



## The Representation of Mental Health Construct in Billie Eilish's Song

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### Abstract

*This research investigates how mental health concepts are depicted in the lyrics of selected songs by Billie Eilish. Although there is an increasing discourse surrounding mental health in modern popular music, there is a scarcity of literary hermeneutic analyses focusing on psychological representations within song lyrics. Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology framed by hermeneutics, this study scrutinizes five official tracks: Lovely, Everything I Wanted, Wildflower, TV, and idontwannabeyouanymore. Data were gathered using documentary methods from authenticated official lyric sources and were analyzed through meticulous close reading and contextual interpretation. The analysis is categorized into four distinct themes: implicit meanings, symbolic expressions, emotional undertones, and mental health challenges. The results indicate that the chosen lyrics consistently reflect mental health issues through motifs of anxiety, vulnerability, emotional suppression, loneliness, and internal strife. Symbolic imagery, including glass, water, fire, and physical sensations, is employed to illustrate psychological distress and emotional instability. Furthermore, the songs underscore emotional contradictions and a fluctuating self-image, portraying mental health as a multifaceted psychological condition. This research illustrates that symbolic imagery serves as a narrative mechanism that shapes psychological identity and emotional turmoil, suggesting that contemporary song lyrics can function as literary texts that articulate modern mental health narratives.*

## **1. Introduction**

English Literature investigates the ways in which language and artistic expression encapsulate human experiences, emotions, and ideas (Simbolon et al., 2025). While traditionally linked to novels, drama, and poetry, the scope of literary studies has broadened to encompass modern cultural texts, including song lyrics (Fadzillah et al., 2022). Song lyrics serve as a conduit between language and emotion, providing artistic portrayals of inner life and lived experiences (Saragih et al., 2023).

As forms of cultural expression, lyrics convey shared values, emotional states, and social significances, enabling music to act as a vehicle for identity formation and moral contemplation (Bauana, 2022). As a result, song lyrics are increasingly acknowledged as valid literary texts that can be scrutinized to gain insights into emotional and psychological experiences.

In today's culture, music has transformed from mere entertainment into a medium for articulating psychological realities. Musical expression allows listeners to reinterpret personal struggles and engage in therapeutic emotional experiences (Syafii et al., 2025). Contemporary song lyrics often tackle themes of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and self-identity, mirroring the rising public consciousness surrounding mental health. Gustavson et al. (2021) assert that interaction with music can improve emotional well-being and alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Furthermore, the use of figurative language, including metaphor, irony, and personification, enables artists to convey emotional depth and psychological intricacy (Subagiharti et al., 2022). Metaphors act as embodied expressions that facilitate the articulation of internal emotional experiences through symbolic language (Holm et al., 2025). Thus, song lyrics can be interpreted as literary texts that express layered psychological meanings and depict complex emotional states (Nur & Ahmad, 2024).

One modern artist often linked with introspective and emotionally intricate lyrics is Billie Eilish. Her music is marked by melancholic tones and explores themes of self-image, vulnerability, and emotional conflict, which deeply resonate with younger audiences. Makiling et al. (2022) analyzed selected songs by Billie Eilish and discovered that her lyrics reflect the psychological struggles faced by young listeners. In a similar vein, Siregar et al. (2025) noted that one of her songs encapsulates emotional turmoil, existential doubt, and feelings of isolation through metaphorical expressions. These studies illustrate that her lyrics frequently engage with mental health experiences, rendering her songs pertinent for literary analysis concerning psychological representation.

While themes of mental health in popular music have been the subject of prior research, many analyses tend to focus on sociological or psychological viewpoints rather than literary interpretations. Contemporary songs serve as narrative forms that depict personal struggles and emotional challenges (Barete et al., 2024). Nevertheless, investigations into Billie Eilish often center on her public persona, cultural impact, or musical style, with few studies delving into her lyrics as literary texts that represent mental health constructs.

This deficiency underscores the necessity for a literary hermeneutic analysis that interprets how mental health is articulated through language, symbolism, and emotional subtleties. The songs selected for this study were chosen for their pronounced thematic emphasis on psychological and emotional experiences.

This research utilizes a hermeneutic framework to analyze the depiction of mental health themes in selected songs by Billie Eilish. Hermeneutics focuses on interpretation through the interaction between text, context, and the reader's comprehension, allowing scholars to reveal underlying meanings and emotional subtleties (Ayu & Purnomo, 2026). By employing this methodology, the lyrics of the songs can be understood beyond their superficial meanings, uncovering more profound psychological and symbolic aspects (Evelyn, 2025).

The analysis is structured into four distinct categories: implicit meanings, symbolic representations, emotional nuances, and mental health issues. In this context, mental health constructs pertain to psychological conditions such as anxiety, loneliness, vulnerability, emotional suppression, unstable self-perception, and internal strife as depicted in the lyrics.

Accordingly, this research investigates the following questions:

RQ1: In what ways is mental health depicted through implicit meanings in selected lyrics by Billie Eilish?

RQ2: What symbolic representations are employed to illustrate psychological conditions?

RQ3: What emotional nuances define the mental health constructs present in the songs?

RQ4: What mental health issues are reflected in the lyrics?

The aim of this research is to examine how mental health is portrayed in the lyrics of Billie Eilish's songs through symbolic and emotional language. From an academic perspective, this study enriches literary scholarship by framing contemporary song lyrics as significant literary works that encapsulate psychological experiences. On a practical level, the research underscores how modern music can convey narratives about mental health and enhance awareness of emotional well-being.

Furthermore, this study adds to literary analysis by illustrating how symbolic language in contemporary music creates psychological significance and emotional conflict. Through the application of a hermeneutic perspective to chosen songs, this study demonstrates that modern lyrics serve as literary representations that convey the intricacies of human emotions and experiences related to mental health.

## **2. Method**

This research utilizes a descriptive qualitative methodology integrated with a hermeneutic perspective to analyze the portrayal of mental health themes in selected songs by Billie Eilish. A qualitative framework prioritizes interpretative richness, contextual significance, and textual scrutiny, rendering it appropriate for investigating symbolic and emotional representations in literary works (Barete et al., 2024).

This methodology enables the researcher to delve into how language articulates psychological experiences, as opposed to depending on quantitative metrics (Kalya Kaulika et al., 2025). The hermeneutic lens facilitates the interpretation of meanings through an interaction among text, context, and reader comprehension, allowing for a more profound investigation of underlying emotional and symbolic significances.

The data for this study comprises selected song lyrics that prominently feature mental health themes. The songs were deliberately chosen based on their depiction of emotional and psychological experiences, including anxiety, loneliness, vulnerability, self-image instability, and internal conflict. The primary data set includes five official tracks: "Lovely" (single), "Everything I Wanted" from the album "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?", "Wildflower" from the album "Hit Me Hard and Soft", "TV" from the EP "Guitar Songs", and "idontwannabeyouanymore" from the EP "Don't Smile at Me". The lyrics were gathered through a documentary method by identifying, selecting, and compiling pertinent words, phrases, and sentences that illustrate mental health representations (Pebriani et al., 2024).

The data were sourced from verified official lyric repositories, including authorized music releases and recognized lyric platforms. Additionally, theoretical frameworks and prior research served as secondary data. The analysis employs a hermeneutic approach to textual interpretation. Initially, each song lyric was examined multiple times to grasp its literal meaning through meticulous reading. Subsequently, key words and phrases associated with emotional and psychological experiences were pinpointed.

Following this, symbolic expressions and figurative language were interpreted within their contextual framework. Next, the emotional undertones present in the lyrics were scrutinized to uncover implicit psychological states. Ultimately, the results were organized into four analytical categories: implicit

meanings, symbolic expressions, emotional undertones, and mental health challenges. In this research, implicit meanings denote the underlying psychological messages conveyed indirectly; symbolic expressions pertain to metaphors and imagery that depict emotional states; emotional undertones signify the subtle feelings embedded within the lyrics; and mental health challenges encompass representations of psychological conditions such as anxiety, loneliness, vulnerability, emotional repression, and unstable self-image.

To ensure the validity of the interpretations, the analysis involved repeated readings and ongoing comparisons across different songs to detect recurring themes. The hermeneutic process was carried out through an iterative dialogue between the individual components of the text and the overarching meaning, facilitating a deeper understanding of psychological representation (Rixkasari et al., 2025). Through this methodology, themes related to mental health constructs were synthesized to illuminate how emotional and psychological experiences are expressed and symbolized in the chosen song lyrics.

### **3. Result**

Before delving into the comprehensive analysis, this research investigates five carefully chosen songs by Billie Eilish, which include one single and four tracks from various albums and EPs. These selections illustrate a range of emotional and psychological expressions that encapsulate experiences related to mental health. The analysis is organized into four distinct analytical categories: implicit meanings, symbolic expressions, emotional undertones, and mental health challenges. Throughout the dataset, recurring themes encompass vulnerability, emotional numbness, anxiety, self-doubt, loneliness, and internal conflict. Symbolic imagery, including glass, water, fire, mirrors, and physical sensations, is consistently employed to signify psychological distress and emotional instability.

Table I provides the thematic analysis of the selected lyrics, categorized according to the four analytical dimensions.

Table I. Thematic Analysis of Mental Health in Selected Songs

Single & Album Titles	Title Songs	Lyrics	Implicit Meanings	Symbolic Expressions	Emotional Undertones	Mental Health Struggles
Single	Lovely	Heart made of glass, my mind of stone  Tear me to pieces, skin to bone	Emotional fragility mental numbness  Feeling exposed, heart deeply	+ Glass= easily broken Stone= cold, numb  Being torn apart= emotional destruction	Vulnerability, Loneliness, Exhaustion  Pain, Helplessness	Emotional numbness, Depression, Trust issue  Emotional distress

		Need a place to hide, but I can't find one near	Searching for safety but failing	Hide= escape	Desperation, fear	Anxiety, lack of emotional support
When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?	Everything I Wanted	I had a dream, I got everything I wanted	Success doesn't equal happiness	Dream= Unreachable desire	Emptiness.	Self-doubt
		Thought I could fly, so I stepped off the Golden	Wanting to escape life	Fly= freedom Stepped off= giving up	Hopelessness	Suicidal thoughts
		I tried to scream, but my head was underwater	Feeling suffocated	Water= emotional overwhelm	Helplessness	Anxiety
	Wildflower	Things fall apart, and time breaks your heart	Pain grows with time	Time as emotional destroyer	Sadness	Heartbreak trauma
Hit Me Hard and Soft		I see her in the back of my mind all the time	Unresolved feelings	Mind's back= subconscious thoughts	Longing	Obsessive thinking
		Like a fever, like I'm burning alive, like a sign	Overwhelming emotions	Fever= emotional intensity	Distress	Emotional instability
	TV	I don't wanna talk right now, I just wanna watch TV	Escaping problems		Numbness	Depression

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Guitar Songs	I put on Survivor just to watch somebody suffer	Using other's struggles to escape from	Tv= distraction	Detachment, Numbness	Avoidance coping, emotional burnout
	I'll try not to starve myself just because you're mad at me	personal problem	Survivor represents emotional distraction	Shame, Sadness	Eating disorder tendencies
		Self- punishmen t from emotional pain	Starving= self-harm/ control		

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Don't Smile at Me	idontwann abeyouany more	If teardrops could be bottled, there'd be swimming pools filled by models	Hidden emotiona l pain.	Bottled tears= suppressed	Insecurity	Low self- esteem	
		If I love you was a promise, wouldyou break it if you're honest?	Fear rejection		Vulnerability	Anxiety	
		Tell the mirror what she's heard before		sadness	Sadness		
				Love as fragile promise			
			Negative selfimage	of Mirror= selfperception		Self-criticism, body-image struggle	

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1. *Single – Title: “lovely”*

The song "Lovely" conveys profound implicit meanings associated with emotional fragility and psychological turmoil. The lyric "Heart made of glass, my mind of stone" juxtaposes vulnerability with emotional numbness. The glass symbolizes fragility, while the stone signifies emotional detachment. This contrast illustrates an internal conflict between openness and emotional withdrawal.

The phrase "Tear me to pieces, skin to bone" heightens the emotional intensity, symbolizing psychological devastation and profound emotional suffering. Additionally, the line "Need a place to hide, but I can't find one near" conveys a sense of desperation and the inability to escape overwhelming feelings. These symbolic expressions evoke emotional undertones of loneliness, fatigue, and helplessness. Collectively, the lyrics depict mental health challenges such as emotional numbness, depression, and insecurity related to trust.

2. *Album “Everything I Wanted” – Title: “When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do*

*We Go?”*

The track “Everything I Wanted” illustrates the struggle between outward success and inner emotional void. The line “I had a dream, I got everything I wanted” suggests that attaining goals does not inherently result in emotional satisfaction. This underlying message conveys feelings of self-doubt and psychological discontent.

The metaphor “Thought I could fly, so I stepped off the Golden” signifies despair and a sense of losing control, potentially alluding to suicidal thoughts. Likewise, “I tried to scream, but my head was underwater” depicts emotional suffocation and a sense of powerlessness. These metaphorical expressions evoke emotional themes of hopelessness, fear, and fragility. The mental health issues portrayed in this song encompass anxiety, suicidal ideation, and emotional instability.

3. *Album “Hit Me Hard and Soft” – Single: “Wildflower”*

The song “Wildflower” highlights the emotional chaos linked to heartbreak and unresolved emotions. The lyric “Things fall apart, and time breaks your heart” indicates that emotional suffering can deepen over time. This implicit message reflects persistent emotional turmoil.

The phrase “I see her in the back of my mind all the time” signifies constant thoughts and unresolved emotional connections. Furthermore,

“Like a fever, like I’m burning alive” symbolizes an overwhelming emotional experience. These metaphorical expressions generate emotional themes of yearning, sorrow, and psychological distress. The mental health challenges recognized include obsessive thinking, emotional instability, and trauma related to heartbreak.

#### 4. Album *“Guitar Songs”* – Title: *“TV”*

The track “TV” illustrates the themes of avoidance coping and emotional detachment. The line “I don’t wanna talk right now, I just wanna watch TV” signifies a withdrawal from emotional engagement. This conveys an underlying message of emotional avoidance.

The imagery in “I put on Survivor just to watch somebody suffer” symbolizes a diversion from personal anguish by concentrating on the adversities faced by others. Additionally, “I’ll try not to starve myself just because you’re mad at me” points to maladaptive coping strategies linked to emotional distress. These phrases evoke emotional nuances of numbness, disconnection, and sorrow. The mental health issues depicted in this song encompass depression, emotional exhaustion, avoidance coping mechanisms, and tendencies towards eating disorders.

#### 5. Album *“Don’t Smile at Me”* – Title: *“idontwannabeyouanymore”*

The song “idontwannabeyouanymore” delves into themes of self-perception, insecurity, and emotional repression. The lyric “If teardrops could be bottled, there’d be swimming pools filled by models” employs hyperbole to illustrate concealed emotional suffering and societal expectations. This underlying message highlights internalized feelings of insecurity.

The phrase “If I love you was a promise, would you break it if you’re honest?” conveys a sense of vulnerability and apprehension regarding rejection. Moreover, “Tell the mirror what you know she’s heard before” symbolizes the cycle of negative self-dialogue and an unstable self-image. These symbolic representations evoke emotional undertones of sadness, anxiety, and diminished self-worth. The mental health challenges portrayed include issues related to body image, self-criticism, and emotional insecurity.

### Cross-Song Synthesis

Throughout the five songs, recurring symbolic imagery such as glass, water, fire, mirrors, and physical sensations consistently signifies psychological distress. The underlying meanings often illustrate emotional vulnerability, internal conflict, and a sense of isolation. Emotional nuances across the dataset highlight feelings of sadness, numbness, hopelessness, and anxiety. Collectively, these patterns outline mental health challenges, including depression, self-doubt, emotional instability, avoidance coping, and body-image insecurity. The recurrence of these themes suggests that the representation of mental health in the chosen songs is depicted as an ongoing and complex psychological experience rather than merely isolated emotional instances.

## 4. Discussion

The results obtained from a single song and four tracks by Billie Eilish consistently illustrate the theme of mental health across four analytical dimensions: implicit meanings, symbolic expressions, emotional undertones, and mental health challenges. These dimensions together form a multifaceted emotional framework that mirrors psychological experiences in today's society (Pratiwi et al., 2022; Ulfah et al., 2023). In light of contemporary social pressures, evolving cultural norms, and heightened emotional stress, Billie Eilish's music presents mental health as a fluid and developing phenomenon rather than a static state (Levy et al., 2024). This portrayal underscores the importance of emotional awareness, self-reflection, and the ongoing negotiation of psychological well-being.

From the angle of implicit meanings, the analysis reveals that the lyrics often convey emotional awareness through indirect language. The songs illustrate internal conflicts characterized by fear, vulnerability, emotional exhaustion, and self-doubt. These underlying messages highlight the struggle between emotional transparency and numbness, indicating that acknowledging internal emotional states is a crucial step in comprehending mental health.

This interpretation is consistent with Layaly et al. (2023), who assert that implicit emotional signals in song lyrics foster deeper psychological contemplation. Likewise, Theodora and Setiawan (2024) stress that indirect emotional expression in modern lyrics enhances self-awareness and emotional clarity. Consequently, the implicit meanings in Billie Eilish's songs serve as narrative indicators that lead listeners toward introspection and psychological acknowledgment.

The examination of symbolic expressions further enhances the depiction of mental health constructs. Recurring imagery such as glass, water, fever, breaking, burning, hiding, falling, and drowning converts abstract emotional experiences into concrete representations. These symbols communicate fragility, emotional instability, and intense psychological pressure. For example, glass represents emotional sensitivity, while water implies suffocation and emotional overload.

Through these metaphors, internal psychological states become more comprehensible and interpretable. This observation corroborates earlier research that identifies symbolism as a fundamental mechanism for illustrating emotional complexity in song lyrics (Nur & Ahmad, 2024). The hermeneutic interpretation indicates that symbolic language does not merely embellish the lyrics but serves as a narrative tool that constructs psychological meaning.

In terms of emotional undertones, the songs consistently express vulnerability, longing, detachment, numbness, and internal conflict. These emotions are conveyed subtly, creating an introspective and reflective tone. This emotional complexity portrays mental health as a continuum rather than a binary state. The coexistence of conflicting emotions—such as hope and despair, connection and isolation, and strength and fragility—demonstrates fluctuating mental states. This finding aligns with Kurniawan and Sari (2025), who contend that emotional ambiguity in contemporary lyrics mirrors the fluid nature of psychological experience. Consequently, the emotional undertones in Billie Eilish's songs reinforce the notion that mental health is characterized by continuous emotional negotiation.

Mental health issues stand out as the most prominent aspect within the dataset. The lyrics illustrate feelings of anxiety, emotional instability, self-doubt, avoidance coping, loneliness, and depressive tendencies. These issues are depicted as ongoing experiences rather than singular events. The songs portray mental health challenges as integral to daily emotional existence, highlighting the processes of coping, reflection, and emotional regulation (Faizan et al., 2024). This portrayal is consistent with the findings of Wang et al. (2022), who assert that music can mirror psychological struggles while also providing emotional insight. By depicting these experiences, the songs underscore that mental health entails continuous self-assessment and adaptation.

In summary, the four analytical dimensions reveal that Billie Eilish creates a complex representation of mental health through symbolic language and emotional expression. Implicit meanings foster introspection, symbolic imagery illustrates psychological conditions, emotional nuances express complexity, and mental health challenges represent lived realities. This synthesis indicates that her songwriting serves as both artistic expression and psychological narrative. The results build upon prior research that primarily emphasized cultural or psychological viewpoints by demonstrating how literary analysis uncovers deeper emotional frameworks within song lyrics.

Through a hermeneutic perspective, this study emphasizes how modern songs can function as literary works that articulate mental health experiences and contribute to wider conversations about emotional well-being (Setya Prihatining Tyas et al., 2024). Moreover, the analysis reveals that contemporary music significantly influences public perceptions of mental health. By depicting emotional challenges through relatable symbolic imagery, these songs offer

listeners a reflective environment to process their own experiences. This implies that modern songwriting can enhance cultural discussions surrounding mental health and promote interdisciplinary studies on the connection between artistic expression and psychological experiences (Chowdary et al., 2024).

## **5. Conclusion**

This research illustrates that specific songs by Billie Eilish utilize symbolic imagery and emotional depth to convey concepts related to mental health. The lyrics create intricate meanings that mirror internal conflicts associated with vulnerability, insecurity, emotional overload, and identity. Through the use of metaphorical language and implicit expression, the songs depict psychological experiences as complex and multifaceted rather than merely straightforward emotional declarations. The consistent application of symbolism throughout the examined songs suggests that modern songwriting serves as a literary medium for articulating mental health narratives. These results imply that analyzing lyrics beyond their literal interpretation facilitates a deeper comprehension of emotional experiences and psychological representation in contemporary music.

This research also enhances literary analysis by showcasing how symbolic language, emotional nuances, and implicit meanings collaboratively construct representations of mental health in modern song lyrics. The amalgamation of these components underscores that music can function as both an artistic expression and a reflective space for psychological experiences. By employing a hermeneutic approach, this study demonstrates that song lyrics can be regarded as literary texts that express emotional complexity and mental health challenges.

Despite these contributions, this research acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, the analysis is confined to five songs from a single artist, which may not accurately reflect broader trends in contemporary popular music. Secondly, the focus is solely on the textual analysis of lyrics, excluding musical elements such as melody, rhythm, or production. Thirdly, the study does not consider listener interpretation and reception, which may affect the understanding of mental health meanings. Consequently, the findings should be approached with caution and should not be generalized beyond the selected dataset.

Future investigations could broaden this research by examining a wider array of artists, contrasting symbolic representations among various genres, or integrating audience reception analysis. Additionally, subsequent studies might merge lyrical interpretation with musical analysis to investigate how sound and language collaboratively shape the representation of mental health.

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