

## PORTRAYAL OF QUARTER LIFE CRISIS THROUGH THE USE OF SATIRE IN THE SONG LYRICS "24" BY SUNDIAL

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**ABSTRACT** This study analyzed how a quarter-life crisis is portrayed through the use of satire in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial. This study aimed to identify signs of a quarter-life crisis by describing the satire used in the song lyrics. Researchers used the content analysis method presented in TEEL paragraphs to portray the quarter-life crisis signs depicted in the satire song lyrics. The data were taken from the song lyrics "24" by Sundial, which was released in 2021. The result showed that there are six unrepeated stanzas of satire containing the portrayal of quarter-life crisis signs, dominated by the sign of feeling unhappy with the current life situation. The type of satire in this song is Menippean satire referring to a single object who is 24 years old. Other literary techniques are used to support the satire in this song, which is dominated by irony. This study emphasized how satire can portray inexpressible life problems like quarter-life crises through humor.

**Keywords:** satire, song lyrics, quarter-life crisis

### INTRODUCTION

It is worth noting that songs have evolved into a universal language used by people all over the world, not to mention musicians (Black, 2021). They utilize music to express their emotions or ideas. Lyrics are an important component of music. The language style used in crafting the lyrics represents the song attributes of the music (Nie, 2021). The lyrics' message can be apparent or implied (Lestari & Sulisty, 2022). Musicians employ satire in their songs to help the audience see things from a different perspective. It is a literary style that combines a critical perspective with comedy with the goal of improving society (Wahyudi, 2005).

This paper defines the portrayal of a quarter-life crisis, a type of crisis that is flaring in today's society through the use of satire. Any form of humor that uses a play structure to make people laugh while also addressing perceived social injustices is known as satire. Satire is distinguished by its attack on wrongdoing and its unambiguous condemnation of the offender (Krefting, 2019).

The transition period from adolescence to adulthood is crucial; at this time, adolescents begin to explore themselves, live independently, develop values and build relationships (Papalia & Feldmad, 2014). One of the events that occur during the transition from adolescence to adulthood is a quarter-life crisis. It is difficult to identify the quarter-life crisis in someone at first glance; however, it can be identified by the use of figurative language such as satire.

From those problems, researchers intend to analyze the portrayal of a quarter-life crisis from the song lyrics "24" by Sundial. In the song "24", Sundial implicitly expresses the life situation of someone at the age of 24 who is going through a quarter-life crisis using satire. Researchers limit this study to focus on the use of satire in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial, which was released in 2021. With the content analysis method, this paper investigates the meaning of satire-using song lyrics and how it portrays the quarter-life crisis experienced by the object in the song. The significance of the lyrics and their underlying message is of interest to researchers. The theoretical frameworks used to analyze, explore, and interpret the lyrics of the song "24" by Sundial are focused on the use of satire portraying the depiction of a quarter-life crisis.

Previous work mainly focused on figurative language analysis in song lyrics or just language mentioning a quarter-life crisis on the internet. Researchers hypothesize that such a

distant approach leads to the model mostly representing characteristics of just one topic instead of correlating the two. Thus, researchers propose to use more detailed qualitative research using content analysis to further investigate the use of satire in portraying a quarter-life crisis.

Based on the background above, researchers want to know more about the portrayal of a quarter-life crisis in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial. Researchers took the lyrics of "24" because the reflection of a quarter-life crisis through satire is very thick. To investigate the quarter-life crisis portrayed in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial, a content analysis of the use of satire is conducted. Hopefully, the results of this study may be helpful in educational studies, particularly regarding the use of satire in song lyrics. This study also serves as a good reference for other students who are interested in conducting studies on figurative language analysis. Therefore, this research raises the title "Portrayal of Quarter Life Crisis Through the Use of Satire in the Song Lyrics "24" by Sundial."

## LITERATURE REVIEW

No previous studies analyzed the quarter-life crisis portrayed in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial. However, there have been several kinds of research conducted regarding similar topics. The first one is related to figurative language, which is "Figurative Language, Imagery, and Deep Structure Used in Art Of Life Song Lyrics By X-Japan," written by Pythaloka (2021). This study examined the use of figurative language, imagery, and deep structure in the Art of Life (1993) song lyrics by X-JAPAN. The results show that in the song lyrics of Art of Life (1993), there are seven types of figurative language, dominated by metaphor, five types of imagery dominated by organic imagery, and deep structure meaning of life, pain, misery, sadness, and love.

The second one is related to the quarter-life crisis, which is "Examining the Phenomenon of a quarter-life crisis Through Artificial Intelligence and the Language of Twitter," written by Agarwal et al. (2020). This study used three sets of language analysis, namely Open-vocabulary Clustering, Linguistic Inquiry Word Count analysis, and Theory-based analysis, to analyze public messages mentioning a quarter-life crisis posted on Twitter from 2011 to 2015 from 3200 unique users aged 18–30 in the United Kingdom and the United States. The findings demonstrate the developmental challenges that young adults face and how these are portrayed naturally in social media language.

This paper explores a combination of those two topics. The figurative language used is satire, and it portrays the depiction of quarter-life crisis in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial. Thus, this paper provides an extended analysis concerning the combination of figurative language, namely satire, and its usage in portraying a quarter-life crisis in the form of song lyrics.

## Satire

Satire is a type of figurative language that mocks or derides something, but it also contains a critique of human frailty that is not always ironic. Declercq (2018) asserts that satire is a genre that inevitably seeks to criticize and amuse, with the caveat that both goals inevitably interact even though neither is entirely necessary to the other. Similarly, Li et al. (2020) state that satire is a literary technique that authors use to mock or ridicule a person, organization, or ideology by criticizing them for a cultural violation or poor social behavior. Satire is intended to prevent any moral or artistic advancement by utilizing humor to criticize. The aim of satire is to make people laugh, so by favoring humor as a means of serious criticism, the significance of human rights issues could be diminished, as stated by Gadsby in Krefting (2019).

There are 3 types of satire according to Edley (2017):

- Horatian

Horatian satire makes humorous societal commentary. It is intended to make lighthearted fun of a subject or circumstance.

- Juvenalian

Juvenalian satire is not humorous; it is grim and intended to challenge authority.

- Menippean

Menippean satire assigns moral judgment to a specific viewpoint. Similar to Horatian satire, it can be humorous and lighthearted, but it can also be as stinging as Juvenalian satire.

According to Unger (2022), the author and founder of the satirical news website The Daily Bonnet, there are some characteristics to identify that something is satire, such as:

- The content seems to be irreverent or lacks respect
- It appears blunt and too honest
- Politically incorrect
- The ideas and story are exaggerated
- The characters are in caricature
- Points out contradictions and hypocrisy
- Advocates something unethical and acts like it's normal
- Funny or humorous

### **Quarter-life crisis (QLC)**

In the course of the human life cycle, individuals' physical and psychological well-being will evolve. Many changes are experienced during the course of human growth, including those in the physical, intellectual, social, moral, linguistic, emotional, and other areas. Eventually, based on the growth of living things, these factors will combine to create unique physical and psychological specialties (Jahja, 2011). Agarwal et al. (2020) stated that the term quarter-life crisis (QLC) is used frequently to refer to developmental crisis experiences in early adulthood ranging from 18 to 30. According to Fischer, as described in Habibie (2019), a quarter-life crisis is a sensation of anxiety brought on by uncertainty about one's future. These feelings of anxiety about relationships, work, and social life occur to them in their 20s.

According to Putri (2019), there are several signs indicating that someone has a quarter-life crisis:

- Starting to question the purpose of life and worrying about the future
- Feeling unhappy with the current life situation
- Feeling depressed and anxious
- Starting to forget the time for fun
- The changing circle of friends
- Lack of motivation
- Envious of what other peers have or accomplished

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study is qualitative research that uses a content analysis method to describe the meaning of satire in the song lyrics of "24" by Sundial and explains the portrayal of a quarter-life crisis through said satire. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as a technique for delving into and understanding the significance of the persons or groups assigned to a social or human issue. The chosen song's lyrics, which satirize the quarter-life crisis, are examined using content analysis.

The data of this study includes the song lyrics of "24" by Sundial taken from [www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Sundial-1/24](http://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Sundial-1/24). The data is analyzed using the content analysis method with the following steps of identifying:

- The object
- Key issue

- Other literary techniques used
- Type of satire
- Purpose

The analysis is presented in a TEEL paragraph structure to identify the portrayal of a quarter-life crisis with the signs mentioned by Putri (2019) through satire in the song lyrics. According to Matrix Education (2018), a strong analysis paragraph uses a TEEL structure that consists of a Topic, Evidence, Explanation, and Link.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the "24" by Sundial lyrics focusing on satire, researchers found portrayals of a quarter-life crisis from 6 unrepeated stanzas. All of the quarter-life crisis signs mentioned by Putri (2019) are portrayed in those stanzas.

*Table 1. Analysis of the first stanza*

| <b>Transcript</b>                              | <b>Analysis</b>  |
|--|--|
| <i>I'm 24 now</i>                              | 1. The object: someone in the age of 24  |
| <i>Still at my parents' house</i>              | 2. Key issue: it is normalized in a society that people at that age are already supposed to be established and have a family, but the object here is the opposite of that. |
| <i>Thought I would have it figured out</i>     | 3. Other literary techniques used: irony   |
| <i>Friends getting married, one has a baby</i> | 4. Type of satire: Menippean   |
| <i>I barely recognize this town</i>            | 5. Purpose: it is to point out a particular belief that someone should already establish a family at the age of 24   |
|  | Signs: Feeling unhappy with the current life situation, Envious of what other peers have or accomplished   |

The first stanza satirizes society's expectation of how someone at the age of 24 should have established their own family. The irony here is that while their friends have met society's expectations and are either married or already have a baby, the object, who is 24 years old, barely even recognizes their hometown, not to mention establishing a family. This Menippean satire points out a particular belief that someone should already establish a family at the age of 24. Society's expectation discourages people who have yet to establish anything at that age. This stanza portrays quarter-life crisis signs based on Putri (2019), such as the feeling of unhappiness with the current life situation and envy of what other peers have or accomplished. The sign, feeling unhappy with the current life situation, is portrayed through the 3rd line where the object thought that they would have had their life figured out at the age of 24, but it turns out that they barely even recognize the town they live in as shown in the 5th line. The other sign, envious of what other peers have or accomplished, is portrayed through the 2nd and 4th lines, where the subject still lives at their parent's house while their friends are married or have a baby at 24. The aura of envy can be seen in how they ironically compare their situation with others that have met society's expectations. Thus, it is clear that this stanza portrays how society's expectation of establishing a family on 24 years old adults has caused a quarter-life crisis for those who have yet to reach that expectation.

*Table 2. Analysis of the second stanza*

| <b>Transcript</b>                                       | <b>Analysis</b>   |
|---|---|
| <i>Mama asked me what my plan is for the future</i>     | 1. The object: someone in the age of 24   |
| <i>But I don't even know what's going on for dinner</i> | 2. Key issue: people at the age of 24 are often asked about their future plans and what they want to do with life, but for some, such questions could add up their burden and make them more confused |
| <i>I'm 24 now, thought I could finally settle down</i>  | 3. Other literary techniques used: irony  |
|   | 4. Type of satire: Menippean  |

5. Purpose: it is to point out that not everyone has the same time points in life, some people could already know about their future plans at the age of 24 and some do not. Questioning a future plan makes some people feel that they should already establish their future plan at the age of 24 because society thinks so. And when they cannot meet society's expectations, it discourages them.

Signs: Starting to question the purpose of life and worrying about the future, Lack of motivation

The second stanza satirizes how questions about someone's future plan could discourage them. The irony here is that the object does not even know their dinner menu, which is in the near future, not to mention their future plan. This Menippean satire makes the point that people with a quarter-life crisis feel they should already have their future plans in place by the time they are 24 because society expects them to. It discourages them when they fall short of society's expectations. This stanza portrays quarter-life crisis signs such as starting to question life's purpose, worrying about the future, and lack of motivation based on Putri (2019). The sign, beginning to question the meaning of life and worrying about the future, is portrayed through the 1st and 2nd lines where the object does not even know what they are having for dinner, let alone what they have planned for the future. The other sign, lack of motivation, is portrayed through the 3rd line mentioning the thought that the object could finally settle down at the age of 24 in a discouraged tone. In conclusion, this stanza portrays a quarter-life crisis ignited by questions about future plans, which makes people who have yet to know their future plans worry about their future and discourages them.

Table 3. Analysis of the third stanza

| Transcript   | Analysis   |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Parties end before I'm drunk</i><br/> <i>Friday night I'm tired as fuck</i><br/> <i>I don't know how I ended up like this</i><br/> <i>Can someone tell me what the hell I missed?</i><br/> <i>(Missed, yeah)</i></p> | <p>1. The object: someone in the age of 24<br/>                 2. Key issue: tiring weekday routines are repeated for most people, and when they do have time to have fun, they'll be too tired to do so. It's been going on for long without them even realizing it that they start to wonder if maybe they've done something too much that they forgot other things.<br/>                 3. Other literary techniques used: hyperbole, colloquialism<br/>                 4. Type of satire: Menippean<br/>                 5. Purpose: it is to point out that sometimes people are too absorbed in their work or their activities, that they often forget how to relax and have fun. It is like they are missing the joys of their youth.<br/>                 Signs: Feeling unhappy with the current life situation, Starting to forget the time for fun</p> |

The third stanza satirizes how tedious routines make people miss out on the joy in life they should have lived for. The phrase "as fuck" and "what the hell" in this stanza is categorized as a colloquialism, which means informal expressions used in everyday life. The colloquialism "as fuck" here also makes a hyperbole effect that implies how overly tired the subject is. This Menippean satire points out how people with a quarter-life crisis repeat the same exhausting everyday routines, and when they do have time to have fun, they will be too exhausted to do it. The routines have been going on for so long that without even noticing it, they question if they may have taken on too much and forgotten other things. Based on Putri (2019), this stanza illustrates signs of a quarter-life crisis, such as the feeling of unhappiness with the current life situation and the start of forgetting the time for fun. The sign, feeling unhappy with the current

life situation, is portrayed through the 3rd line, showing how the object is dissatisfied with their current livelihood. It seems that they realize they are missing something in life and begin to question what they have missed. The other sign, starting to forget the time for fun, is portrayed through the 1st and 2nd lines where they do not seem to enjoy parties to the fullest by the fact that they are not drunk when those parties end, and when weekdays are over, they seem too tired to have fun. In reality, people must know how to manage the work-life balance in order to still have fun in the middle of their tedious routines. When people do not spend a proper amount of time for fun, they will feel unhappy. Therefore, it is clear that this stanza portrays a quarter-life crisis experienced by people with tedious routines who miss out on their joyous youth.

Table 4. Analysis of the fourth stanza

| Transcript   | Analysis  |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Birthday's here, I'm still depressed</i><br/> <i>Got no friends, just lots of stress</i><br/> <i>It feels like yesterday when we were kids</i><br/> <i>Can someone tell me what the hell I missed?</i><br/> <i>'Cause I don't know</i></p> | <p>1. The object: someone in the age of 24<br/>                 2. Key issue: usually people are happy when their birthday comes. Kids often celebrate their birthdays with family and friends, but as they grow older, they have different schedules from their friends and start to drift apart.<br/>                 3. Other literary techniques used: antithesis, colloquialism<br/>                 4. Type of satire: Menippean<br/>                 5. Purpose: it points out how people's time as a child is more joyous and less depressing than when they reach adulthood, they have friends they can celebrate their birthday with. Once they have their own work and activities, they will have no time for their friends; thus, drifting apart from them. It is like they are missing out on their time with their friends.<br/>                 Signs: Feeling depressed and anxious, The changing circle of friends</p> |

The fourth stanza satirizes how growing up can be stressful, even more so when people do not have friends to rely on. The antithesis in this stanza is in the 1st line, where a birthday, a joyous event, is the exact opposite of the feeling of depression. In this stanza, the phrase "what the hell" is classified as a colloquialism, which refers to the casual language used in everyday life. This Menippean satire points out the stress of growing up without friends to rely on. When a person's birthday arrives, they are usually overjoyed. Children frequently spend their birthdays with family and friends, but as they become older, their schedules diverge, and they begin to drift away. According to Putri (2019), this stanza depicts the signs of a quarter-life crisis, such as the feeling of depression and anxiety and the changing circle of friends. The sign, feeling depressed and anxious, is portrayed through the 1st and 2nd lines, which mention that the object is still depressed and has lots of stress even on their birthday. The other sign, the changing circle of friends, is portrayed through the 2nd and 3rd lines, where the object states that they do not have friends and starts to reminisce about their childhood. This stanza once again mentions the question about what the object has missed in life, but this time with an answer that the object does not know. This shows the confusion of the object undergoing a quarter-life crisis. The process of growing up would indeed involve a lot of stress, but that is where we can learn how to become an adult truly. People come and go; that is the same for friends; only true friends last forever. People must also learn to let go in order to grow. As a result, it can be concluded that this stanza depicts the stress of growing up and the changing circle of friends in people's quarter-life crisis.

Table 5. Analysis of the fifth stanza

| Transcript  | Analysis                                       |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Sleep till the sun's down, another breakdown</i><br/> <i>Feels like the days are all the same</i></p> | <p>1. The object: someone in the age of 24</p> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>A new type of anxious school never taught this<br/>             And what the fuck are taxes anyway?</i></p> | <p>2. Key issue: monotonous days make people get tired of it. People start to feel anxious at the repeating routines that do not seem to lead anywhere. School never taught students how to deal with this anxiety.<br/>             3. Other literary techniques used: colloquialism, irony<br/>             4. Type of satire: Menippean<br/>             5. Purpose: it is to point out that living a routine without a set goal grows anxiety in people's minds. With anxiety, people's minds begin to drift to random stuff that they are insecure about, and how to overcome that anxiety is not something that was taught in formal education.<br/>             Signs: Feeling unhappy with the current life situation, Feeling depressed and anxious</p> |
|---|--|

The fifth stanza satirizes how monotonous routines while growing up lead to anxiety in people's minds without them even knowing how to handle it. In this stanza, the phrase "what the fuck" can be classified as a colloquialism, which refers to the informal language used in everyday life. The irony here is that when they do not even know what taxes are, which was taught in school, there is no way they can expect to conquer the anxiety of growing up, which was not taught. This Menippean satire points out how people with a quarter-life crisis do not know how to overcome the anxiety from monotonous routines experienced when growing up. People grow tired of routine days. They become worried when they repeat activities that do not appear to lead anywhere. Students were never taught how to deal with this kind of anxiety at school. This stanza, according to Putri (2019), describes the signs of a quarter-life crisis, such as the feeling of unhappiness with the current life situation and the feeling of depression and anxiety. The sign, feeling unhappy with the current life situation, is portrayed through the 1st and 2nd lines, where the object seems bored and tired of their monotonous routine. They are unsatisfied with the repeating order that does not have excitement, just depression. The other sign, the feeling of depression and anxiety, is portrayed through the 3rd line, where the object mentions the new type of anxiety that was never taught at school. Hence, it can be seen that this stanza portrays the anxiety suffered by people with a quarter-life crisis stemming from monotonous routines that lead nowhere.

Table 6. Analysis of the sixth stanza

| Transcript  | Analysis  |
|---|---|
| <p><i>I tell myself I won't be cynical and bitter<br/>             And now I see it when I'm looking in the mirror<br/>             I'm 24 now, wondering when I will be okay</i></p> | <p>1. The object: someone in the age of 24<br/>             2. Key issue: even if someone continuously convinces themselves with positive thoughts, in truth, they still show off the image of negativity.<br/>             3. Other literary techniques used: irony<br/>             4. Type of satire: Menippean<br/>             5. Purpose: it points out that convincing yourself to be positive may not always work, it is okay to not be okay in this phase of life.<br/>             Signs: Starting to question the purpose of life and worrying about the future, Feeling unhappy with the current life situation</p> |

The sixth stanza satirizes how the effort of trying to look okay when you are not may not always work. The irony here is how the object sees the cynical and bitter self in them even though they told themselves not to show it. This Menippean satire points out that it is okay to show people you are not okay and experiencing a quarter-life crisis. Even though someone

constantly tries to convince themselves that they are optimistic, they still project a negative picture. So do not try to hide the pain, and be true to yourself. This stanza illustrates signs of a quarter-life crisis based on Putri (2019), such as starting to question life's purpose, worrying about the future, and feeling unhappy with the current life situation. The sign, starting to question the purpose of life and worrying about the future, is portrayed through the 3rd line, where the object wonders when they will finally be okay and get rid of their anxiety and live a happy life. The other sign, feeling unhappy with the current life situation, is portrayed through the 1st and 2nd lines, where the object tries to convince themselves not to be cynical and bitter when they are. They try to look okay by hiding the cynicism and bitterness in them. In conclusion, showing that you are not okay when you have a quarter-life crisis is okay.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After analyzing the "24" song lyrics by Sundial, researchers find six unrepeated stanzas of satire containing the portrayal of quarter-life crisis signs. The result shows that feeling unhappy with the current life situation sign appears most frequently by four times, followed by feeling depressed and anxious and starting to question the purpose of life, and worrying about the future by two times. It is because a quarter-life crisis stems from the feeling of unhappiness with the life currently lived. Other signs are the result of that unhappy feeling itself.

The object of the song only refers to a single object that can be related to many. There are also many other literary techniques used in each stanza, dominated by irony. The type of satire in this song is Menippean, a type of satire that can be humorous and lighthearted but also stinging to assign moral judgment to a specific viewpoint.

Based on the explanation above, researchers find that the portrayal of a quarter-life crisis in the song lyrics "24" by Sundial mainly focuses on the unhappiness in the object's life. However, this portrayal also shows that it is okay not to be okay when experiencing a quarter-life crisis. Through this song's lyrics, hopefully, people who are experiencing the same thing will be able to express themselves by relating to this song.

This study uses Putri's theory (2019) on quarter-life crisis signs, Unger's theory (2022) on satire characteristics, Matrix Education's analysis design (2018), and other theories to support this study. Future works could investigate how satire portrays other topics aside from a quarter-life crisis. Further, researchers propose to perform a more detailed qualitative analysis depending on the topic that will be analyzed. Future studies can also use this research as an object to compare and elaborate the problem of the study with other theories.

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