

Unveiling Emotional Resonance: A Musical Discourse Analysis of Taylor Swift's 'Midnights Album' and Its Impact on "Swifties"

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examined Taylor Swift's Midnights album's stylistic devices, thematic elements, and audience reception, employing a qualitative research design. The corpus consisted of the album's thirteen (13) songs, analyzed through the lens of Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, encompassing description, interpretation, and explanation, and supplemented by I. R. Galperin's theory of stylistic devices. Additionally, focus group discussions with Swifties provided insights into fan reception. The analysis identified 135 stylistic devices in the album's lyrics, including metaphor (61 instances, 45.19%), imagery (22 cases, 16.30%), simile (13 instances, 9.63%), Hyperbole (8 instances, 5.93%), personification (8 cases, 5.93%), allusion (3 instances, 2.22%), juxtaposition (1 instance, 1%), epistrophe (1 instance, 1%), and rhyme (1 instance, 1%). The recurring thematic elements in the album encompassed self-realization, self-empowerment, escape and solitude, regret and loss, vulnerability, control and manipulation, reclaiming independence, social pressure and expectation, emotional resonance, emotional detachment, emotional turmoil, acceptance, and rejecting conformity. Swifties' reception of the album revealed emergent themes, including self-reflection, self-reliance, emotional acceptance, love, vulnerability, relatability, anxiety, and pain. This study highlights the complex interplay between stylistic expression, thematic depth, and audience engagement in contemporary music discourse, offering insights into the cultural and emotional impact of Taylor Swift's Midnights.

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1. Introduction

Taylor Swift's Midnights album has established itself as a cultural and commercial phenomenon, breaking numerous records within its release week. The album dominated the entire top 10 of the Billboard Hot 100 and achieved unprecedented streaming and sales milestones, solidifying its place as Swift's most successful release to date (Carlin, 2022). The album's songs delve into deeply personal themes such as insecurity, shame, guilt, and fantasies of retaliation—emotions and experiences that resonate with listeners and keep them captivated long after midnight (Carlin, 2022). Swift's ability to craft lyrics that intertwine her narratives with universal emotions has made her music worthy of scholarly attention. According to Boonjoon (2018), her lyrical composition reflects a sophisticated interplay of linguistic stylistics, embedding messages that often mirror her life stories and experiences. Since her debut in 2006, Swift has consistently transcended musical genres, evolving from country to pop, indie folk, and, more recently, synth-pop, all while retaining the power to influence her audience through language (Morris, 2024; Abbas et al., 2024; .Tennisanna et al., 2024).

As Swift's artistry continues to evolve, her lyrical compositions have grown increasingly sophisticated, revealing more profound layers of craft and intentionality (Kheraj, 2022). These songs serve as authentic linguistic artifacts, resonating with a diverse audience of "Swifties" across different educational backgrounds, cultures, and interpretations. Ósze (2023) highlights the importance of examining Swift's use of stylistic devices to uncover the cultural, social, and personal contexts embedded in her lyrics. This perspective aligns with Beard's (2000) assertion that studying the language of songs offers insights into how linguistic choices reveal thematic elements and contextual complexities. As Bayram (2010) observes, language in songwriting is not merely a vehicle for expression but a deliberate tool for crafting meaning, as every musical choice is inherently intertwined with linguistic preparation and execution.

Furthermore, Halliday (2007) provides a valuable framework for analyzing how language conveys attitudes, emotions, and social relationships in artistic compositions. This analytical lens supports a deeper understanding of the thematic and stylistic dimensions of song lyrics, which often reflect the songwriter's cultural and personal identity.

Several studies have explored the linguistic phenomena in Taylor Swift's discography. For instance, Siallagan et al. (2017) analyzed figurative language and imagery in the lyrics of Swift's 1989 album, while Alek et al. (2020) conducted a critical discourse analysis of Swift's song "Look What You Made Me Do," focusing on its lyrics, symbolism, and visual representations. More recently, Putra et al. (2023) examined the interpersonal meaning in Swift's song "Anti-Hero." While these studies have provided valuable insights into Swift's earlier works, none have focused on the *Midnights* album, representing a significant evolution in her artistic and linguistic repertoire.

In light of these considerations, this study aims to analyze the lyrical content of Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album. Specifically, it seeks to (a) identify the stylistic devices employed in the album, (b) explore its thematic elements, and (c) examine the reception of the album by Swift's fanbase, known as "Swifties." By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between linguistic artistry, thematic resonance, and audience engagement in contemporary music.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, explicitly utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Framework and Galperin's (1981) Stylistic Features. The descriptive qualitative method was selected to explore and analyze Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album's stylistic devices, thematic elements, and audience reception. This approach allowed the researcher to systematically describe and interpret the data while uncovering social, cultural, and personal contexts within the lyrics. As Creswell (2009) explains, qualitative research provides a means to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups ascribe to a social phenomenon. Patton (2002) further underscores that qualitative analysis seeks to identify emerging themes, patterns, and insights, addressing the "what," "how," or "why" of a phenomenon rather than relying on numerical metrics.

The corpus of the study consisted of thirteen (13) songs from Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album, including "Lavender Haze," "Maroon," "Anti-Hero," "Snow on the Beach," "You're on Your Own, Kid," "Midnight Rain," "Question...?," "Vigilante Shit," "Bejeweled," "Labyrinth," "Karma," "Sweet Nothing," and "Mastermind." The lyrics, sourced from Taylor Swift's official digital platform, The Taylor Swift Nation, were used as the primary data. These texts served as authentic linguistic material for analysis, filtered through Fairclough's CDA framework and Galperin's stylistic features to identify linguistic and thematic patterns.

Data collection involved obtaining the complete lyrics of the selected songs, which were then organized and segmented for analysis. The lyrics were broken down into smaller units, such as clauses and lines, as recommended by Halliday (2004), who emphasized that linguistic analysis begins at the textual level to uncover functional meaning. Coding was employed as the primary method for organizing and analyzing the data. Following Creswell's (2009) guidelines, text segments were labeled with specific terms reflective of stylistic devices and themes, using a combination of manual coding and digital tools for accuracy. MAXQDA software was utilized to facilitate coding and streamline the analysis process.

The analysis was conducted in three stages, aligning with Fairclough's CDA framework. At the text level, stylistic devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, and other linguistic features were identified and categorized based on Galperin's stylistic framework. These stylistic devices were highlighted and color-coded to provide clarity and aid in interpretation. The second stage involved interpretation, examining the relationship between linguistic features and the contextual factors surrounding the songs. Finally, the broader societal and cultural implications of the album's lyrics were explored at the explanation level. This multi-level analysis allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how Taylor Swift's lyrics articulate personal and social themes.

To complement the textual analysis, focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with a diverse group of Taylor Swift fans, commonly referred to as Swifties. The participants ranged in age from 16 to 32, representing a variety of professional and educational backgrounds, including high school and college students, a nurse, a banker, a housewife, an entrepreneur, and teachers. This diverse sample ensured a broad spectrum of perspectives, enriching the analysis with interpretations influenced by different life stages and experiences. The FGDs employed semi-structured question guides, encouraging participants to share their emotional responses and personal interpretations of the album. This qualitative approach captured key audience themes: self-reflection, emotional resilience, and vulnerability. Responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed alongside the song lyrics, providing a holistic understanding of the album's impact.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, the analysis underwent a rigorous review by a panel of experts in qualitative research, discourse analysis, and stylistics. This panel evaluated the coding processes, thematic categorizations, and interpretations to ensure that the findings were grounded in the data and aligned with the study's objectives. Feedback and recommendations from the panel were incorporated into the analysis to enhance its reliability and accuracy. Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent from FGD participants and maintaining confidentiality.

The methodological approach adopted in this study enabled a detailed exploration of Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album, providing insights into her work's linguistic artistry, thematic depth, and audience reception. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis and stylistic analysis, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how contemporary music serves to express complex personal and social narratives.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Stylistic Devices Taylor Swift's *Midnights* Album

The analysis of Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album uncovered a range of stylistic devices employed in the lyrics, revealing their contribution to the album's thematic and emotional depth. As shown in Table 1, metaphor emerged as the most frequently utilized device, accounting for 45.19% of the total occurrences. Metaphor plays a critical role in Swift's lyrical composition, as it conveys abstract ideas with vivid and relatable imagery. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that metaphors allow for mapping complex or unfamiliar concepts onto more familiar ones, thereby fostering understanding and emotional resonance. The predominance of metaphor in *Midnights* underscores its centrality in evoking the introspective and contemplative themes that define the album.

Imagery, which constitutes 16.30% of the identified devices, ranks second in frequency, highlighting Swift's deliberate effort to create sensory-rich descriptions. Imagery enhances the experiential quality of the lyrics, immersing listeners in the narrative's emotional and visual landscapes. Abrams (1999) defines imagery as language that appeals to the senses, and in *Midnights*, this device draws listeners into vivid mental pictures that resonate deeply with their emotions and personal experiences. This aligns with Dancygier and Sweetser's (2014) findings on the role of imagery in fostering emotional connections in artistic works.

Simile, contributing 10% of the stylistic devices, further reflects Swift's ability to create relatable and descriptive comparisons. As noted by Akram et al. (2022), Similes enhances lyrical depth by contrasting dissimilar elements to draw attention to specific characteristics or emotions. For example, Swift's use of simile in "Sweet like honey" (*Karma*, Pos. 14) provides a tangible comparison that intensifies the song's emotional tone. Tulung et al. (2021) add that similes enrich textual descriptions, making them more enjoyable and accessible to audiences.

Personification and Hyperbole, each accounting for 6% of the identified devices, contribute to the expressive dynamism of the lyrics. Personification, which attributes human characteristics to inanimate objects or abstract concepts, enhances the relatability and emotional impact of the songs. Lazar (2003) emphasizes that personification draws listeners closer to the narrative by humanizing abstract concepts, as demonstrated in "Blurring out my periphery" (*Snow On The Beach*, Pos. 22). Hyperbole, on the other hand, employs deliberate exaggeration to amplify emotional intensity and dramatic effect. Knickerbocker and Reninger (1985) argue that Hyperbole is a critical device in artistic texts, as it evokes heightened emotions, as illustrated by "I waited ages to see you live" (*You're on Your Own, Kid*, Pos. 11).

Irony, representing 9% of the devices, adds a layer of complexity and subtle contradiction to Swift's lyrics. According to Knickerbocker and Reninger (1985), irony juxtaposes apparent meanings with underlying truths, compelling listeners to engage critically with the text. For example, "All that you ever wanted from me was sweet nothin'" (*Sweet Nothing*, Pos. 14) highlights the disparity between expectation and reality, resonating with themes of vulnerability and emotional conflict. Keraf (2009) notes that irony often provokes reflective and thought-provoking responses.

Other stylistic devices, including allusion (2%), rhyme (3%), and less frequent ones such as metonymy, epithet, juxtaposition, and epistrophe, contribute to the album's linguistic richness and aesthetic appeal. Although these devices occur less frequently, their strategic placement enhances the thematic and rhythmic structure of the lyrics. For instance, rhyme, as posited by Hamer (1930), enhances musicality and memorability, as seen in "It's fine to fake it 'til you make it, 'til you do, 'til it's true" (*Snow On The Beach*, Pos. 25–26). Similarly, allusion enriches the interpretive possibilities of the text by referencing broader cultural or historical contexts (Siallagan et al., 2017).

The findings of this study align with previous research on Swift's discography, such as Siallagan et al. (2017), which noted the dominance of metaphor and imagery in the 1989 album. However, *Midnights* reflects an even greater emphasis on metaphor, suggesting an evolution toward more introspective and emotionally layered themes. The album demonstrates Swift's mastery of linguistic creativity, using these devices to explore complex emotions, foster relatability, and craft vivid narratives.

The stylistic devices identified in *Midnights* serve as integral elements in constructing its lyrical and thematic depth. The frequent use of metaphor, imagery, and simile highlights Swift's ability to blend linguistic artistry with emotional resonance. Meanwhile, the strategic incorporation of less common devices adds richness and complexity to the lyrics, demonstrating her versatility as a lyricist. These findings underscore the significance of stylistic analysis in understanding the interplay between language and emotion in contemporary music. Future research may build on these insights by examining how these stylistic devices interact with musical composition to create a holistic artistic experience.

Table 1. Frequency Stylistic Device and Lyrics

Stylistic Devices	Frequency (%)	Count	Lyrics
Allusion	2%	3	<i>I spy with my little tired eye (Sweet Nothing, Pos. 2)</i>
Epistrophe	1%	1	<i>It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me (Anti-Hero, Pos. 13)</i>
Epithet	1%	1	<i>Spider boy, king of thieves (Karma, Pos. 18)</i>
Hyperbole	6%	8	<i>I waited ages to see you live (You on Your Own Kid, Pos. 11)</i>
Imagery	16%	22	<i>I can still make the whole place shimmer (Bejeweled, Pos. 9)</i>
Irony	9%	12	<i>All that you ever wanted from me was sweet nothin' (Sweet Nothing, Pos. 14)</i>
Juxtaposition	1%	1	<i>I'll stare directly at the sun but never in the mirror (Anti-Hero, Pos. 15)</i>
Metaphor	45.19%	61	<i>And I'm a monster on the hill (Anti-Hero, Pos. 18)</i>
Metonymy	1%	1	<i>Someone told his white-collar crimes to the FBI (Vigilante Shit, Pos. 31)</i>
Personification	6%	8	<i>Blurring out my periphery (Snow On The Beach, Pos. 22)</i>
Rhyme	3%	4	<i>it's fine to fake it 'til you make it 'Til you do, 'til it's true (Snow On The Beach, Pos. 25-26)</i>
Simile	10%	13	<i>Sweet like honey (Karma, Pos. 14)</i>

3.2 Emerging Themes in Taylor Swift's *Midnights* Album

The thematic analysis of Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album reveals a multifaceted exploration of human experiences, emphasizing self-awareness, personal growth, and emotional vulnerability. Table 2 presents the thematic elements and their respective lyrics, showcasing the depth and diversity of narratives embedded in the album.

a. Self-Realization

Self-realization emerges as the most prevalent theme, highlighting introspection and personal growth. Lyrics such as "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me" (*Anti-Hero*, Pos. 27) illustrate Swift's candid acknowledgment of personal flaws and the journey towards self-awareness. Swift's work often reflects themes of self-reliance, individuality, and empowerment, which are central to her broader lyrical narrative (Marwah & Suswanto, 2023). The recurrent focus on self-realization in *Midnights* aligns with findings on how music fosters self-awareness and encourages personal reflection (McFarland & Alvaro, 2000).

b. Self-Empowerment

Themes of self-empowerment permeate the album, as seen in “Best believe I’m still bejeweled / When I walk into the room” (Bejeweled, Pos. 7–9). These lyrics metaphorically express confidence and resilience in the face of criticism and adversity. As a recurring theme in Swift’s work, empowerment emphasizes reclaiming agency and asserting individuality (Rohmiyati et al., 2023). According to Max et al. (2023), Swift’s narrative often emphasizes reclaiming agency and asserting individuality, reflecting her journey as an artist navigating personal and professional challenges.

c. Escape and Solitude

Escape and solitude are central themes, capturing a desire for freedom and autonomy. For example, the line “I didn’t choose this town, I dream of getting out” (You’re on Your Own, Kid, Pos. 8) reflects a longing for liberation from constraints. Lyrics that express such personal struggles resonate with listeners and offer a framework for navigating adversity (Gawa, 2023). Further, Putra et al. (2023) observe that such lyrics resonate with listeners facing similar struggles, emphasizing accountability and personal agency in overcoming challenges.

d. Regret and Loss

The album poignantly addresses themes of regret and loss, as demonstrated in “And I lost you / The one I was dancin’ with” (Maroon, Pos. 25–26). These lyrics encapsulate the complexities of heartbreak and nostalgia, inviting listeners to reflect on their own experiences with loss. By articulating such emotions, Swift fosters a sense of shared vulnerability and connection with her audience. Additionally, These lines reflect the complexities of heartbreak and nostalgia, themes explored extensively in Swift’s storytelling (Harrison & Ringrow, 2022).

e. Vulnerability

Vulnerability is another recurring theme, characterized by lyrics such as “You know how scared I am of elevators” (Labyrinth, Pos. 6). Lazar (2003) explains that such expressions humanize the narrative, drawing listeners closer to the artist’s emotional world. Swift’s candid portrayal of fear and insecurity allows her audience to connect with her on a profoundly personal level. Moreover, Swift’s use of figurative language and personal anecdotes draws listeners into her emotional world, fostering intimacy and connection (Liao, 2020).

f. Control and Manipulation

The theme of control and manipulation is explored in lyrics like “What if I told you I’m a mastermind?” (Mastermind, Pos. 14). Max et al. (2023) highlight how these narratives reveal Swift’s ability to navigate power dynamics and reclaim agency. These lyrics’ strategic and deliberate tone reflects the artist’s empowerment in overcoming external and internal challenges. Swift’s songs often reflect her ability to navigate power dynamics, showcasing a narrative of empowerment and strategic agency (Tulung et al., 2023).

g. Reclaiming Independence

Reclaiming independence is a prominent theme, as seen in “You’re on Your Own, Kid / You always have been” (You’re on Your Own, Kid, Pos. 25–26). These lyrics emphasize resilience and self-reliance, resonating with listeners who value autonomy and strength in the face of adversity.

h. Social Pressure and Expectation

Social pressures and expectations are deftly addressed in “No deal, the 1950s shit they want from me” (Lavender Haze, Pos. 25). These lines critique societal norms, highlighting the tension between individuality and conformity. These lines critique societal norms, emphasizing individuality and authenticity (Putri et al., 2022).

i. Emotional Resonance and Turmoil

The album masterfully conveys emotional resonance, as exemplified by “So scarlet, it was maroon” (Maroon, Pos. 16), and emotional turmoil, as captured in “Lost in the Labyrinth of My Mind” (Labyrinth, Pos. 15). These themes delve into the complexities of human emotions, reflecting Swift’s lyrical ability to articulate complex emotional experiences (Siallagan et al., 2017).

j. Acceptance

Acceptance is a key theme in *Midnights*, with lyrics such as “To you, I can admit / That I’m just too soft for all of it” (Sweet Nothing, Pos. 32–33) showcasing personal growth and self-awareness. Putra et al. (2023) assert that such lines encourage introspection and foster a sense of peace with one’s vulnerabilities and imperfections.

k. Rejecting Conformity

Finally, rejecting conformity is powerfully articulated in “Familiarity breeds contempt / Don’t put me in the basement” (Bejeweled, Pos. 53–54). Max et al. (2023) interpret these lyrics as a critique of societal limitations, emphasizing the importance of individuality and self-expression.

The thematic elements identified in *Midnights* reflect Taylor Swift’s capacity to capture the intricacies of human experience. From self-realization and empowerment to vulnerability and acceptance, the album navigates a broad emotional spectrum, resonating deeply with its audience. By integrating personal narratives with universal themes, Swift creates a lyrical tapestry that is both introspective and relatable. These findings align with contemporary studies on thematic analysis in music, underscoring the transformative power of lyrical storytelling in fostering emotional connection and understanding. Future research could further examine how these themes interact with the album’s musical composition to create a cohesive and impactful artistic experience.

Table 2. Thematic Elements and Lyrics

Themes	Lyrics
SELF-REALIZATION	<i>It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me (I'm the problem, it's me)</i> (<i>Anti-Hero</i> , Pos. 27) <i>I was making my own name</i> <i>Chasing that fame (Midnight Rain, Pos. 37-38)</i> <i>I swear that it was something 'cause I don't remember who I was</i> <i>Before you painted all my nights a color I've searched for since</i> (<i>Question</i> , Pos. 5-6)
SELF-EMPOWERMENT	<i>What's a girl gonna do?</i> <i>A diamond's gotta shine (Bejeweled, Pos. 45-46)</i> <i>Flexing like a goddamn acrobat</i> <i>Me and Karma vibe like that (Karma, Pos. 16-17)</i> <i>Ladies always rise above (Vigilante Shit, Pos. 26)</i>
ESCAPE AND SOLITUDE	<i>Staring at the ceiling with you (Lavender Haze, Pos. 4)</i> <i>Flying in a dream, stars by the pocketful (Snow On The Beach, Pos. 29)</i> <i>I didn't choose this town. I dream of getting out (You're on Your Own Kid, Pos. 8)</i>
REGRET AND LOSS	<i>And I lost you</i> <i>The one I was dancin' with (Maroon, Pos. 25-26)</i> <i>And I never think of him</i> <i>Except on midnights like this (Midnight Rain, Pos. 54-55)</i> <i>When she said it was too much</i> <i>Do you wish you could still touch her? (Question, Pos. 18-19)</i> <i>You know how scared I am of elevators (Labyrinth, Pos. 6)</i>

	<i>This this the first time I've felt the need to confess (Mastermind, Pos. 37)</i>
VULNERABILITY	<i>No one wanted to play with me as a little kid (Mastermind, Pos. 34)</i>
	<i>Strategy sets the scene for the tale</i> <i>I'm the wind in our free-flowing sails (Mastermind, Pos. 23-24)</i> <i>none of it was accidental (Mastermind, Pos. 26)</i>
CONTROL AND MANIPULATION	<i>I laid the groundwork and then, just like clockwork (Mastermind, Pos. 28)</i>
	<i>You're on your own, kid</i> <i>You always have been (You're on Your Own Kid, Pos. 25-26)</i> <i>I'll run away (You're on Your Own Kid, Pos. 20)</i>
RECLAIMING INDEPENDENCE	<i>I went dancin' all night</i> <i>And you can try to change my mind (Bejeweled, Pos. 42-43)</i>
	<i>All they keep asking me (all they keep asking me)</i> <i>Is if I'm gonna be your bride (Lavender Haze, Pos. 16-17)</i> <i>No deal, the 1950s shit they want from me (Lavender Haze, Pos. 25)</i>
SOCIAL PRESSURE AND EXPECTATION	<i>Did you ever have someone kiss you in a crowded room?</i> <i>And every single one of your friends was making fun of you (Question, Pos. 12-13)</i>
	<i>The burgundy on my T-shirt when you splashed your wine into me (Maroon, Pos. 13)</i> <i>So scarlet, it was maroon (Maroon, Pos. 16)</i>
EMOTIONAL RESONANCE	
EMOTIONAL DETACHMENT	<i>You don't ever say too much</i> <i>And you don't really read into</i> <i>My melancholia (Lavender Haze, Pos. 5-7)</i> <i>But you aren't even listening (yeah, oh yeah) (Lavender Haze, Pos. 22)</i> <i>Get it off your chest</i> <i>Get it off my desk (get it off my desk) (Lavender Haze, Pos. 30-31)</i>
	<i>"It only hurts this much right now" (Labyrinth, Pos. 2)</i> <i>Lost in the labyrinth of my mind (Labyrinth, Pos. 15)</i>
EMOTIONAL TURMOIL	<i>Break up, break free, break through, break down (Labyrinth, Pos. 16)</i>
	<i>Ask me what I've learned from all those years</i> <i>Ask me what I earned from all those tears (Karma, Pos. 34-35)</i>
ACCEPTANCE	<i>To you, I can admit</i> <i>That I'm just too soft for all of it (Sweet Nothing, Pos. 32-33)</i>
REJECTING CONFORMITY	<i>Familiarity breeds contempt</i> <i>Don't put me in the basement (Bejeweled, Pos. 53-54)</i>

3.3 Swifties' Reception of Taylor Swift's *Midnights* Album

The focused group discussion (FGD) with Taylor Swift's listeners (Swifties) revealed the interplay between personal context and the interpretation of *Midnights*' lyrical themes. As presented in Table 3, the participants shared essential thematic interpretations, including self-reflection, self-reliance, emotional resonance, acceptance, love, vulnerability, relatability, anxiety, and pain. The findings highlight the universality of Swift's music, as her storytelling invites listeners to project their own experiences onto her lyrical narratives. Setiawati and Maryani (2018) note that Swift's songs often draw from her personal life, allowing audiences to navigate their own complexities through her introspective lens.

a. Self-Reflection

Self-reflection emerged as a significant theme, resonating with listeners who perceived the album as an invitation to introspect. Lyrics such as "It's me, hi, I'm the problem, it's me" (*Anti-Hero*, Pos. 27) prompted participants to confront their own flaws and growth. This aligns with Mansfield and Seligman's (2021) findings that Swift's introspective narratives encourage listeners to engage in deep contemplation, fostering a reflective journey through themes of love, loss, and identity.

b. Self-Reliance

The theme of self-reliance reflects Swift's emphasis on independence and inner strength, inspiring listeners to trust themselves and forge their own paths. For instance, the lyrics "You're on Your Own, kid / You always have been" (*You're on Your Own, Kid*, Pos. 25–26) resonated with participants who viewed the song as a declaration of resilience. Research underscores that Swift's lyrics often serve as anthems of empowerment, guiding listeners toward self-sufficiency and personal strength (Marwah & Suswanto, 2023).

c. Emotional Resonance

Emotions pervade Swift's music, capturing a spectrum of human experiences. Participants highlighted the emotional depth of *Midnights*, noting its ability to evoke heartbreak, empowerment, and nostalgia. For example, one participant stated, "Listening to the songs in *Midnights* led to a range of emotions, from introspection and nostalgia to empowerment and defiance." This resonates with findings that Swift's music reflects a shared emotional state, allowing listeners to connect with her experiences on a personal level (Harrison & Ringrow, 2022).

d. Acceptance

Acceptance was identified as a poignant theme, illustrating the journey of embracing imperfections and finding peace. Lyrics such as "To you, I can admit / That I'm just too soft for all of it" (*Sweet Nothing*, Pos. 32–33) reflect Swift's vulnerability and encourage listeners to embrace their authentic selves. Such themes align with the therapeutic value of music in helping individuals reconcile their emotions and imperfections (Liao, 2020).

e. Love

Love serves as a cornerstone of *Midnights*, weaving tales of romance, heartache, and longing. The lyrics "I think Taylor wanted us to feel the complexities of relationships and identities in her *Midnights* album" were cited by participants as emblematic of Swift's ability to capture the highs and lows of love. Scholars note that Swift's love songs resonate deeply with audiences as they reflect the universality of romantic experiences (Putri et al., 2022).

f. Vulnerability

Vulnerability, as Swift's hallmark, was emphasized by participants who described *Midnights* as her "most vulnerable era." Lyrics such as "It is because of the way the tracks are being written by Taylor Swift. The songs feel so personal because of their vulnerability" reflect her openness and relatability. Vulnerability in Swift's lyrics fosters a strong sense of connection with her audience, particularly among younger listeners, as they relate to her candid expressions of fear and insecurity (Brown, 2012).

g. Relatability

Relatability is a defining characteristic of Swift's music, with participants highlighting its ability to resonate across diverse experiences. One participant noted, "The album feels more personal and easier to relate to." Scholars suggest that Swift's skillful blending of personal and universal themes allows fans to see themselves reflected in her music (Setiawati & Maryani, 2018).

h. Anxiety

Anxiety, captured in lyrics such as “Lost in the labyrinth of my mind” (Labyrinth, Pos. 15), reflects the human struggle with insecurity and uncertainty. Participants noted that these introspective themes offer solace, validating their own experiences with anxiety. Research highlights the role of music in normalizing discussions about mental health, providing listeners with a safe space for reflection (Mansfield & Seligman, 2021).

i. Pain

Pain, a recurring theme in Swift’s discography, is explored through heartbreak, betrayal, and personal growth. Participants highlighted the cathartic power of songs like “The Pain of Relationships” as they resonate with listeners navigating their own adversities. Swift’s vivid imagery amplifies her narratives’ emotional impact, emphasizing the depth of human experience (Siallagan et al., 2017).

The reception of *Midnights* among Swifties underscores the universal appeal of Taylor Swift’s music, as her lyrical narratives resonate deeply with audiences through themes of self-reflection, emotional resonance, and vulnerability. By weaving personal experiences into her storytelling, Swift fosters a sense of connection and understanding that transcends individual contexts. These findings align with existing literature on Swift’s impact as a storyteller, emphasizing music’s therapeutic and transformative power. Future research could explore the interplay between lyrical themes and musical composition, examining how these elements together shape listeners’ emotional engagement.

Table 3. Listeners’ Personal Context and Interpretation

ESSENTIAL THEMES	THEMATIC STATEMENTS
	<i>“In my perspective, the songs in “midnights album” are all about self-criticism.” - Informant B</i>
SELF-REFLECTION	<i>“Whenever I listen to Taylor’s Midnights Album, self-reflection” Informant A</i>
	<i>“I’m about to say that your emotions are about feeling in love. Blaming oneself.” Informant F</i>
SELF-RELIANCE	<i>“It captures a sense of self-reliance that many individuals can relate to in their own experiences.” Informant G</i>
	<i>“You’re on your own, kid” talks about independence and trying to figure out things on your own,” Informant C</i>
	<i>“Taylor Swift’s narrative voice in the album is soft and emotional.” Informant A</i>
	<i>“Listening to the songs in Midnights Album led to a range of emotions, from introspection and nostalgia to empowerment and defiance.” Informant D</i>
EMOTIONAL	<i>“I think the album is more emotional, from heartbreak to acceptance, mirroring our own personal journeys in life.” Informant J</i>
	<i>“As an avid listener of this album since 2022, the specific emotion I usually associate with this album is the feeling of being in different phases of being in love.” Informant I</i>

ACCEPTANCE	<i>"We always aspire to love and be loved, and acceptance is also something that we can relate to." - Informant H</i>
	<i>"There are a lot of recurring themes like acceptance." Informant G</i>
	<i>"I think Taylor wanted us to feel the complexities of relationships and identities in her Midnights album- that it is not all rainbows and sunshine in love and that relationship." Informant D</i>
LOVE	<i>"I usually associate this with the feeling of being in different phases of being in love." Informant I</i>
	<i>"There are themes in the album that I can relate to, including the intricacy of love." Informant G</i>
	<i>"You're on your own, kid. You always have been." The song might be all about a one-sided love affair." Informant E</i>
VULNERABLE	<i>"I can interpret the album as Taylor Swift's most vulnerable era." Informant B</i>
	<i>"It is because of the way the tracks are being written by Taylor Swift. The songs feel so personal because of their vulnerability." Informant J</i>
RELATABILITY	<i>"The album feels more personal and easier to relate to." Informant H</i>
	<i>"There are themes in the album that I can relate to." Informant F</i>
ANXIETY	<i>"I can relate to some of Taylor's portrayal of relationships in the song Labyrinth. I came from a past relationship that gave me anxiety." Informant A</i>
	<i>"Listening to her songs feels there's so much anxiety." Informant H</i>
PAIN	<i>"The pain of relationship." Informant C</i>
	<i>"Your pain or story, your relationships, which is a song, especially midnights album." Informant B</i>
	<i>"Very strong humor lines like a feeling and pain." Informant G</i>
	<i>"I wanted that pain which is in the past relationship."</i>

Informant E

3.4 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the fields of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and stylistics by illustrating how Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album operates as a rich site of linguistic, discursive, and societal analysis. Using Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Framework, this study demonstrates how Swift's work exemplifies the interconnectedness of textual, discursive, and social dimensions of meaning-making in music. At the textual level, Swift's use of stylistic devices, such as metaphor, imagery, and Hyperbole, underscores the power of linguistic choices in constructing emotionally evocative and cognitively stimulating narratives. This aligns with Galperin's (1981) stylistic theory, which highlights the role of expressive means in enhancing communication and evoking emotional responses in audiences.

Beyond textual analysis, the study underscores Swift's ability to engage with discursive practices, including the negotiation of identity and critique of societal norms, through her thematic and narrative construction. Her lyrics engage with issues such as anxiety, self-reliance, and societal expectations, illustrating how discourse reflects and challenges broader societal dynamics, as theorized by Fairclough. For example, Swift's exploration of themes like self-acceptance and empowerment serves as a vehicle for challenging gender norms and encouraging individuality. This supports recent findings that popular music often functions as a site of discursive negotiation, where personal and social meanings intersect (Ruanglertsilp, 2022).

At the societal level, the study highlights how music functions as a medium for social cohesion and emotional connection. The reception of *Midnights* by Swifties demonstrates how personal narratives embedded in music can resonate universally, fostering solidarity and shared understanding among listeners. This aligns with contemporary research suggesting that music is a reflection of societal values and a tool for cultural transformation (Harrison & Ringrow, 2022). Swift's work exemplifies how artistic discourse bridges individual expression and collective experience, reinforcing the notion that music serves as both a mirror and a catalyst for societal change.

Moreover, this study underscores the relevance of Galperin's stylistic features in understanding the nuances of artistic discourse, particularly in how specific linguistic devices amplify emotional engagement. Recent studies on stylistics in music confirm that artists use figurative language and rhetorical devices to deepen listeners' cognitive and emotional involvement with the text (Liao, 2020).

These findings reinforce the utility of Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework in examining music as a complex discursive practice that operates across textual, cultural, and societal domains. Furthermore, they highlight the enduring relevance of Galperin's stylistic theory in elucidating how linguistic features shape meaning and emotional impact. Future research could expand on these frameworks by incorporating interdisciplinary approaches, such as musicology and psychology, to further explore how music intersects with discourse and social change.

4. Conclusion

This study comprehensively explores Taylor Swift's *Midnights* album, focusing on its stylistic devices, emerging themes, and audience reception. The findings demonstrate Swift's exceptional ability to weave universal experiences into deeply personal narratives, resonating with diverse audiences. Through stylistic analysis, the album's extensive use of figurative language, including metaphors, imagery, and rhetorical devices, enhanced the depth and relatability of its lyrical content. The thematic analysis highlighted key areas such as self-reflection, self-reliance, emotional resonance, and acceptance, which collectively capture the multifaceted nature of human experience. Audience reception further underscored the album's impact, with listeners identifying its therapeutic and empowering qualities. These elements position *Midnights* as a transformative artistic work that bridges individual narratives with shared human emotions, solidifying its cultural and artistic significance.

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