can cause fear or embarrassment. According to Ohoiwutun (2007: 94), something considered taboo reflects the local customs and culture. But of course, behind this is the action caused by mental illness which is getting worse and skyrocketing among teenagers. From these actions we can also know that there are many factors that cause juvenile delinquency, including bullying and also a lack of love and attention from the family. The lack of attention given by parents to their children sometimes causes the child to become lonely and often causes problems in the surrounding environment. Indirectly, Pumped up Kicks is a song that was created to invite and make us aware of how important mental health is, especially for teenagers.

In American culture, guns are legalized because they can be used to kill people, but According to the criminology book "Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People" by Henigan (2016: 256), the culture of violence and Subcultures are a dangerous combination. This encourages people to feel entitled to own guns to protect themselves from danger. By banning guns, this regulation will harm law-abiding citizens who cannot protect themselves from criminals. A study by J.D. Prisoners Wright and Rossi (1985) found that rather than reducing crime in violent urban environments through gun control, endemic violence in these areas needed to be reduced, thereby reducing the need to carry firearms gas. In US, smoking culture and bullying are two different problems, yet they both have detrimental effects on people and the community. Bullying is a common problem in the United States, with a significant number of students reporting physical, verbal, social, and electronic bullying, according to multiple studies. Bullying was common in the US in 2009: 20.8% of cases involved physical bullying, 53.6% involved verbal bullying, 51.4% involved social bullying, and 13.6% involved technological bullying. Victims of bullying may experience depressive symptoms, shock, and low self-esteem, among other negative outcomes. On the other hand, when schools or authorities do little to stop bullying, the practice may become more common.

Based on many individuals smoking cigarettes and other tobacco products, smoking culture is also a major problem in US. With over 480,000 deaths annually, smoking is the greatest preventable cause of death in United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Many people continue to smoke despite the health dangers because of addiction, peer pressure, and other factors.

## CONCLUSION

From the results of the analysis of juvenile delinquency in the lyrics of the song "pumped up kick" by dissecting the lyrics to find out broader cultural values and anxieties through the lens of cultural studies. The researchers can conclude in general that the juvenile delinquent revealed from the lyrics of the song is a teenager who loses his mind and is haunted by feelings of revenge and is struggling with mental health problems and thoughts of killing, resulting in indiscriminate murders being committed at school. This research examines how the song depicts themes of youth violence, alienation, and the consequences of abandonment. Each lyric also has a meaning which explains the life of the killer until he finally carried out the action and also everything happened due to the lack of support and love from parents which was the cause. The study showed that the juvenile delinquency revealed in the song's lyrics are a minor who is struggling with mental health issues and homicidal thoughts, school violence, and gun violence in teenagers. The researchers created this research to realize and increase knowledge about the many factors that cause juvenile delinquency and social issues among teenagers.

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