



## **IDENTIFYING THE TYPES OF STRUGGLE IN SHAWN MENDES SONG'S LYRICS**

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### ***Abstract***

*This study aims to show the type of struggle in the three songs sung by Shawn Mendes. A qualitative descriptive method was used. There are three Shawn Mendes songs discussed in this study; In My Blood, Treat You Better, and Stitches. The analysis results show that there are two kinds of struggles in the song In My Blood; internal and external struggles. The main character overcomes his problems by telling himself never to give up, doing some activities to help himself, trying to calm himself down, and asking someone for help. The title of the song, Treat You Better, has an external struggle and internal struggle. The main character's struggles are shown by helping the woman he likes, giving his lover everything she wants, and promising his lover that he will never let him down. In the last song, Stitches, there are internal and external struggles. The main character struggles to solve problems by healing his pain, believing that he can survive his pain, and receiving help from someone. The importance of this analysis is to show that the meaning of the lyrics and the story behind the song represents the struggle of the story of human life for surviving and fighting against their problems.*

**Keyword:** *Struggle, The Song's Lyric, The Main Character.*

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menunjukkan jenis perjuangan dalam ketiga lagu yang dinyanyikan oleh Shawn Mendes. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan. Ada tiga lagu Shawn Mendes yang dibahas dalam penelitian ini; *In My Blood, Treat You Better, and Stitches*. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa ada dua macam perjuangan pada lagu *In My Blood*, yaitu perjuangan internal dan eksternal. Tokoh utama mengatasi masalahnya dengan mengatakan pada dirinya sendiri untuk tidak pernah menyerah, melakukan beberapa kegiatan untuk berjuang, mencoba menenangkan diri, dan meminta bantuan dari seseorang. Judul lagu *Treat You Better* memiliki perjuangan eksternal dan perjuangan internal. Perjuangan karakter utama ditunjukkan dengan menolong wanita yang ia sukai, memberikan semua yang kekasihnya inginkan, dan berjanji kepada kekasihnya bahwa dia tidak akan pernah mengecewakannya. Dalam lagu berjudul *Stitches* terdapat perjuangan internal dan eksternal. Karakter utama berjuang untuk memecahkan masalah dengan menyembuhkan rasa sakitnya, percaya pada dirinya sendiri bahwa dia dapat bertahan dari rasa sakitnya, dan menerima bantuan dari seseorang. Pentingnya analisis

ini adalah untuk menunjukkan bahwa makna lirik dan cerita di balik lagu mewakili perjuangan kisah kehidupan manusia untuk bangkit dan berjuang dalam menghadapi masalah.

**Kata Kunci:** Perjuangan, Lirik Lagu, Tokoh Utama

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Literature existed thousands of years ago, and it is always intriguing to discuss. Each word in literature has a specific connotation. Literature as an art form has evolved into a vehicle for imaginatively expressing people's thoughts. Literature has evolved, either in concept or style. Each country in our world has a distinct literary history, owing to variances in culture and situation, but they share specific characteristics.

Generally, people have known that they are kinds of literature such as Prose, Poetry, Fiction, Non-fiction, and Drama. Van Spanckeren in (Siregar, 2018) states that as same as narratives, song or poetry can range from the sacred to the light and amusing; There are lullabies, war chants, love songs, and songs dedicated to specific activities such as children's games, gambling, various duties, magic, or dancing ceremonials. It means that a song as a part of the narrative has its character as same as other narrative works. People are very addicted to music. It can be seen through our daily life that people always

listen to music or song. The researchers choose this topic because people usually do not care about the song's character and what has she or he has been through. The music listener only concerns about the beat or the lyrics but does not care about the character's struggle in the song. This reason catches our attention on the title of the three songs as *In My Blood*, *Treat You Better*, and *Stitches*. Shawn Mendes sings those songs. Therefore, the researchers aim to find the kinds of struggle that contains in the three songs by Shawn Mendes.

## **II. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **2.1 Song and Its Types**

They are several definitions connecting to the song's term as Muldoon in (Siregar, 2018) states that in general, the term song refers to a short poem' or other collection of words placed to music or intended to be sung. Moreover, the song is another form of a poem or a collection of words given a melody and meant to be sung by many people. Marcello adds (Suhendi, 2017) that a song is a vocal composition for one or more voices performed through singing. A song may be accom-

panied by a musical instrument or performed solo. It could argue that a song has numerous identifications: Firstly, it is an artistic endeavour. Secondly, it is a vocal composition. Thirdly, it is the voice of a brief musical composition consisting of words and a lyric sung to music. A song that is sung and may be accompanied by a musical instrument or played unaccompanied.

The song as Rampur in (Quratulaini, 2017) divides it into several types;

#### 1. Classical

This song has a significant amount of traditional music.

#### 2. Country

It is easy to listen to. It is primarily composed of clean words accompanied by music pieces performed on classical guitars and other traditional instruments.

#### 3. Hip Hop

Hip hop or rap music is characterized by the performer who recites lyrics in an off-beat manner while maintaining the rhyming pattern.

#### 4. Pop

It can be said as contemporary lyrics and lively rhythms that are primarily aimed towards young culture. Pop song songwriting is more concerned with music technology and

recording than with live performance. Rhythm and effects are two critical components of pop songwriting.

#### 5. Rock

It is the most popular among teenagers and young people with distinct lead guitars, basic guitars, percussion, and keyboards.

#### 6. Metal

The metal song has a more complex tone than rock tunes. These tracks have shouting vocals with high pitches, strong guitar leads, and solid drum work.

#### 7. Ballads

Ballads are songs that feature a musical narration of a story. These are primarily calm songs. However, they may also have heavier elements.

#### 8. Dance

Dance music is rapid and has a thundering rhythmic beat. Lyrics are not given much weight in this song. Dance songs are now played at dance parties and discotheques to accompany synthesizers, drum machines, and electronic music.

#### 9. Love:

Slow songs with lyrics on love and relationships are known as love songs. These songs are commonly heard at weddings.

There are sad love songs with lyrics about breakups as well.

#### 10. Gospel

Lyrics in gospel songs are drawn from Bible verses or written solely to express Christian faith. They are sung in churches all across the world.

The three songs of Shawn Mendes that the researchers discuss in this paper as '*In My Blood*' is categorized as a ballad. The song entitled '*Treat You Better*' consists of love meaning. The last song, entitled '*Stitches*', is categorized as Pop. *Stitches* lyrics and the rhythms present teenager's characteristics.

### 2.2 Definition of Struggle and Its Kinds

According to Harrison (Diana, 2017), the struggle is a natural element of life that involves some suffering and measures our resistance to the flow of life. It could be internal or external, between us and the outer world, or between external groups. On the one hand, the sensation of emotional dissonance between opposing forces initiates the fight, and on the other side, the battle results in an emotional outcome, as stated by Further, Levykh in (Diana, 2017).

Meanwhile, Douglas (Tarigan, 2017) says that there can be no progress if there is no struggle. It means that struggle is a me-

dium to improve human's ability, so it can be understood that struggle is an absolute thing that can not be separated from human life.

There are some kinds of struggle that comes from humans themselves or outside. Bond (Nuladani, 2017) states, there are two aspects of struggles. They are internal struggle and external struggle.

#### 1. Internal Struggle.

According to Bond (Nuladani, 2017) says that internals is defined by the scars, pains, anxieties, and bad habits that mark our existence. These internal conflicts dictated our responses to our environment, situations, friends, family, and every other facet of life.

Harrison in (Diana, 2017) states that internal conflict refers to the conflict that occurs within ourselves and is caused by our attitude, desire, decision, understanding or interpretation of life, attachment to people or events, and expectation of how things should be. It means that internal struggle is the effect of a problem that comes from inside of humans themselves. It arises because of the way humans seeing and understanding something.

All those statements above tell us that internal struggle is a struggle that arisen from the human. It is also purposing to discover human's soul like their desire, temperament,

and character. It also affects how humans are seeing and understanding something. For example, someone who has faced a problem before has a different opinion about this problem from someone who faces the same problem. This person is more understand the way to overcome the problem than the new person who faces it. For example, a problem appears when people try to decide or when people try to choose.

## 2. External Struggle.

Evans (Nuladani, 2017) asserts that external conflict focuses on public outcomes rather than personal choices, on social justice rather than personal fulfilment. It can be understood that external struggle comes from the society around of the human as it occurs between or among person or with a life event, such as marital or job loss, Slankin in (Diana, 2017). So the external struggle happens in more than one person, and it is a part of a life event. For example, a problem happens when people have to face their senior in school or work, and a problem comes when they have to deal with other people.

These two classifications of struggle can be applied in the main character's struggle in the song as they reflect humans in real life. Moreover, each song undoubtedly con-

veys a message that the readers or listeners are expected to comprehend under the song's theme (Andriasta, 2016). Thus, every song has its meaning or story that it wants to tell to the people who listen to it, and every story has its character, and the character's struggle can share with the listeners.

## III. METHOD

The method of this research is descriptive qualitative. According to Parse (Ameliani, 2018), a descriptive qualitative method is a method for intensively studying phenomena to uncover patterns and themes concerning life events when the researcher is interested in a particular aspect of the phenomenon. It can be said that using descriptive qualitative, the analysis of struggle's type in the song can be done by describing the story that is implied and recovered in the lyric of the songs.

They are steps to conduct this research; formerly, the researchers select the object of the analysis. They are three songs, as in '*In My Blood*' (released in 2018), '*Treat You Better*' (released in 2016), and '*Stitches*' (released in 2015) written by Shawn Mendes. Secondly, to render the struggle's type, the researchers formulate the classification of the lyrics from the three songs in the table. Lastly, the researchers identifying the meaning in the

lyrics and telling the lyric or song story as the final results.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 1. *In My Blood*

The struggle of the main character in this song exists because of the insecurity issue, as implied in every lyric in this song. The classification of struggle in this song can be shown in the tabulated data.

**Table 1 Kinds of Struggle in *In My Blood***

Lyric of the Song	Kinds of Struggle
<i>Sometimes I feel like giving up, but I just can't 'It isn't in my blood'</i> (Line 2 and 3, Verse 1)	Internal struggle
<i>'Laying in the bathroom floor, feeling nothing. I'm overwhelmed and insecure, give me something 'I could take ease my mind slowly'</i> (Line 1-3: Verse 2)	Internal struggle
<i>Just take her home and you'll feel better Keep telling me that it gets better Does it ever?</i> (Line 4-7, Verse 2)	External Struggle
<i>'Looking through my phone again, feeling anxious Afraid to be alone again, I hate this I'm trying to find a way to chill, can't breathe, oh'</i> (Line 1-3, Verse 4)	Internal Struggle
<i>I need somebody now I need somebody now Someone to help me out I need somebody now'</i> (Verse 6)	External Struggle

The main character is experienced two types of struggle. Shawn experiences an internal struggle when he tries healing his anxiety by himself alone. It is shown in data one. The lyric of *'It isn't in my blood'* (Line 3, Verse 1) can be said as a form of 'confidence'

of Shawn. He will recover from his anxiety if he does not give up. In turn, *'Blood'* in (Oxford dictionary, 2008) means a red liquid that flows in your body and according to Webster's dictionary (Prentice Hall General Reference, 2004), *'Blood'* means red fluid in the arteries and veins. 'Blood' is functioning as Oxygen, food saris, and food waste remaining transportation. It shares all the food into the whole body and become energy. It can be said that blood is a red liquid in a human's body and having an essential role in supporting a human's life. In other words, *'it isn't in my blood'* means that the word *'Give Up'* to recover from the illness will never flow in Shawn's body or exists because he does not want his life in danger. So this lyric can be categorized as an internal struggle.

The lyric in the second data tells the listeners about the habit of Shawn that he usually lay on his bathroom floor because he feels empty. He also says that he tries to relax and does not think about his anxiety. *'I could take ease my mind slowly'* in other words, can be interpreted as an effort to cool down himself. A struggle to keep calm or to calm down him is coming from Shawn. So it shows an internal struggle.

Meanwhile, the lyric in data three, *'Just take her home and you'll feel better'* (Line 5, Verse 2), can be explained as Shawn's effort. He does not only work for himself but also works for his girlfriend. Taking his girlfriend for going home can be identified as the effects2. of their relationship. His girlfriend will be happy because Shawn takes care of her, and that act will make their relationship stronger. So Shawn experiences an external struggle.

Data four shows the meaning of anxious. It is a feeling of afraid or worried mentality troubled and eagerly wishing that someone will help the main character. Those lyrics want the listeners to know that the main character is afraid and hoping helps. Those lyrics tell the listeners about the feeling of the main character. He has anxiety because he hates to be alone, but he always feels alone, although people are always around him. The character wants to inform the listeners that he tries to solve his problem by relaxing and not worrying too much about something even he fails. An attempt to relax and does not afraid about something that does not exist yet shows the struggle of Shawn coming from himself, and nobody knows it.

The last data describes that every person needs other people in their life. Thus, every

person faces an external struggle. Shawn also experiences it by needing another person to help him recover from his illness because he cannot do it alone. It can be said that Shawn also experiences external struggles.

## **2. Treat You Better**

There are two main characters in this song; the one with a one-sided love (the main male character) and the one with a toxic relationship (the main female character), as described in the song's lyrics. Knowing these characters as presented in the song's lyrics can tell the story behind it and reveal the types of struggle in the song. This tabulated data show the kinds of the struggle.

**Table 2 The Types of Struggle in *Treat You Better***

Lyric of the Song	Kinds of Struggle
<i>'I won't lie to you I know he's just not right for you And you can tell me if I'm off But I see it on your face When you say that he's the one that you want And you're spending all your time In this wrong situation And anytime you want it to stop.' (Verse 1)</i>	External struggle
<i>'I know I can treat you better than he can, And any girl like you deserves a gentlemen' (Line 1-2, verse 2)</i>	Internal struggle
<i>'Tell me why are we wasting time on all of your wasted crying, when you should be with me instead?' (line 3, Verse 2)</i>	External Struggle
<i>'I'll stop time for you, the second you say you'd like me too.' (line 1-2, verse 3)</i>	External Struggle

Give me a sign Take my hand, we'll be fine Promise I won't let you down Just know that you don't Have to do this alone Promise I'll never let you down (Verse 5)	External Struggle
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The lyric '*I know he's just not right for you*' (line 2: Verse 1) shows that the male main character wants to tell the woman that her boyfriend is not the best choice. He even tries to convince the woman that he will never do a lie like her boyfriend if she chooses him. Meanwhile, in the lyric '*and you're spending all your time in this wrong situation*', it can be implied that the male main character has been accompanied the girl for a long time. In other words, it can be said that they are trapped in a friend zone case. This lyric has been shown the first step of the male's struggle to help the female escape from the female's toxic relationship.

Besides, the lyric of '*and you can tell me if I'm off, but I can see it in your face when you says that he's the one that you want*' (Line 3-5, Verse 1) shows the struggle that the female's face when she tries to maintain her relationship by rejecting the love that she gets from another man, even she has to suffer with her relationship. This effort is a characteristic of external struggle. She puts her love to the

wrong person and it hurts her. Then the meaning in the next lyric, '*and you can tell me if I'm off*' in another world can be said that the female forces the male to do not disturb her and drives him out for her life. This action affects her friendship with the hero of the story. So, the female is not only experiencing internal struggle but also an external struggle.

The lyric '*I know I can treat you better than he can*' (Line 1, Verse 2) tells the listeners that the male tries to convince the female. He can make her feel happier than her boyfriend does. The lyric '*and every girl like you deserves a gentleman*' (Line 2, Verse 2) shows that he tries to tell her that she needs someone who loves her with all of his heart.

According to (Oxford dictionary, 2008), 'gentleman' means a polite man and behaves well. It means the male wants to say that the female needs a man who can love her with all of his heart and a man who behaves well and treats her gently. This suggests that the male gives the female love.

In the lyric of data 3, the male tries to steal the female's attention and heart by saying that he will give everything that she wants, even he has to say something impossible to happen or something like stops the time. In

this case, the male's action purposes of showing his love.

In '*tell me why are we wasting time*' (Line 3, Verse 2) can be acknowledged that the heroine has accompanied her boyfriend for a long time. She is also enduring the pain that she gets from the relationship at the same time. The heroine cries because of her pains, but she does not want to escape from her toxic relationship. Even someone offers her freedom, love, and protection. She chooses to stay with her abusive boyfriend. She does not want to leave him. She sacrifices herself into her relationship and gets the boyfriend's love. Thus, the struggle of the fourth data can be assumed as an external struggle.

In the last lyric, the male shows his seriousness to help the female escaping from her toxic relationship. He loves her. As a consequence, he wants the female lead to be happy and being in a toxic relationship will never make her happy. This paragraph also tells that the male character wants to tell the female character that she is not alone. He will accompany her in her life, and the female needs to trust him. The male's effort to help the heroine is a part of his struggle to get love from the heroine. Thus, his struggle in this data can be included in the external struggle.

### 3. Stitches

The kinds of struggle can be caught by seeing the explanation from every lyric in the song as described in table 3.

**Table 3 Struggle in Struggle in Stitches**

Lyric of the Song	Kinds of Struggle
' <i>I thought that I've been hurt before, But no one ever let me quite this sore</i> ' (line 1-2, verse 1)	Internal struggle
' <i>Got a feeling that I'm going under, But I know that I'll make it out alive</i> ' (line 1-2, verse 2)	Internal struggle
' <i>Tripping over myself and aching. Begging you to help</i> ' (line 5-6, verse 3)	External Struggle

This lyric tells the listeners that the main character has a deep wound inside. He thinks that the pain has been enough to hurt him, but the fact is that pain grows deeper every day. He thought that his wound had been stopped to grow. It can be said as a method of Shawn to keep calm himself, and this kind of struggle can be included into an internal struggle because it is coming from Shawn himself.

The following lyric, '*but no one ever let me quite this sore*' (Line 2, verse 1), means everyone knows about his wounds, but nobody helps him bond his wounds. Every people even adds another wound. Byword 'No-one' (Line 2, verse 1) shows that people who hurt him are more than one. This word also leads the writer's understanding that he is fighting a group of people or a society.

'*Got a feeling that I'm going under*' is an idiom for someone who feels useless. It can be said that sometimes Shawn feels that he is nothing and cannot do something big, and leads him into the thought that he is useless. The following lyric, '*but I know that I'll make it out alive*', means that Shawn is confident that he will survive from the wound or sore that he has. He thinks that even people drag him down. He has to show them that he can survive. This confidence is a part of the struggle that is coming from Shawn himself. Thus, Shawn is experiencing an internal struggle.

In the lyric of '*tripping over myself, and aching*', Shawn says that he is falling because of himself, and it is hurt. In other words, all of the efforts he gives to heal his wound are failures, and he is sick because of that failure. The following lyric, '*begging you to come help*', can be said as another option that Shawn has. He has to ask other people help to heal his wound. This asking affects his relationships with other people. Thus, he is asking a help that can be included as a part of the external struggle.

## V. CONCLUSION

A song is a part of literature or narrative works that has its own story and characters. The characters of the story also have

their problem and struggle. The main character *In My Blood* struggles against his anxiety, the main characters of *Treat You Better* struggle to get love from someone, and the main character of *Stitches* struggles against a group of toxic people around him and a deep wound inside himself.

The result shows that the kinds of struggle shown in the analysis are internal struggle and external struggle. The main characters in the three songs sung by Shawn Mendes are experiencing an internal struggle and external struggle. The suggestion for further research can be conducted by other researchers interested in the songs based on the perspective of semiotic, figurative language, and poetic translation in the song.

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