

## **Patriarchal Resistance in Taylor Swift's *All Too Well* (10 Minute Version): Semantic Analysis with Feminism**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the representation of patriarchy and forms of feminist resistance in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's song All Too Well (10 Minute Version) through a semantic approach and feminist theory. This song was chosen because it contains a complex personal narrative about a romantic relationship fraught with power imbalances, emotional manipulation, and patriarchal domination. This study uses a qualitative method with close reading techniques of song lyrics as the main data. Data analysis was conducted using a semantic approach and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model to reveal the meaning of words that represent women's experiences in unequal relationships. The results show that the lyrics represent patriarchal practices through ambiguous language, fake anti-patriarchal symbols, objectification of women, and forms of gaslighting and emotional manipulation. On the other hand, the song also portrays feminist resistance through the affirmation of memory, claims to personal experience, rejection of patriarchally constructed images of women, and attempts to reclaim identity. Thus, All Too Well (10 Minute Version) functions not only as a heartbreak song, but also as a feminist narrative that challenges patriarchal values in romantic relationships. This study is expected to contribute to feminist linguistic studies and enrich the understanding of the representation of women in popular music.*

*Keywords: feminism; patriarchy; semantics; song lyrics; Taylor Swift*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Songs are not only a form of entertainment. Imtiyaz (et al., 2025) assert that songs also serve as a way to express life experiences, emotions, and social commentary. Taylor Swift's songs are particularly interesting to study because she is known as a songwriter who narrates her personal experiences in a detailed and reflective way. Taylor Swift does not simply sing about her feelings, but builds stories through her lyrics so that listeners can follow the emotional flow, conflicts, and meanings conveyed. Each song often feels like a piece of a story or a fragment of her own life journey.

One of Taylor Swift's trademarks is her courage to recount her romantic experiences, including stories about her ex-boyfriends, in the form of songs. Instead of mentioning names directly, Taylor uses narrative details such as symbols, memories, and specific moments to describe these relationships. This approach makes her lyrics feel personal yet universal, as many listeners can find similar experiences in their own lives. Through her songs, Taylor

reconstructs past relationships from her perspective as a woman who has experienced loss, disappointment, and a process of growing up.

The word choice in Taylor Swift's songs is a narrative approach that is deliberately constructed to enhance the emotion and meaning of the story. She tends to use simple language, close to everyday conversation, but with deep emotional content. Words and phrases such as *remember*, *I was there*, *you kept me like a secret*, and *I remember it all too well* function as memory markers that emphasize that these experiences are not vague or imaginary, but real and strongly embedded in the narrator's consciousness. The repetition of the phrase "*all too well*" semantically emphasizes the intensity of the memory, while also serving as evidence that women's emotional experiences are often remembered in detail, which is often questioned or underestimated by others. With diction like this, Taylor constructs a subject position that is self-aware, reflective, and has authority over her own story.

In "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)", the power of language choices is even more apparent through the expansion of the narrative and sharper linguistic details. Taylor not only recounts feelings of heartbreak, but uses words that implicitly point to the imbalance in the relationship, such as age difference, emotional control, and unequal positions. Phrases such as "*I was never good at telling jokes, but the punchline goes*" and "*you said if we had been closer in age maybe it would have been fine*" show how language is used to represent the justification and manipulation that often occur in relationships. Through her choice of words, Taylor shows how women's voices are often positioned as excessive, sensitive, or irrational. However, by re-narrating the experience using her own language, Taylor reverses this position: she is no longer the object of the story, but rather the subject who bravely speaks out about the emotional injustice she has experienced.

The song "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" by Taylor Swift is full in deep semantic meaning, especially in the context of feminism and criticism of patriarchy (Imtiyaz et al., 2025). Taylor Swift frequently uses her music to critique unequal gender relations and patriarchal norms. In *All Too Well (10 Minute Version)*, vivid metaphors and autobiographical storytelling portray emotional manipulation, objectification, and women's struggle to reclaim their voices. From a feminist perspective, the song challenges stereotypes that women are overly emotional and instead validates their memories and experiences as acts of resistance.

Given popular music's influence on shaping gender discourse, this study examines how language represents patriarchal power and feminist resistance through a semantic and feminist analysis of the song's lyrics. While previous studies have explored Taylor Swift's work from perspectives such as gender, memory, and masculinity, few have employed semantic analysis to investigate how linguistic choices construct meanings of patriarchy and resistance. This study addresses that gap by examining how the lyrics represent women's experiences and challenge patriarchal domination, contributing to feminist linguistic studies and the analysis of gender representation in popular music.

## SEMANTICS

Semantics is a branch of linguistics that studies meaning in language, including how the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences represent experiences, emotions, and social realities (Nisaul Zahra et al., 2024). Semantic analysis is employed to identify the symbolic meanings and ambiguous expressions within the text. Through a feminist lens, this analysis extends beyond the surface meaning of language to investigate how linguistic elements, including the scarf symbol and age-gap references, reflect gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations. Furthermore, it highlights the woman's efforts to reconstruct her identity after being affected by an oppressive relationship (Zolkifli & Ghani, 2024). The meaning of language is not neutral, but rather relates to how humans understand the world and construct their social

views (Cavanaugh, 2020). In critical studies, semantic analysis is used to reveal how word choice and meaning construction can reproduce or challenge dominant ideologies and power relations in society (Fairclough, 2013; Chen, 2021). In a feminist perspective, semantics plays an important role in showing how language represents women's experiences through metaphors, evaluations, and labels that often reflect gender inequality and patriarchal domination (Lazar, 2014). By examining these linguistic features, we can better understand how feminist and patriarchal ideologies are communicated and challenged through language use. (Dian Maharani et al., 2025). Therefore, semantic analysis is a relevant approach to examining song lyrics as cultural texts that contain not only personal experiences but also social and ideological meanings.

#### PATRIARCHAL

Patriarchy, understood as a social system that structures male dominance, is often strengthened through language that restricts women's roles and identities. Ni'mah (2022) reveal the irony of social conditions that still exist today, where women are often underestimated in decision-making. There is a strong perception that women are weak creatures, always under the domination of men, and incapable of living independently (Connell, 1987). This mindset is part of a patriarchal system that is deeply rooted in various aspects of life, from family and social environment to the media (Safriyanto et al., 2024). Patriarchy not only influences how women are viewed, but also shapes their emotional, psychological, and relational experiences.

In the context of popular culture, including music, patriarchal values are often reflected through narratives that portray women as passive or vulnerable to male power. Songs born from women's experiences often become a space to show the effects of these unequal power relations, such as emotional manipulation, inequality in relationships, and restrictive stereotypes. Taylor Swift, in *All Too Well (10 Minute Version)*, presents a form of emotional documentation that describes how women can experience pressure and control in unbalanced relationships. Such narratives show that patriarchy still works subtly through everyday interactions, especially in romantic relationships that are influenced by gender-biased social structures (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020). In romantic relationships, patriarchy can control women through social norms about how "women should behave," for example, being more understanding, not too demanding, and always considering the feelings of their male partners. These standards often cause women to suppress their own feelings and needs in order to maintain the relationship, without realizing that this is a form of relational inequality.

#### FEMINISM

In feminist theory, semantics is used to show how language reflects and challenges gender inequality and patriarchal power (Alex Martinus, 2023). In response to patriarchal domination, feminism emerged to dismantle structures of injustice and fight for equality between men and women (Jasmeen, 2025). In feminist studies, women's experiences are not merely personal stories, but also representations of structural oppression that require critical analysis. Through this perspective, works of art-including music-are seen as important media for expressing women's experiences and showing their forms of resistance (Fajriah, 2024).

In feminist theory, language has a huge influence in both maintaining and challenging the patriarchal system (Cameron, 2020). Feminist theory examines how patriarchal structures shape social relations and maintain gender inequalities. According to Simone de Beauvoir, women have historically been positioned as the "Other," while men occupy the normative and dominant position in society. This hierarchical construction continues to influence contemporary gender relations, where women's experiences and voices are frequently

marginalized within patriarchal social structures (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020; Jasmeen, 2025). This unequal relationship influences how women's experiences are represented, interpreted, and valued. Contemporary feminist scholars further argue that women are not merely passive victims of patriarchal domination but active agents capable of negotiating, resisting, and challenging oppressive structures through language, self-representation, and storytelling. Therefore, feminist analysis provides a useful framework for examining how women articulate resistance and reclaim authority over their own experiences.

Contemporary feminist scholarship views women's narratives as forms of resistance against patriarchal structures. By voicing their experiences, women reclaim agency, challenge dominant gender discourses, and construct alternative meanings. In popular music, autobiographical songwriting functions not only as artistic expression but also as a feminist practice that transforms personal experiences into collective resistance (Rens, 2021). From a semantic perspective, patriarchy is reflected in linguistic choices that marginalize women, such as portraying their emotions as "dramatic" or assigning them responsibility for maintaining relationships. These meanings reveal how language reinforces unequal gender relations and patriarchal power.

The song "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" provides space for feminist readings because it features the voices of women trying to reclaim narrative control over their own experiences. Semantic choices, emotional metaphors, and an emphasis on wounds and self-awareness become tools to show how women can challenge the traditional roles assigned to them. A feminist analysis of this song helps reveal how Taylor Swift not only tells a personal relationship story but also voices a symbolic form of resistance against the patriarchal structures that influence how women are treated in society.

The present study integrates semantic analysis and feminist theory to investigate the representation of patriarchy and women's resistance in Taylor Swift's "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)." Semantic analysis is used to identify meanings embedded in words, metaphors, and symbolic expressions, while feminist theory provides the analytical lens for interpreting how these meanings reflect patriarchal domination, identity construction, and acts of resistance. Through this framework, the study examines how language functions as a site where unequal gender relations are challenged and renegotiated.

## METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH PROSEDURE

The purpose of this study is to discover the representation of patriarchy, power relations, and modes of women's resistance in the lyrics of Taylor Swift's song "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)". The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain a thorough understanding of the meaning of language by interpreting the social, cultural, and ideological contexts underlying the text; thus, the analysis focuses not only on linguistic aspects but also on how language constructs and represents social reality (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The research analysis framework is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) paradigm, which sees discourse as a social practice inextricably linked to power dynamics and ideology (Fairclough, 2013a). The analysis is conducted along three dimensions: text analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. According to Fairclough (Fairclough, 2013a; Karima et al., 2025), language is seen not only as a medium of communication, but also as a tool for reproducing or challenging dominant beliefs. Another researcher supports this viewpoint, arguing that language actively shapes social ideas of gender relations (Karima et al., 2026).

As a textual analysis technique, this study employs close reading. This technique involves multiple in-depth readings of the complete lyrics to find language patterns, symbols,

metaphors, and emotional nuances that create latent meaning within the text. Careful reading enables academics to determine how women's experiences are produced through narrative, diction choices, and rhetorical methods utilized in songs (Karima et al., 2022). The entire interpretation process is built on a feminist theoretical foundation for comprehending gender inequity, patriarchal dominance, and language-mediated forms of women's resistance.

The lyrics of Taylor Swift's song "All Too Well (10 Minute Version)" from her album "Red (Taylor's Version)" published in 2021 are the focus of this study. The song lyrics were chosen because they reflect women's experiences in intimate relationships, revealing power inequalities, emotional manipulation, and patriarchal behaviors through the use of metaphors and linguistic symbols. The song's narrative complexity makes it suitable for study using feminist and Critical Discourse study methodologies.

The research data sources include both primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of linguistic units such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences from the official lyrics of All Too Well (10 Minute Version), received from Apple Music as the official source. Secondary data is gathered from a variety of scientific sources, including books, respected journal articles, and earlier research on Critical Discourse Analysis, feminist theory, patriarchy, semantics, and song lyric analysis, which serves as the conceptual framework of the study.

The data presentation stage involves organizing the identification results into thematic categories using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis dimensions and feminist views (Ni'mah & Karima, 2022). Next, each quote is carefully analyzed to interpret its literal and contextual implications, and then linked to ideas such as patriarchy, power relations, and women's resistance. The final stage entails generating conclusions by synthesizing all of the analysis results to explain how the language in song lyrics serves as a medium for representing, maintaining, and challenging patriarchal ideology in popular culture.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to (Karima et al., 2022) the discourse of women in a patriarchal society cannot be separated from the issues of gender and it is always interesting to discuss. This idea is relevant to analysis, where Taylor uses storytelling and emotional expression to show how women struggle with relationships.

### PATRIARCHY REPRESENTED IN LYRICS

A semantic analysis of the lyrics to "*All Too Well (10 Minute Version)*" reveals a strong representation of patriarchal dominance in the romantic relationship between the narrator and her partner. Patriarchy is displayed not only in the form of direct domination, but also through an unbalanced emotional structure, objectification, and narrative control exercised by men.

#### THE FALSE ANTI-PATRIARCHY SYMBOL

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"And you were tossing me the car keys, 'Fuck the patriarchy'"  
"Keychain on the ground"

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Semantically, the phrase "*fuck the patriarchy*" is an expression of resistance that literally means rejection of the patriarchal system. However, in the context of these lyrics, the meaning is ironic. The expression does not truly represent a feminist attitude or real resistance, but is merely an empty slogan uttered by men. This is reinforced by the action of "*tossing me the car keys*," which demonstrates a power relationship: men retain dominance and emotional control, while women are in a position of receiving, not choosing. From an analysis of the context of meaning, this shows that men use this slogan for social performativity, not as an

ideological belief. This finding is in line with Beauvoir's theory of patriarchy (1949), which states that men often claim to be on women's side, but still place themselves at the center and women as "the other" (Damiana et al., 2025)

According to Judith Butler theory of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble*, a person's actions and words can shape gender reality because they are repeated in accordance with social norms (McIntosh, 1991). This means that a person can appear to support gender equality only through certain words or attitudes. However, this becomes ironic if this support is not followed by equal practices in real life.

This is in line with (Wahid & Legino, 2023) research on power relations in romantic relationships, which shows that the language or discourse of equality is often used as a cover to maintain emotional control over one's partner. Therefore, the lyrics are not only a personal criticism, but also expose how feminist language can be misused to maintain patriarchal power in a hidden way.

The phrase "*key chain on the ground*" shows that the slogan "*fuck the patriarchy*" is just for decoration, not something that really means anything. The key chain falling to the ground shows that symbols of resistance against patriarchy aren't valued or seen as important. Words that sound like they're against patriarchy are treated like ordinary accessories, without any real action to support equality. The contradiction between the phrase "*fuck the patriarchy*" and the male character's dominant behavior suggests a gap between discourse and practice. While the statement appears to challenge patriarchal values, the actions described in the lyric continue to reproduce unequal power relations. This finding reflects Butler's (1990) notion that identities and social positions are performed through repeated acts rather than merely expressed through language. It also aligns with contemporary discussions of performative allyship, where support for gender equality is articulated symbolically but is not accompanied by substantive behavioral change (Kutlaca & Radke, 2023; Huang, 2023). Consequently, the lyric critiques the use of feminist language as a performative gesture that conceals rather than dismantles patriarchal domination.

#### POWER IMBALANCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

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*"He's gonna say it's love... you never called what it was"*

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These lyrics describe a situation where a man refers to the relationship as "love," but never actually defines or admits to it clearly. In essence, the word "love" is used to give the impression of something serious and meaningful, but it is not followed by any real emotional responsibility.

Semantically, Taylor Swift shows how language can be used to hide the truth. The word "love" sounds nice and convincing, but the phrase "*you never called what it was*" makes it clear that the guy was avoiding being clear not labeling it, not committing, and not honestly admitting to the relationship. This creates a disparity in meaning: women are invited to believe in "love," while the reality of the relationship remains unclear.

According to (Rachmawati Setyaningsih, 2025) the use of love language in romantic relationships does not always reflect genuine commitment or equality. Expressions of love can serve as an emotional illusion that reassures partners, while clarity about the relationship and responsibilities are deliberately avoided in order to maintain control. In the context of feminism and patriarchy, these lyrics reflect subtle emotional control. By not providing clarity, men maintain a safe and dominant position, while women are left in uncertainty. Women are expected to understand, wait, and accept, without the right to demand certainty. This pattern is often considered normal in romantic relationships, when in fact it reveals an unequal dynamic.

Through these lyrics, Taylor Swift critiques how the language of love can be used as a tool for manipulation, rather than as a form of healthy affection. The song emphasizes that true love is not only spoken, but also admitted, explained, and practiced fairly and honestly.

#### EMOTIONAL OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN

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*“The idea you had of me, who was she?”*  
*“A never-needy, ever-lovely jewel whose shine reflect on you”*

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These lyrics portray the confusion and self-awareness of the female character. She questions the image of herself that exists in her partner's mind. The question “who was she?” suggests that this figure is not her real self, but rather an idealized version shaped by the desires and expectations of men.

The phrase “a never-needy, ever-lovely jewel” portrays women as perfect, undemanding, always sweet, and beautiful, like jewelry. The lyric suggests that women are represented primarily through idealized characteristics, potentially reducing their complexity as autonomous subjects. The word “jewel” affirms the position of women as something to be owned and displayed, not as equal subjects. The lyrics describe how a woman's value is often measured by patriarchal standards: undemanding, always pleasant, and making men look better. This is a form of gender objectification, where women are expected to fulfill ideals set by the dominant social structure. The findings of K.G. Lopez, Christine (2024) in linguistic and literary representations, women are often described based on cultural expectations and gender stereotypes, which place them as visual and social objects, not as subjects with their own free will.

The phrase “whose shine reflects on you” suggests that a woman's value is measured by the extent to which she makes a man look good. Women are expected to shine not for themselves, but to support their partner's image. This indicates an unequal relationship, in which women's identities are constructed for the benefit of men. The representation of women as “jewelry” that reflects a man's shine also shows how patriarchy shapes social roles. Women are not seen as determinants of their own identity, but as supporters of men's identity. Patriarchy as a social system still influences the construction of social gender broadly, where women are often placed into more traditional or subordinate roles (Althaaf et al., 2025). These cultural norms structurally reinforce gender role inequality.

These lyrics criticize patriarchal expectations of women in romantic relationships: women must always be understanding, undemanding, and emotionally supportive, with no room for their own needs. Through these lyrics, Taylor Swift exposes how women often lose their identity because they are forced to conform to an ideal image created by others, rather than being themselves.

The lyric “The idea you had of me, who was she?” reflects the speaker’s rejection of an identity constructed by the male figure. From a feminist perspective, this representation resonates with Beauvoir’s concept of women as the “Other,” in which women are often defined according to male expectations rather than their own subjectivity. The lyric therefore functions as an assertion of female agency and self-definition. This finding is consistent with (Nartey, 2024), who argues that women construct resistance by reclaiming their voices and identities through self-representation. Furthermore, the speaker’s challenge to an externally imposed identity reflects a process of identity negotiation and resistant agency, through which women actively redefine themselves against patriarchal expectations.

#### EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION AND GASLIGHTING AS PRODUCTS OF PATRIARCHY

*“And you call me up again just to break me like a promise.”*  
*“So casually cruel in the name of being honest.”*

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These lyrics describe subtle emotional abuse in romantic relationships. The phrase “*call me up again*” refers to unnecessary and repetitive actions that reopen old wounds. The words “*just to break me*” emphasize that the purpose of the communication is not to repair the relationship, but to cause emotional pain. The comparison “*like a promise*” shows that the pain is deep because it involves trust and expectations that had been built up previously.

The phrase “*so casually cruel*” contains a paradoxical meaning. The cruelty is carried out in a casual manner, as if there are no emotional consequences for the victim. This shows how emotional abuse is often not recognized as abuse because it is not carried out in a harsh or overt manner. The word ‘cruel’ emphasizes the painful impact, while “casually” shows the perpetrator's indifference to the victim's feelings.

The phrase “*in the name of being honest*” is a strong criticism of the use of honesty as justification. Honesty here is not used to build healthy communication, but as an excuse to say hurtful words. Hurtful language is not just a matter of words; it becomes part of a pattern of covert emotional abuse, where the perpetrator uses terms such as “honest” to justify their behavior, when in fact it is a form of emotional control or domination. According to (Nuraini & Rosyadi, 2025) symbolic violence in romantic relationships is characterized by the use of language and symbols that indirectly demean or dominate the other party in the relationship. In the context of feminism, this reflects patriarchal power relations, where men feel entitled to control women's emotions under the pretext of openness or honesty, while the emotional impact is ignored.

Overall, Taylor Swift highlights through these lyrics how language can be a tool of emotional violence. Words that appear honest and reasonable are actually used to perpetuate hurt and inequality in relationships. These lyrics emphasize that honesty without empathy is not a form of love, but a form of emotional violence that is often normalized in romantic relationships.

#### AGE AS SOURCE OF POWER IMBALANCE

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*“You said if we had been closer in age, maybe it would've been fine”*

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The lyrics “*You said if we had been closer in age, maybe it would've been fine*” describe a form of shifting responsibility in an unequal relationship. Relationship problems are not recognized as a result of the perpetrator's attitude or behavior, but are shifted to an external factor, namely the age difference. The word “maybe” indicates an uncertain and avoiding attitude, as if the failure of the relationship is simply a matter of circumstance, not a conscious choice or action.

Semantically, this sentence functions as self-justification. By using age as an excuse, the perpetrator positions himself as blameless, while the woman is positioned as the party who must accept this explanation. This language normalizes the imbalance in the relationship and obscures the real source of the problem, which is an unequal power dynamic.

From a feminist perspective, age differences are often linked to emotional and social power imbalances, where the older party has greater control. By using a narrative that sounds rational and mature, the perpetrator covers up existing practices of domination. Through these lyrics, Taylor Swift criticizes how language is used to rationalize patriarchal relationships and silence women's emotional experiences.

Several studies (Arcani, 2020; Minarni, 2021; Akbar et al., 2024) have found that emotional abuse in romantic relationships often occurs through seemingly logical statements or reasons, but has a devastating emotional impact on the partner. Verbal behaviors such as

self-justification or external reasoning can be forms of emotional manipulation in dating violence.

#### REPRESENTATION OF FEMINISM IN LYRICS

According to (Amanda et al., 2024) feminism is a series of social, political, and intellectual movements that aim to achieve gender equality in various aspects of life, including politics, economics, personal life, and social life. Feminism is often mistakenly understood as an ideology that hates men, when in fact its main goal is to eliminate unequal relationships between men and women. In a relationship that is fair and equal, both women and men benefit equally.

#### THE FALSE ANTI-PATRIARCHY SYMBOL IN FEMINISM

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*“And you were tossing me the car keys, ‘Fuck the patriarchy’”  
“Keychain on the ground”*

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From a feminist perspective, this part of the lyrics criticizes men who appear to support women or feminism only through words, not through real actions, when in fact he still wants to be dominant and take control. By saying slogans such as “fuck the patriarchy,” he seems to show that he is aware of gender inequality and is on the side of women. However, in everyday relationships, they still hold the reins and place women in a weaker position. Without a change in attitude and equal relationships, language of resistance can actually be used to cover up male domination rather than eliminate it. In other words, this support is superficial and symbolic, not ideological or real (Alam & Alfian, 2022).

This language, which sounds progressive, actually serves as a tool to conceal domination. When someone uses “feminist” language, they can appear modern and caring, making controlling or unequal behavior difficult to recognize. Women may feel that their partners are “different from other men,” when in fact the pattern of the relationship remains the same—men are still at the center of decision-making, while women adjust themselves.

Through these lyrics, Taylor Swift wants to show that patriarchy does not always appear in crude or overtly obvious ways, but can be subtly present through symbols, language, and attitudes that appear to support equality. Words of resistance against patriarchy, if not followed by a change in attitude and a fair distribution of power, can actually be used to maintain unequal relationships. Therefore, this song emphasizes that gender equality is not enough to be spoken about, but must be practiced in actions and relationships that are truly equal.

#### REJECTION OF THE IMAGE OF WOMEN

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*“The idea you had of me, who was she?”*

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From a feminist perspective, the lyrics “*The idea you had of me, who was she?*” show women's critical awareness of objectification and identity construction by men in patriarchal relationships. This question is not just confusion, but a form of resistance: female characters realize that the person their partner loves is not the real them, but an ideal version shaped by men's expectations and interests.

Feministically, these lyrics criticize patriarchal expectations of women in romantic relationships: women must always be understanding, undemanding, and emotionally supportive, with no room for their own needs. Through these lyrics, Taylor Swift exposes how women often lose their identity because they are forced to conform to an ideal image created by others, rather than being themselves.

In this way, the lyrics are a form of identity reclamation: women take back control of their narrative and reject the definition of themselves shaped by male perspectives. According to (Sofi, 2020; Saleem, 2025) feminist awareness is reflected through the courage, confidence, and independence of female characters in rejecting domination, which marks an effort to reclaim their subjectivity and dignity as women. This is in line with the feminist idea that women's liberation begins when women realize and question how they are constructed by patriarchal power relations.

#### RECLAIMING THE SELF

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*“I’d like to be my old self again, but I’m still trying to find it”*

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The lyric *“I’d like to be my old self again, but I’m still trying to find it”* reflects a process of identity reconstruction following experiences of emotional domination. Rather than portraying the speaker as a passive victim, the lyric emphasizes her active effort to recover and redefine her sense of self. This finding is consistent with (Nartey, 2024), who argues that women construct resistance by reclaiming their voices and developing positive self-representations. It also aligns with (LaGuardia-LoBianco, 2025) concept of resistant agency, which views resistance as a process of rebuilding agency and overcoming the effects of oppression. Furthermore, the speaker's effort to rediscover herself reflects a process of identity negotiation through which women challenge externally imposed definitions and reconstruct identities grounded in their own experiences and aspirations.

From a feminist perspective, these lyrics reflect how women in unequal relationships often lose their identity because they have to adjust to their partner's expectations. The effort to “find oneself” becomes a form of awareness and resistance: women realize that their identity has been distorted by patriarchal relationships and strive to reclaim their subjectivity. According to (Liebling-kalifani, 2009) abuse not only affects physical health but also has a huge impact on women's identity and sense of self. Many victims try to make sense of their experiences, rebuild their identity, and find new meaning in themselves after violence. Manuscript (2013) assert that emotional abuse in intimate relationships often affects self-esteem and how individuals view themselves, including feelings of worthiness and negative influences on self-concept. Thus, these lyrics not only speak of personal sadness, but also of the process of restoring women's identity after experiencing emotional domination.

#### REFUSING TO BE BLAMED FOR THE PAIN CAUSED BY MEN

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*“I’m a crumpled-up piece of paper lying here”*

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These lyrics use powerful metaphors to describe the emotional state of the female character after experiencing a painful relationship. Semantically, the phrase “crumpled-up piece of paper” implies something that has been crumpled, damaged, and considered worthless, while “lying here” suggests a passive position—abandoned without attention or care. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as cited in (Syahrial, 2025), metaphors are not merely a figure of speech, but rather a way of thinking that helps us understand abstract experiences through concrete experiences.

From a semantic and conceptual metaphor perspective, these lyrics represent the metaphors ‘self is an object’ and ‘emotional harm is physical damage’. Women's identities are positioned as objects that can be treated carelessly by others. This reflects how unequal relationships can make women feel a loss of self-worth and self-esteem, as if they were merely objects that could be squeezed and then discarded.

In feminist studies, this metaphor shows the impact of patriarchy in romantic relationships, where women often bear the emotional scars of their partner's dominance, manipulation, or indifference. Women are not only emotionally hurt, but also dehumanized, reduced to something broken and incomplete. By narrating this condition through metaphorical language, Taylor Swift reveals the experiences of women that are often silenced, while also making it a form of criticism against patriarchal relationships that belittle the value and subjectivity of women.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study explored the representation of patriarchy and feminist resistance in Taylor Swift's *All Too Well (10 Minute Version)* through semantic analysis and a feminist perspective. The findings indicate that patriarchy is represented through emotional manipulation, gaslighting, objectification, and unequal power relations, which shape women's identities and experiences. At the same time, feminist resistance emerges through the narrator's efforts to reclaim her voice, reconstruct her identity, and challenge patriarchal expectations. The analysis demonstrates that linguistic choices, metaphors, and symbolic expressions are central to conveying both oppression and resistance. Overall, the song functions not only as a personal narrative of heartbreak but also as a cultural text reflecting broader issues of gender inequality and women's agency in contemporary society.

Future studies are encouraged to examine popular music using diverse feminist frameworks, such as feminist critical discourse analysis, postfeminism, or gender performativity. Comparative analyses across songs, albums, or artists may also provide deeper insights into recurring patterns of gender representation. In addition, educators and researchers can utilize song lyrics as valuable resources for promoting discussions on gender equality, feminist perspectives, and critical cultural literacy.

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