

# SIGNS OF PETER PAN SYNDROME IN NIKI SONGS

BASWORO WIJOYOKUSUMO\*<sup>1</sup>, RAHAYU PUJI HARYANTI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universita Negeri Semarang

First received: January 5, 2025

Final proof received: February 15, 2025

\*Corresponding Author: basworowijoyokusumo@gmail.com

## Abstract

In an era where young adults face mounting pressures from societal expectations, anxiety and loneliness have become prevalent psychological challenges, particularly during the transitional phase of emerging adulthood. These challenges are often linked to Peter Pan Syndrome, a psychological phenomenon characterized by emotional immaturity and reluctance to embrace adult responsibilities. This study explores the intersection of Peter Pan Syndrome, a psychological phenomenon marked by emotional immaturity and reluctance to embrace adult responsibilities, with themes of anxiety and loneliness as reflected in the music of Indonesian singer-songwriter NIKI. By focusing on five selected songs (Pandemonium, 24, Heirloom Pain, Nothing Can, and Split), the research delves into how her lyrics articulate the emotional complexities of emerging adulthood, including self-doubt, identity struggles, and the pressures of societal expectations. Using thematic and figurative language analysis within a qualitative framework, the study examines the resonance of NIKI's music with young listeners experiencing quarter-life crises and the broader implications of these struggles in contemporary society. Findings reveal how NIKI's music portrays the psychological impact of anxiety and loneliness associated with Peter Pan Syndrome, offering not only a reflection of these challenges but also a message of resilience and emotional healing. By bridging psychological theory and popular culture, this research highlights the role of music as a medium for understanding and addressing modern developmental struggles.

Keywords: Peter Pan Syndrome, Anxiety, Loneliness, NIKI, Quarter-life Crisis, Intergenerational Trauma

## INTRODUCTION

Peter Pan Syndrome, first introduced by Dan Kiley (1983), is named after the fictional character who refuses to grow up and take on adult responsibilities. Kiley (1983) defined it as a behavioral pattern characterized by a reluctance or refusal to accept adult responsibilities. Individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome often exhibit emotional immaturity, dependence, and avoidance of commitment. Although this syndrome is

not officially recognized as a mental disorder, Kiley (1983) noted that it has been widely discussed in psychological literature and popular culture. The characteristics of Peter Pan Syndrome can manifest at various life stages and transcend gender and socio-economic boundaries.

One prominent context in which Peter Pan Syndrome can be observed is during the quarter-life crisis. The term "quarter-life crisis" first emerged among young

adults in America at the turn of the 20th century (Atwood & Scholtz, 2008; Robbins & Wilner, 2001). According to Robbins & Wilner (2001), this phase is typically experienced by individuals in early adulthood and is marked by uncertainty, despair, negative self-evaluation, and feelings of being trapped in life. A quarter-life crisis often involves anxiety and worries about future uncertainties, especially regarding work, love, and social life (Arnett, 2015; Nash & Murray, 2010). As individuals transition into adulthood, they face numerous reactions and challenges. This developmental stage, known as emerging adulthood, was introduced by Arnett (2000), who described it as occurring between the ages of 18 and 25. During this period, individuals encounter various demands from their environment, which can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and loneliness psychological challenges closely associated with Peter Pan Syndrome.

The connection between Peter Pan Syndrome and anxiety and loneliness highlights its profound impact on emotional well-being, making this issue still relevant today. According to Kiley (1983), increased self-blame can reduce self-confidence, creating a cycle of emotional distress. Anxiety often stems from fears of responsibility and the loss of personal freedom, while loneliness arises from avoiding deep and meaningful relationships. For some, adulthood feels like a significant sacrifice due to societal rules and norms, such as entering the workforce and enduring monotonous daily routines (Gracias, 2013). This is evident in one of the most striking manifestations of Peter Pan Syndrome: the avoidance of commitment. Many individuals with this syndrome tend to prefer casual relationships, such as situationships, over serious romantic relationships due to fear of responsibilities and expectations in dee-

per commitments.

These isolated emotions can lead to serious consequences, including chronic stress and existential crises when individuals struggle to find purpose and direction in life. As highlighted on Kumparan Woman, Judith (2023) noted how situationships, or undefined relationships, became a trend among Gen Z women in 2022, reflecting dynamics associated with Peter Pan Syndrome. This phenomenon shows how the inability to form deep connections can exacerbate psychological and social issues, such as anxiety about responsibilities and feelings of loneliness due to a lack of meaningful emotional connections. This issue continues to be a concern, especially among younger generations, due to its relevance in explaining behavioral patterns and emotional challenges in the modern era.

Peter Pan Syndrome has been explored through various media forms, including literature, and is evident in the lyrics of Indonesian singer-songwriter NIKI. Notably, NIKI has 11.2 million monthly listeners and became the first Indonesian female artist to perform at Coachella in 2022. Her songs, such as *Pandemonium*, *24*, *Heirloom Pain*, *Nothing Can*, and *Split*, delve into themes of self-discovery, vulnerability, and the conflict between freedom and responsibility. For example, *Pandemonium* reflects emotional chaos, *24* addresses the confusion of early adulthood, *Heirloom Pain* discusses generational burdens, *Nothing Can* examines the limits of independence, and *Split* portrays the struggle to balance dual identities. These themes resonate deeply with young listeners who often face similar challenges during transitional life phases. This demonstrates that Peter Pan Syndrome has become a part of literary discourse.

Despite frequent discussions of Peter Pan Syndrome, there is a lack of academic research specifically highlighting

its psychological impacts, especially in the context of popular culture and music. The author of this research aims to fill this gap by focusing on how anxiety and loneliness, as two key elements of Peter Pan Syndrome, are portrayed in NIKI's music. By analyzing the lyrics and themes in NIKI's work, this research seeks to uncover how these psychological themes are conveyed and how they resonate with young audiences who often face pressures in navigating adult life. To guide this exploration, the research is structured around three research questions: What are the main themes explored in NIKI's selected songs? How are the themes of anxiety and loneliness, related to Peter Pan Syndrome, reflected in NIKI's music? And finally, what are the real-life implications of NIKI's songs in relation to Peter Pan Syndrome in contemporary society? These questions provide a framework for examining how NIKI's artistry not only reflects but also interacts with her listeners' struggles, offering a unique perspective on understanding the emotional complexities associated with Peter Pan Syndrome.

### **Peter Pan Syndrome**

The Peter Pan Syndrome, a concept introduced by Dan Kiley in 1983, describes a behavioral pattern characterized by a persistent reluctance to transition into adult roles and responsibilities. Inspired by the fictional character Peter Pan, who chooses to remain a child forever, the term highlights traits such as emotional immaturity, dependency, and avoidance of long-term commitments. Although not officially classified as a clinical diagnosis, the syndrome is widely recognized in psychological discussions as a way to describe individuals struggling to move from adolescence to adulthood. Kiley (1983) emphasized its psychological impact, stating, "It is not

life-threatening, so it is not a disease. But it endangers one's mental health, so it is more than just an inconvenience." This statement underscores the seriousness of the syndrome, which goes beyond mere reluctance, as individuals often prioritize instant gratification over long-term planning, refuse to take on stable roles like building a career or starting a family, and struggle to make significant life decisions.

Individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome display a persona of enjoying challenges, engaging in activities for fun, and often exhibit narcissistic tendencies due to excessive fantasies about themselves. However, on the flip side, they also have an overwhelming fear of adult responsibilities (Skropupa & Draga, 2012). This attitude reflects a developmental crisis in achieving independence while being afraid to take on adult functions. From Erikson's psychosocial perspective, the anxiety of entering adulthood arises from the inability to navigate the conflicts of developmental tasks. This social developmental crisis is marked by obstacles in forming adult intimacy to build social bonds within relationships, roles, and social life (Feist & Feist, 2011).

Rooted in the fundamental fear of adulthood and responsibility, the anxiety inherent in Peter Pan Syndrome becomes a key driver that leads individuals to avoid adult expectations and responsibilities. This anxiety often manifests as existential fears, such as losing autonomy or uncertainty about the future. According to Quadrio (1983), Peter Pan Syndrome represents a condition of ambivalence and anxiety about growing up—whether to explore a new world or remain in the comfort zone of their childhood. Ortega (2007) noted that people with Peter Pan Syndrome are often afraid of loneliness, which leads them to seek dependable partners to make decisions for them. However, when

their relationships begin to demand deeper commitment and higher levels of responsibility, they become frightened, ultimately ending the relationship and seeking another partner (Ortega, 2007).

Ortega (2007) argued that the symptoms of Peter Pan Syndrome stem from overprotective parenting. Overprotective parents often fail to provide children with opportunities to make independent decisions or to develop the skills needed to prepare for life in society. Kiley (1983) delved further into the origins of the anxiety central to Peter Pan Syndrome, highlighting that it often stems from family dynamics, particularly unresolved marital issues between parents. In such environments, children are highly sensitive to their parents' disharmony, even when open conflict is not visible. These tensions often manifest through subtle, covert messages that children inadvertently interpret as being their fault.

Loneliness is another significant psychological challenge associated with Peter Pan Syndrome, marked by emotional isolation and hesitation to form deep, meaningful relationships. Individuals with this syndrome often portray themselves as freedom-loving and fearless, akin to knights unafraid of danger. Yet, in their daily lives, they panic when performing tasks expected of an adult man (Skropupa & Draga, 2012). According to Kiley (1983), this loneliness is experienced as "a vast emptiness that reaches the pit of their stomachs." Those with the syndrome often prefer superficial connections over genuine, long-term bonds. This tendency often stems from a fear of vulnerability and a desire to maintain independence, trapping them in a cycle of alienation.

### **Developmental Tasks of Early Adulthood**

The transition from adolescence to

adulthood involves a series of developmental tasks, as described by psychologist Erik Erikson. According to Erikson (1950), the primary task in early adulthood is to build intimate relationships without falling into isolation. Intimacy, in this context, does not solely refer to romantic relationships but also encompasses the ability to care for and share oneself with others while maintaining a strong sense of self. Erikson (1950) described this developmental crisis as "intimacy versus isolation," noting that its resolution is heavily influenced by the outcome of the identity crisis in adolescence, which he termed "identity versus role confusion." This interaction also reflects the impact of earlier developmental crises during infancy and childhood.

In Erikson's theory, the interaction between early and later developmental crises highlights how experiences during infancy and childhood can influence the success of developmental tasks in young adulthood. As Marcia (1980) stated, achieving a strong sense of identity during adolescence serves as a critical foundation for successfully addressing the challenges of intimacy in early adulthood. Furthermore, Kroger (2007) emphasized that identity formation is not confined to adolescence but continues throughout life, alternating between periods of crisis and stability.

Young adults may fear losing their sense of self by becoming too close to others, or they may entirely define themselves through their relationships with others. The challenge of building intimate relationships becomes even more difficult if they are still grappling with unresolved identity issues. Erikson (1950) stressed that although achieving a sense of identity is a lifelong process, periods of crisis and stability are inevitable throughout this journey. Additionally, Erikson (1950) underscored the importance of having a strong identi-

ty foundation to establish healthy intimate relationships. This perspective raises intriguing questions about social and cultural contexts: for instance, how women in earlier generations often defined themselves through their roles as wives, or how Eastern cultures, which prioritize interdependence over individualism, approach this developmental task.

For individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome, these challenges become even more pronounced. Their resistance to change and fear of commitment make it increasingly difficult for them to navigate the developmental tasks related to intimacy and identity. Without resolving these developmental crises, they may remain in a state of prolonged adolescence, struggling to define their adult identity and embrace new roles and responsibilities. Marcia (1980) also noted that failure to establish a solid identity during adolescence can lead to difficulties in addressing developmental challenges in adulthood, including building healthy intimate relationships. Furthermore, Papalia, Olds, and Feldman (2009) highlighted that stagnation in psychosocial development can hinder individuals from reaching their full potential, resulting in feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety, and profound loneliness. This stagnation not only impedes personal growth but also underscores the deep psychological impact of failing to move beyond developmental struggles, as described by Erikson.

### **Popular Culture and Music as Expression**

Music serves as a powerful medium for expressing complex emotions and psychological states. As noted by Rabinowitch (2020), “Musical behavior has likely played a crucial role in shaping human social interaction and continues to do so today.” In the context of this research,

NIKI’s songs are analyzed not only for their thematic content but also for their role in reflecting the psychological challenges of early adulthood. Through her lyrics, NIKI explores the collective experiences of young people, using music as a form of storytelling that resonates with listeners who may face similar issues related to Peter Pan Syndrome. As Hesmondhalgh (2013) observed, popular music often becomes a tool for emotional expression and identity, allowing listeners to find meaning and support in lyrics that mirror their own struggles. In songs like “*Split*” and “*Pandemonium*,” NIKI captures psychological dynamics such as anxiety, loneliness, and identity uncertainty, which are characteristic of early adulthood.

NIKI’s lyrics stand out for their use of figurative language, including metaphors, symbolism, imagery, and personification. These literary devices help convey emotional struggles and psychological themes associated with Peter Pan Syndrome. Metaphors are used to depict complex emotions, while symbolism adds layers of deeper meaning, connecting listeners to the underlying messages of the songs. For instance, Barthes (1977) suggests that symbolism in popular cultural texts often creates a “unity of emotion and logic,” helping audiences comprehend abstract concepts through compelling narratives. Analyzing these devices is crucial for understanding how NIKI’s songwriting reflects core concepts such as anxiety, loneliness, and the reluctance to grow up.

According to research from Arini, D. P. (2019) entitled “*Peterpan Syndrome Phenomenon: Self-Identity Crisis in Forming Intimacy in Adult Men*”, this study explores Peter Pan Syndrome from a psychosocial perspective, focusing on the challenges faced by adult men in forming interpersonal relationships due to anxiety about commitment and so-

cial responsibility. Using qualitative analysis, the research highlights how failure to navigate adolescent developmental tasks leads to role confusion and unpreparedness in early adulthood. However, this study is limited to adult men and does not explore the broader manifestations of Peter Pan Syndrome across genders or its presence in cultural or media contexts, such as music or literature. Additionally, the research does not investigate the psychological impacts of Peter Pan Syndrome on emotions like loneliness and anxiety, nor does it analyze how these emotions are expressed or reflected in popular culture.

Building on the exploration of emotional themes in broader contexts, the study by Puspitarini, D. (2024) entitled *“Freedom of Expression Seen Through Lyrics in Rich Brian and NIKI’s Songs”* examines how song lyrics serve as a medium for expressing social and cultural issues. Using semiotic analysis, the research reveals how Rich Brian and NIKI convey arguments and support for contemporary issues through their music. While this study highlights the role of music as a platform for addressing societal concerns, it does not focus on psychological struggles, such as anxiety and loneliness, which are central to Peter Pan Syndrome. Furthermore, it primarily addresses freedom of expression rather than the nuanced emotional challenges associated with early adulthood, leaving a gap in understanding how music reflects deeper psychological experiences.

Expanding further on emotional exploration in NIKI’s work, Yuniar, D.H. (2024) in *“The Portrayal of Contemporary Love in NIKI’s ‘Dancing with the Devil’ Song”* delves into the complexities of modern love as expressed in NIKI’s lyrics. Employing a semiotic phenomenology approach, the study interprets the song’s deeper intentions and cultural context, emphasizing themes of

love, gratification, and societal dynamics. While providing insights into the evolving notions of love in contemporary society, this study focuses solely on one song and overlooks other emotional dimensions, such as anxiety and loneliness, that are integral to Peter Pan Syndrome. Moreover, it misses the opportunity to examine NIKI’s broader discography, which could offer a more comprehensive understanding of recurring themes in her music.

In light of these gaps, this research takes a different approach by analyzing the psychological themes of anxiety and loneliness as the key elements of Peter Pan Syndrome as reflected in NIKI’s selected songs. By integrating psychological theories with cultural and lyrical analysis, this research aims to bridge the gap in previous research by addressing how NIKI’s music encapsulates the emotional struggles of emerging adulthood. This not only broadens the scope of Peter Pan Syndrome studies but also contributes to understanding its portrayal in contemporary popular culture.

## METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to examine how NIKI’s music reflects psychological themes related to Peter Pan Syndrome, specifically anxiety and loneliness. Qualitative research, as described by Creswell (2014), allows for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena through detailed textual and contextual analysis. The analysis is grounded in the theory of Peter Pan Syndrome proposed by Dan Kiley, which explores the emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals struggling with the transition to adulthood. As individuals progress into adulthood, they begin to recognize the importance of emotional relationships and connections (Putrayudha, 2024). This awa-

renewal is key to understanding the dynamics of anxiety and loneliness experienced by individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome, who often avoid adult responsibilities. This research highlights the deeper psychological roots of the anxiety and loneliness experienced by young people.

The research focuses on five selected songs by NIKI: *Pandemonium*, *24*, *Heirloom Pain*, *Nothing Can*, and *Split*. These songs were chosen for their relevance to themes experienced by young people, particularly those navigating a quarter-life crisis. The primary data consists of the official lyrics of these songs, sourced from licensed platforms to ensure accuracy. These lyrics serve as the foundation for analyzing themes related to Peter Pan Syndrome.

A thematic analysis will be conducted to identify recurring language and imagery that reflect experiences of anxiety, loneliness, and internal conflict. The lyrics of each song will be examined in detail to uncover how NIKI employs expressive language to convey feelings of disillusionment, intergenerational struggles, and challenges in navigating early adulthood. Key themes aligned with Peter Pan Syndrome and the quarter-life crisis will be highlighted and discussed in depth. Complementing this, a focused analysis of figurative language will also be conducted, identifying metaphors, similes, personification, and symbolism. This analysis aims to reveal how NIKI uses these devices to express complex emotions, such as struggles with identity, personal relationships, and existential conflicts.

Finally, the findings from the analysis will be synthesized to provide a cohesive interpretation of how NIKI's music addresses the psychological complexities associated with Peter Pan Syndrome, particularly loneliness and anxiety. By combining insights from thematic analysis and figurative language, this research aims to

demonstrate how music serves as a medium to explore psychological struggles that resonate with listeners who may be experiencing similar developmental challenges.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section will outline the results of the analysis and discussion related to the main themes that author found in NIKI's selected songs, the reflection of Peter Pan Syndrome themes in her music, and the real-life implications of NIKI's songs concerning Peter Pan Syndrome in contemporary society.

### Main Themes Explored In NIKI's Selected Songs

The author found that the results of this research indicate that NIKI's lyrical narratives strongly resonate with emotional struggles such as self-doubt, isolation, and anxiety themes that align with the psychological dimensions of Peter Pan Syndrome. This can be observed in the analysis of each of NIKI's songs in this research, starting with the song *Pandemonium*. The title "Pandemonium" originates from a term describing extraordinary chaos. In the context of the song, it represents emotional upheaval that paradoxically feels calming for the narrator, despite external turmoil. The main theme of the song revolves around the search for peace amidst chaos, introspection, and feelings of isolation from the outside world.

The lyrics depict the narrator's emotional journey, likened to an isolated island. The narrative evolves from describing external chaos, such as societal pressures and collective deception, to deep personal reflections on feelings of being lost. Despite conflicting emotions, the narrator embraces the chaos, portraying it as something artistic and profound. Figurative language

in this song includes metaphors such as “silently detonating emotions” to describe suppressed emotional explosions and “gold is new, but the gray is state of the art,” emphasizing the beauty found in sadness. The writing style is introspective and poetic, blurring the line between sorrow and elegance.

The central theme of finding calm amidst chaos and feelings of isolation aligns with the tendencies of Peter Pan Syndrome to confront complex emotions like anxiety and loneliness without attempting to resolve them. While *Pandemonium* explores the tension between external chaos and inner peace, the next song, *24*, shifts to a more reflective perspective, focusing on simple joys and the uncertainties of young adulthood. The title “24” reflects the narrator’s age, a significant moment in early adulthood that serves as a symbol for emotional reflection and life transitions.

The song delves into themes of simple pleasures, the transition into adulthood, and the interplay between happiness and existential questions. The narrative begins with reflections on the narrator’s daily life at 24, highlighting small achievements, memories of those who have passed, and fragile yet meaningful romantic relationships. The song’s structure is simple yet effective in conveying fleeting happiness paired with deeper uncertainties. Figurative language includes symbolic imagery, such as “pear tree budding” to signify growth and renewal, and “floating feather” to depict a sense of lightness but instability. The tone is melancholic yet hopeful, balancing nostalgia and optimism.

The theme of being caught between simple joys and the search for deeper meaning resonates with the anxiety characteristic of Peter Pan Syndrome, reflecting concerns about adult responsibilities and life’s uncertainties. While *24* captures personal

reflections on growing up, *Heirloom Pain* focuses more on intergenerational issues struggles that are inherited and the complexities of family relationships. The title “Heirloom Pain” symbolizes emotional wounds passed down through generations. An understanding of generational trauma shapes the central theme of this song, which examines family dynamics, inherited struggles, and personal growth amidst these burdens.

The song portrays the narrator recognizing negative emotional patterns in their family, including the father’s anger and the mother’s mistakes. This narrative captures the tension between acknowledging this inheritance and striving for self-improvement and emotional liberation. Metaphors like “heirloom pain” represent inherited trauma, while imagery such as “walls up to the skies” symbolizes the emotional barriers built by the narrator. The song’s tone is reflective and empathetic, capturing the emotional depth of family relationships.

The themes of family trauma and hesitation to accept responsibility align with the tendencies of Peter Pan Syndrome to avoid emotional challenges, highlighting the difficulty of breaking free from inherited cycles. Following this exploration of intergenerational dynamics, the next song, *Nothing Can*, focuses on the narrator’s personal confrontation with isolation and independence. The title “Nothing Can” emphasizes the narrator’s realization that no external force can save them from their inner struggles, affirming themes of loneliness and self-reliance. The song explores isolation, helplessness, and the journey toward self-acceptance.

The narrative begins by describing small, unpleasant moments, such as chaotic parties and bitter conversations, then evolves into the narrator’s reflection on the need to rely on themselves. Figurative

expressions like “working overtime just to freeze them” depict the narrator’s efforts to face their inner turmoil. The tone of the song is marked by irony and introspection, offering an honest exploration of emotional resilience.

The themes of isolation and independence align with the tendencies of Peter Pan Syndrome to grapple with feelings of loneliness and the struggle to take ownership of life’s challenges. Building on the internal exploration in *Nothing Can, Split* takes a broader perspective, delving into identity conflicts and cultural duality. The title “Split” represents the narrator’s fragmented identity, torn between two cultures, places, and mindsets. This duality forms the central theme of the song, exploring identity conflicts, cultural alienation, and the search for belonging.

The lyrics depict the narrator’s struggle to reconcile their roots with their current circumstances, reflecting feelings of alienation and emotional duality. Imagery like “spread so thin, I’m low on emotional bandwidth” metaphorically describes emotional exhaustion, while the tone combines introspection with symbolic depictions of fragmentation.

The theme of not fitting into one’s surroundings mirrors traits of Peter Pan Syndrome, particularly the difficulty in building a stable identity amid societal expectations and personal struggles. Together, these five songs offer a layered exploration of emotional upheaval, self-reflection, and personal growth, highlighting various dimensions of Peter Pan Syndrome through their unique themes and styles.

The author also found that the central themes of each selected song touch on anxiety and loneliness, ensuring that these two topics which are the hallmarks of Peter Pan Syndrome remain present in every song. These feelings of anxiety and lone-

liness are revealed through the analysis of specific lyrics found in these songs.

### Reflections Of Anxiety And Loneliness Themes In NIKI’s Songs

Peter Pan Syndrome, among other things, is characterized by symptoms of anxiety and loneliness. As reflected in the following lyrics,

*“Pandemonium calms me down like an ocean”  
“Silently detonating emotions”* (Zefanya, 2020)

These lines reflect the paradoxical comfort in chaos and the suppression of overwhelming emotions, resonating with the hidden anxiety associated with Peter Pan Syndrome. Just as individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome internalize parental tension, the narrator in this song finds calm amidst chaos, mirroring the tendency to mask inner conflict with an outward sense of calm. This inclination to suppress emotions serves as the foundation for deeper feelings of anxiety, as observed in the family dynamics explored in the next song.

*“You wonder when your dad will call”  
“And yet I know nothing at all”* (Zefanya, 2024)

The phrase “You wonder when your dad will call” indicates unresolved family relationships, reflecting the covert messages from parents in Peter Pan Syndrome. This aligns with how such messages stem from marital disharmony and nurture anxiety (Kiley, 1983). The uncertainty and self-doubt in “And yet I know nothing at all” resonate with the anxiety of navigating adulthood without sufficient emotional grounding from parental figures. This restlessness is rooted in problematic family dynamics, and these pressures are often passed down through generations, as depicted in the next song.

*“Dad’s temper and mom’s mistakes”  
“Walking around with heirloom pain”* (Zefanya, 2024)

The phrase “Dad’s temper and mom’s mistakes” reflects the inheritance of unresolved family dynamics, which directly contribute to the anxiety associated with Peter Pan Syndrome. The concept of “heirloom pain” suggests the burden of generational trauma, highlighting how hidden messages from parents weigh children down with emotional struggles. From this inherited trauma, existential anxiety emerges, as revealed through the themes of isolation and self-responsibility explored in the lyrics of the next song

*“No one’ll ever save you, no one and nothing can”  
“Sitting alone with yourself is burning alive”* (Zefanya, 2024)

The lyrics “No one’ll ever save you, no one and nothing can” depict the existential loneliness associated with Peter Pan Syndrome, where children internalize parental conflicts and feel entirely responsible for resolving their struggles. “Sitting alone with yourself is burning alive” emphasizes the intense anxiety tied to self-reliance, stemming from a lack of emotional support from parents. This anxiety is further complicated by feelings of directionlessness and fragmented identity, as illustrated in the next song

*“Always part of me missing,  
but no one sees a difference”  
“Where I live, they believe you only have yourself”* (Zefanya, 2021)

The lyrics of “Always part of me missing” reflect a fragmented identity and emotional disconnection often experienced by individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome,

stemming from hidden messages within the family. “Where I live, they believe you only have yourself” highlights learned self-reliance and cultural or emotional isolation, further exacerbating their anxiety. These lyrics as a whole depict how anxiety becomes a core aspect underlying all emotional experiences in Peter Pan Syndrome.

While the exploration of anxiety in Peter Pan Syndrome sheds light on the internal conflicts and struggles resulting from unresolved parental tensions and intergenerational trauma, it is equally important to examine how this anxiety intertwines with a profound sense of loneliness. The emotional detachment caused by parental dynamics not only triggers self-doubt and fear but also fosters isolation, leaving individuals feeling disconnected from their families and themselves.

The subsequent analysis delves deeper into the aspect of loneliness, demonstrating how this pervasive emotion shapes the life experiences of those grappling with Peter Pan Syndrome. As the author notes in the following lyrics

*“This head feels like an island / I am my own asylum”* (Zefanya, 2020)

These lyrics convey an intense sense of isolation, where the speaker sees themselves as disconnected from others. This aligns with the loneliness in Peter Pan Syndrome, where a child feels emotionally alienated within their own home, despite being surrounded by material possessions or superficial relationships. What worsens this loneliness for these children is their parents’ attempts to compensate for a lack of affection by providing money and material goods (Kiley, 1983).

The idea of being “my own asylum” suggests a deliberate detachment that stems from feelings of being unwanted or

misunderstood. This loneliness deepens when the most basic emotional needs remain unmet, as depicted in the yearning for familial connection in the subsequent lyrics

*“You have everything you ever wanted / You wonder when your dad will call”* (Zefanya, 2024)

These lyrics reflect the emptiness of material fulfillment when it cannot replace genuine human connection. The speaker’s longing for simple parental contact highlights a type of loneliness tied to feelings of estrangement from family. This aligns with how prosperity in individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome masks deeper emotional needs and exacerbates their sense of not belonging. This loneliness stems not only from broken relationships but also from inherited trauma, as evident in the subsequent lyrics.

*“Walking around with heirloom pain / Dad’s temper and mom’s mistakes”* (Zefanya, 2024)

These lyrics address the inherited emotional burdens that shape the speaker’s identity and contribute to their loneliness. References to parental lack of affection reflect theoretical perspectives on alienation, guilt, and anger that a child may feel toward their parents, deepening their sense of isolation. The feeling of being trapped in a cycle of inherited pain prolongs their loneliness. This alienation becomes increasingly evident in the mundane moments of daily solitude, as portrayed in the subsequent lyrics.

*“You look around your bedroom / You’re all alone again”* (Zefanya, 2024)

These lyrics vividly depict the raw experience of loneliness, where the speaker is left to confront their isolation. This line

reflects the feelings of disconnection and helplessness in seeking acceptance, as described in Peter Pan Syndrome, where loneliness becomes a central struggle.

The inability to find solace in external relationships mirrors the idea in this theory that these individuals lack a sense of care and meaningful connection. This pervasive loneliness is also intertwined with a sense of lost identity, as revealed in the subsequent lyrics.

*“Guess I’m forever caught between two worlds / Always part of me missing”* (Zefanya, 2021)

These lyrics capture the sense of internal division and longing for acceptance—central themes of loneliness in Peter Pan Syndrome. The feeling of being stuck in “two worlds” resonates with the experience of a child who feels alienated both within and outside their family. The lack of a solid sense of belonging anywhere exacerbates their loneliness, as they struggle to balance conflicting identities and expectations. Overall, this persistent loneliness forms the core of the emotional struggles faced by individuals with Peter Pan Syndrome.

### **Real-Life Implications Of NIKI’s Songs In Relation To Peter Pan Syndrome In Contemporary Society**

NIKI’s songs explore various emotional and social challenges faced by young people, reflecting themes closely tied to Peter Pan Syndrome. The pressures of societal expectations, as depicted in *24* with the lyrics, “they call you a grown-up with the dog and the bills and the garden” (Zefanya, 2024), highlight the anxiety and self-doubt experienced by those unprepared to face traditional life milestones.

Cultural and identity alienation, as seen in *Split*, portrays the struggle of navi-

gating dual identities in an increasingly interconnected world, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and stagnation. In *Heirloom Pain*, the cross-generational transmission of unresolved trauma, reflected in lyrics like “Grandma left but her heartache stayed” (Zefanya, 2024), emphasizes the long-term impact of family dynamics on mental health.

Songs like *Nothing Can* and *Pandemonium* sharply depict the isolation of modern life, where shallow connections foster loneliness and hinder emotional independence. Additionally, anxiety about failure, expressed in *Heirloom Pain*, mirrors contemporary trends where fear delays important life decisions, reinforcing the hesitation to grow up.

NIKI also explores escapism as a coping mechanism, with lyrics like “pillow barricade” (Zefanya, 2020) in *Pandemonium*, illustrating how avoidance of deeper emotional issues perpetuates immaturity. Despite these struggles, her work conveys messages of resilience and hope, encouraging young people to embrace vulnerability, heal, and move toward personal growth, as captured in the empowering declaration, “I’m doing it anyway” (Zefanya, 2024) in *Heirloom Pain*.

## CONCLUSION

NIKI’s songs serve as a poignant reflection of the emotional struggles associated with Peter Pan Syndrome, particularly within the context of contemporary society. Themes of loneliness, anxiety, and the pressure to conform to external expectations resonate with the psychological experiences of individuals navigating adulthood while grappling with unresolved emotional issues.

By addressing these themes, NIKI not only highlights the feelings of inadequacy and existential anxiety that many face

today but also emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, emotional healing, and resilience. Her music offers a mirror to the societal struggles that contribute to Peter Pan Syndrome while providing a voice of hope and encouragement for young people facing these challenges. Through her work, she creates a space for empathy and understanding, inspiring her listeners to confront their vulnerabilities and strive for growth amid the pressures of modern life.

## REFERENCES

- Arini, D. P. (2019). *Peterpan syndrome phenomenon: Self-identity crisis in forming intimation in adult men*. *PSIKODIMENSI*, 18(2), 158. <https://doi.org/10.24167/psidim.v18i2.2305>
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). *Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties*. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.55.5.469>
- Arnett, J. J. (2015). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Atwood, J. D., & Scholtz, C. (2008). *The quarter-life time period: An age of indulgence, crisis, or both?* *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 30(4), 233–250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-008-9066-2>
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text* (S. Heath, Ed.). *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 37, 220. Hill and Wang.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. W. W. Norton & Co.
- Feist, J., & Feist, G. J. (2010). *Psikologi kepribadian* (1st & 2nd ed.). Salemba Humanika.
- Garcia, C. M. (2013). *Peter Pan and the horror*

- of becoming an adult. *Journal of Artistic Creation and Literary Research*, 1(1), 16–27.
- Hesmondhalgh, D. (2013). *Why music matters*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Judith, A. (2023). *Survei ungkap situationship jadi tren di kalangan perempuan Gen Z selama 2022. Kumparan*. <https://kumparan.com/kumparanwoman/survei-ungkap-situationship-jadi-tren-di-kalangan-perempuan-gen-z-selama-2022-1zoCspEjbtB/full>
- Kroger, J. (2007). *Identity development: Adolescence through adulthood* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Marcia, J. E. (1980). *Identity in adolescence*. In J. Adelson (Ed.), *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (pp. 159–187). Wiley.
- Nash, R. J., & Murray, M. C. (2010). *Helping college students find purpose: The campus guide to meaning-making*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ortega, H. R. (2007). *Overprotecting parents can lead children to develop Peter Pan syndrome*. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved January 4, 2025, from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070501112023.htm>
- Papalia, E. D., Olds, S. W., & Feldman, R. D. (2009). *Human development* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Puspitarini, D. (2024). *Freedom of expression seen through lyrics in Rich Brian and NIKI's songs*. *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS)*, 7(2), 249–258. <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.6759>
- Putrayuda, A. (2024). *The development of psychosocial characteristics in John Steinbeck's "The Pearl."* *Philosophica: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, dan Budaya*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.35473/pho.v7i1.31>
- Quadrio, C. (1982). *The Peter Pan and Wendy syndrome: A marital dynamic*. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 16(2), 23–28.
- Robbins, A., & Wilner, A. (2001). *Quarter life crisis: The unique challenges of life in your twenties* (1st ed.). Tarcher Perigee.
- Rabinowitch, T. C. (2020). *The potential of music to effect social change*. *Music & Science*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059204320939772>
- Skorupa, A., & Draga, P. (2012). *Peter Pan syndrome among mountain climbers: Close interpersonal relationships aspect*. In Gwoździcka-Piotrowska (Ed.), *Academic areas of scientific knowledge* (pp. 109–122). ALTUS.
- Yuniar, D. H. (2024). *The portrayal of contemporary love in NIKI's "Dancing with the Devil" song*. *Journal of Music Science, Technology, and Industry*, 7(1). <https://jurnal.isi-dps.ac.id/index.php/jomsti/>
- Zefanya, N. (2020). *Pandemonium*. On *Moonchild* [Album]. 88rising.
- Zefanya, N. (2021). *Split*. 88rising.
- Zefanya, N. (2024). 24. On *Buzz* [Album]. 88rising.
- Zefanya, N. (2024). *Heirloom pain*. On *Buzz* [Album]. 88rising.
- Zefanya, N. (2024). *Nothing can*. On *Buzz* [Album]. 88rising.