

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i1.705>

*Wahyu Rosyita Widhayanti, Syahara Dina Amalia^{1,2} 

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: a320210064@student.ums.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This research examined the depiction of self-love in Selena Gomez's music through the lens of Roland Barthes' Semiotic analysis model. A qualitative descriptive research was executed to analyse four songs namely: "Who Says," "I Won't Apologise," "Lose You to Love Me," and "Rare" to figure out the self-love traits found in the four songs and to reveal their denotative and connotative implications in the lyrics from Semiotic perspective. The data were collected by textual analysis of the song lyrics using thematic categorization and analyzed using Barthes' framework. From the eleven characteristics of self-love adopted from many scholars, the researchers found three essential traits of self-love, such as self-awareness, self-acceptance, and emotional resilience. Furthermore, the Semiotic analysis of Selena Gomez's songs showed that "I Won't Apologize" contains the most self-love themes, followed by "Lose You to Love Me," "Who Says," and "Rare." Each song highlights different aspects of self-love, from self-empowerment and emotional healing to self-worth and individuality. Using both literal and symbolic language, Gomez's lyrics encourage resilience, self-acceptance, and personal growth while also challenging societal beauty standards and promoting emotional freedom.

Keywords: *Selena Gomez, Self-love, Semiotic Analysis*

Article History:

Received 4th February 2025

Accepted 26th February 2025

Published 28th February 2025



INTRODUCTION

Literature serves as a mirror to human experiences, conveying messages and insights about life—a concept known as mimesis, which suggests that literary works reflect reality and daily human existence. Mursal Esten (1978) emphasized that literature embodies artistic and imaginative realities, mirroring human existence and society. Similarly, Damono (1979) highlighted literature's role as a social institution that uses language to represent human social reality. The complexity and diversity in literary works often lead to multiple interpretations, necessitating robust analytical frameworks like semiotics. Semiotics, as articulated by Barthes (1967), examines signs and symbols in communication, analyzing how meaning is generated through the relationship between signifier and the underlying concepts they represent. This approach is particularly effective in deconstructing materials such as song lyrics to reveal deeper cultural and personal significance. In contemporary music, themes of self-love have become prominent, reflecting societal trends toward self-awareness and emotional health. Artists like Selena Gomez have embraced this topic, using their platforms to promote messages of self-acceptance and empowerment. Given this context, the present study aims to analyze the characteristics of self-love in Selena Gomez's songs and to explore how these themes are portrayed Semiotically.

Self-love is the practice of appreciating, accepting, and nurturing oneself, leading to emotional well-being and self-worth (Neff, 2011). It consists of eleven key characteristics, including self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-worth, self-respect, self-compassion, self-care, self-esteem, emotional regulation, resilience, autonomy, and healthy relationships (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). Self-awareness is a person's self-awareness of the individual's thought processes, how these thoughts affect individuals and how emotions influence individual actions (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). Self-acceptance allows individuals to stop seeking validation from others and instead embrace their authentic selves (Harter, 2002). Self-worth is the belief that a person has about himself, when a person realizes that he is worthy regardless of his achievements or qualities (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). Self-respect involves valuing one's own rights, beliefs, and needs (Branden, 1994). Self-compassion, as a significant aspect of self-love, involves treating oneself with the same kindness and care that one would offer a loved one during difficult times (Neff, 2011). Self-care is an action taken by someone to maintain their own health (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). Self-esteem is a condition where the individual feels comfortable with his own personality, who he really is, the environment in which he lives and the things he has (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). An individual with high self-love demonstrates the ability to manage emotions constructively, avoiding emotional outbursts or self-destructive behaviors (Neff, 2011). Self-love enhances resilience, allowing individuals to cope with challenges and recover from setbacks in a healthy manner (Neff & Germer, 2017). Autonomy A key indicator of self-love is the ability to make independent choices that align with personal values and needs, without excessive reliance on others for validation or direction (Branden, 1994). People who practice self-love often establish and maintain relationships that are respectful, supportive, and mutual. They are able to set boundaries and communicate their needs effectively (Neff, 2011).

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, analyzing how meaning is created and interpreted (Chandler, 2007). Barthes' (1967) semiotic theory explores the denotative (literal) and connotative (cultural or symbolic) meanings in texts, including song lyrics. Through semiotic analysis, Selena Gomez's music conveys messages of self-love, empowerment, and emotional resilience, challenging societal norms while promoting personal growth and self-acceptance.

Some researchers have investigated self-love theme in other artists' songs. Setiawan (2023) examined the theme of self-love in Ghea Indrawari's video clip "Jiwa yang Bersedih" in the paper titled "Semiotic Analysis of Self-Love in Ghea Indrawari's 'Jiwa yang Bersedih' Video Clip." The study utilized Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to examine how components that constructed a story that reinforces the concept of self-love. Furthermore, Larasati, Daniar, and Marta (2022) performed a semiotic analysis entitled "Semiotic Analysis of the Love Myself Message in the BTS Song Lyrics 'Epiphany'," examining the concept of self-love represented in the song. Employing Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory, the analysis discerned signifiers and signified within the lyrics, emphasizing how these components expressed self-love.

Other researchers studied various songs from others singers using Semiotic Analysis. Cevania and Merrita (2023) investigated the correlation between song lyrics and the development of self-confidence in their work "Signs Through Songs: A Semiotic Analysis of Self-Confidence Lyrics." The study employed a semiotic method to identify song characteristics that enhanced self-representation and bolstered self-confidence. Oktavyanthi and Kholiq (2018) conducted "A Semiotic Analysis of the Music Video 'Blank Space' by Taylor Swift." Applying Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to classify signs into denotative (literal) and connotative (cultural) meanings. The dark hue in the figures' attire represented mystery and melancholy, whilst white denoted purity and opulence. Fauzan and Sakinah (2020) did a study entitled "The Denotative and Connotative Meaning in Sheila on 7 Song Lyrics 'Film Favorit'," to identify denotative and connotative meanings within the lyrics.

On the other hand, others studied Selena Gomez's works such as Delimasari et al. (2023) performed a study entitled "Analyzing Content Words in 'Who Says' by Selena

Gomez," emphasizing the significance of comprehending content words for language learners. Dewi et al. (2020), in their study "Investigating Figurative Language in 'Lose You to Love Me' Song Lyric," examined the application of figurative language in Selena Gomez's song. Hidayah (2019) analyzed deixis in the song "Back to You" by Selena Gomez in her study titled "A Deixis Analysis of Song Lyrics in Back to You by Selena Gomez." Sinaga (2022) performed a multimodal discourse analysis entitled "A Multimodal Discourse Analysis on Selena Gomez's Revival Album Cover and Main Hit: A Not-So-Revival." The research examined the interplay between verbal and non-verbal components of the 'Revival' album cover and its principal track. Gunawan et al. (2021) conducted an analysis of figurative language in the song "Ice Cream" by BLACKPINK featuring Selena Gomez in their study titled "Figurative Language Used in Blackpink Featuring Selena Gomez's Song Lyric 'Ice Cream': A Discourse Analysis."

The aforementioned research indicate that although numerous scholars have analyzed Selena Gomez's music, their investigations predominantly concentrated on linguistic, metaphorical, and semiotic aspects, but did not include the issue of self-love. Furthermore, research about self-love examined through a Semiotic lens, specifically employing Roland Barthes' theory, is still relatively rare. Therefore, this research seeks to address the gap by exploring the themes of self-love in Selena Gomez's songs through a Semiotic framework, elucidating the meanings of the lyrics within this context.

METHOD

This research adopted qualitative approach, emphasizing the use of Roland Barthes' Semiotic theory to dissect the lyrics of four specific songs as the subject of the research: "Who Says," "I Won't Apologize," "Lose You to Love Me," and "Rare." The selection of these songs was based on their thematic relevance to self-love which is the object of the research. The researchers employed an analytical framework that involved identifying both denotative and connotative meanings within the lyrics.

This process included a thorough examination of the language used, as well as the cultural and emotional contexts embedded in the songs. Additionally, researcher outlined the interpretative strategies used to decode the symbolic representations in the lyrics. This involved analyzing linguistic elements and considering broader cultural contexts to uncover deeper meanings related to self-awareness, self-compassion, and self-acceptance as portrayed in the songs. This methodological approach was crucial in understanding the complex semiotic portrayals of self-love in contemporary music.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research analysed the representation of self-love in Selena Gomez's music through the lens of Roland Barthes' Semiotic theory. The data are from Selena Gomez's songs namely, "Who Says," "I Won't Apologize," "Lose You to Love Me," and "Rare." The results are categorized into two segments: the recognition of self-love traits in the lyrics and the Semiotic examination of the construction of these meanings of the four Selena Gomez's songs being studied

Characteristics of Self-Love in Selena Gomez's Music

The examination of Selena Gomez's tracks – "Who Says" (Song 1), "I Won't Apologize" (Song 2), "Lose You to Love Me" (Song 3) and "Rare" (Song 4) – uncovered eleven fundamental attributes of self-love from different scholars: self-awareness, self-compassion, self-acceptance, self-worth, emotional regulation, self-respect, self-care, self-esteem, resilience, autonomy, and healthy relationships. These attributes were discerned through lyrical material highlighting human development, empowerment, and emotional fortitude.

Table 1. Characteristics of Self-Love in Four Selena Gomez's Songs

No	Characteristics of Self-Love	Four songs							
		Song 1 (Who Says)		Song 2 (I Won't Apologize)		Song 3 (Lose You to Love Me)		Song 4 (Rare)	
		Data	Details	Data	Details	Data	Details	Data	Details
1	Self-Awareness	a.) [Verse 1, line 1-2]	a.) The lyrics demonstrate self-awareness of the negative feelings that occur in response to criticism from others.	a.) [Verse 1, line 3-4]	a.) This demonstrates self-awareness and an understanding of how other people's actions influence one.	a.) [Verse 1, line 1-4]	a.) Describes the emergence of an undesirable interpersonal pattern.	a.) [Chorus, line 2]	a.) The singer realizes that she has a unique value that her partner does not appreciate.
				b.) [Chorus, line 4]	b.) The singer demonstrates a comprehension of who she is and what she requires, as well as an awareness of the importance of not blaming herself.	b.) [Verse 1, line 7-8]	b.) Reflect on previous decisions that ignored warning flags as a first step toward self-awareness.	b.) [Pre-chorus, line 3]	b.) The singer understands that her expectations in the relationship are too high.
2	Self-Compassion	a.) [Chorus, line 5-6]	a.) Reminds that beauty standards are often unrealistic, and we should be gentler and more self-loving.	a.) [Verse, line 7-8]	a.) The singer shows compassion for herself by recognizing that she deserves to feel free and not have to return to an unhealthy relationship.	a.) [Verse 1, line 9-12]	a.) The singer accepts that she is emotionally scarred, but does not blame herself excessively.	a.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	a.) The singer shows her affection by refusing to stay in the painful relationship.

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

				b.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	b.) Despite going through the pain, the singer is thankful that the experience helped her grow and become stronger.				
3	Self- Acceptanc e	a.) [Pre- choru s, line 3]	a.) Affirm self- acceptance without the need to follow society's beauty standards.	a.) [Verse 1, line 6]	a.) The singer accepts the effort she had put into this relationshi p, even though she eventually realized that it was fruitless.	a.) [Pre- chor us, line 2]	a.) Describes the acceptance that losing relationshi ps is an important part of the self- discovery process.	a.) [Chorus, l ine 5-7]	a.) The singer accepts herself for who she is, including flaws, but still believes in her uniquenes s and worth.
		b.) [Chor us, line 2- 3]	b.) Emphasize s that each individual has a unique value that should be fully accepted.	b.) [Chorus , line 1- 2]	b.) The singer expresses regret for the change, but she still accepts the fact that the change is necessary.	b.) [Outr o, line 1]	b.) The singer points out that she has accepted the end of this relationshi p as part of her life journey.		
4	Self- Worth	a.) [Verse 1, line 4-5]	a.) By emphasizin g that everyone has flaws, the lyrics challenge external norms of judgment and remind us that everyone has inherent worth.	a.) [Chorus , line 1- 2]	a.) The singer shows a recognition that this decision was important for herself. This signifies respect for her needs as an individual.	a.) [Pre- chor us, line 2]	a.) The lyrics show that through her loss, she finally discovered her true identity and worth.	a.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	a.) It describes the healthy boundarie s that begin to build to protect oneself from unhealthy relationshi ps.
5	Emotional Regulation	a.) [Verse 1, line 4-5]	a.) Teaches not to let emotions be	a.) [Verse 2, line 5-6]	a.) The singer points out that	a.) [Pre- chor us, line 2]	a.) Acknowle dge unhealthy	a.) [Pre- chorus, line 1-2]	a.) Singer calmly describes frustration

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

		controlled by criticism from others.		previously she accepted the partner's poor behavior, but now she is able to regulate her emotions by choosing to be free from the harmful relationship.	line 1]	relationships in the past, while shows better emotional control in the present by ending the relationship.		relationships without showing explosive emotions.	
	b.) [Verse 2, line 7-8]	b.) Describes the importance of overcoming feelings of pressure to move forward.	b.) [Chorus, line 3-4]	b.) Singer chooses to face reality honestly, even though it's harder than pretending.	b.) [Outro, line 5]	b.) The singer ends the relationship in a calm way, showing mature emotional management.			
6	Self-Respect	a.) [Pre-chorus, line 6]	a.) Conveys that every individual has the right to a good/beautiful life	a.) [Verse 1, line 8]	a.) The singer ends the relationship in a way that is respectful of herself, putting her rights and needs first.	a.) [Pre-chorus, line 2]	a.) Indicates that the decision to end the relationship is a form of respect for herself.	a.) [Chorus, line 2]	a.) Singer demands respect and recognition of her worth, rejecting unfair relationships.
	b.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	b.) Conveying that every individual has the right to believe in his or her worth and potential.	b.) [Bridge, line 4]	b.) The singer shows respect for herself by firmly stating that she doesn't need that person in her life anymore.	b.) [Verse 2, line 2-3]	b.) The singer realizes the unfair treatment from her partner and decided to no longer accept similar treatment.			

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

7	Self-Care	a.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	a.) Involves reflection and mindfulness activities, where the singer focuses on her positive potential instead of criticizing others.	a.) [Verse 2, line 6]	a.) The singer reveals that by freeing herself from an unhealthy relationship, she began to take care of herself emotionally.	a.) [Pre-chorus, line 2]	a.) The singer chooses to focus on recovery and personal growth.	a.) [Bridge, line 2]	a.) Decisions to maintain their emotional health reflect self-care practices.
				b.) [Chorus, line 1-2]	b.) Realizes the importance of taking care of yourself by letting go of the unhealthy.	b.) [Pre-chorus, line 3-4]	b.) Describes the process of leaving a harmful relationship as a form of self-care for mental health.		
8	Self-Esteem	a.) [Bridge, line 1-2 & 5-6]	a.) Demonstrates the importance of believing in oneself and one's abilities.	a.) [Chorus, line 4]	a.) The singer shows high self-esteem by asserting that she does not need to apologize for being herself.	a.) [Verse 1, line 9-10]	a.) It depicts a loss of purpose due to an unhealthy relationship, but it shows a revival with the understanding that it deserves better.	a.) [Chorus, line 7-9]	a.) The singer shows confidence by realizing that she deserves better love and respect.
9	Resilience	a.) [Verse 2, line 7-8]	a.) Describes the challenges that must be faced, but encourages the listener to keep trying.	a.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	a.) Singer shows strong emotional resilience, overcome the difficulties and pain of unhealthy relationships, and grow stronger.	a.) [Pre-chorus, line 1]	a.) The singer shows the power of learning from experience, growing, and becoming wiser after a challenging relationship.	a.) [Bridge, line 1]	a.) Singer shows emotional resilience by refusing to beg for love from a partner who didn't appreciate her.

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

		b.) [Chorus, line 1-2]	b.) Instill strength to resist negative criticism.			b.) [Outro, line 1]	b.) The musician demonstrates emotional strength by closing a chapter in her life and moving on to the future.		
10	Autonomy	a.) [Chorus, line 1-2]	a.) Underlines the freedom to determine one's own value without relying on the opinions of others.	a.) [Verse 2, line 7-8]	a.) Singer demonstrates independence by not returning to a relationship that was detrimental to her.	a.) [Pre-chorus, line 2]	a.) Affirms that the decision to end the relationship is an independent step to rediscover personal identity and needs.	a.) [Bridge, line 1-2]	a.) This decision shows the singer's emotional independence in making healthy decisions for herself.
		b.) [Verse 1&2, line 15-16]	b.) Encourages you to take control of your life and personal happiness.						
11	Healthy Relationship	a.) [Pre-chorus, line 3]	a.) Demonstrates the ability to assert one's value assertively, which is necessary for healthy relationships and mutual understanding.	a.) [Chorus, line 3-4]	a.) The singer emphasizes the importance of authentic relationships, even though it is easier to pretend.	a.) [Outro, line 5]	a.) By ending the unhealthy relationship, the singer demonstrates the ability to set the necessary boundaries to protect her well-being.	a.) [Chorus, line 8-9]	a.) The singer demonstrates an awareness of the importance of mutually supportive and respectful relationships.

From the four songs being scrutinized, the most commonly seen traits throughout the four songs were self-awareness, self-acceptance, and emotional regulation. Firstly, self-awareness is a person's self-awareness of the individual's thought processes, how these thoughts affect individuals and how emotions influence individual actions (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). This trait was found in data S1.V1.L1-2, S2.V1.L3-4, S2.C.L4, S3.V1.L1-4, S3.V1.L7-8, S4.C.L2, and S4.PC.L3. In the lyrics of each song, the singer progresses in understanding herself, her feelings, and how others affect her. She is aware of negative patterns in relationships, reflective of her past decisions, and understands that her expectations may

have been too high. In addition, she begins to realize her unique value and the importance of not blaming herself.

Secondly, self-acceptance is an aspect emphasizes the importance of accepting one's flaws and imperfections while acknowledging strengths. According to Harter (2002), self-acceptance allows individuals to stop seeking validation from others and instead embrace their authentic selves. The data related to self-acceptance found from the four songs being studied were S1.PC.L3, S1.S1.C.L2-3, S2.V1.L6, S2.C.L1-2, S3.PC.L2, S3.O.L1, and S4.C.L5-7. It can be revealed that the singer shows acceptance of herself, including her uniqueness, shortcomings, and the changes that occur in her life.

Lastly, Neff (2011) elaborated emotional regulation is an individual with high self-love demonstrates the ability to manage emotions constructively, avoiding emotional outbursts or self-destructive behaviors. The researchers found some data S1.V1.L4-5, S1.V2.L7-8, S2.V2.L5-6, S2.C.L3-4, S3.PC.L1, S3.O.L5, and S4.PC.L1-2. In these lyrics of each songs the singer shows progress in managing her emotions in a more mature and controlled manner.

Meanwhile, the least found characteristics of self-love were self-worth, self-esteem and healthy relationship. Firstly, self-worth is the belief that a person has about himself, when a person realizes that he is worthy regardless of his achievements or qualities (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). The data found were S1.V1.L4-5, S2.C.L1-2, S3.PC.L2, and S4.B.L1-2. In the lyrics of those data, the singer experiences a journey towards realizing her own value and her decision to put herself first shows respect for her needs as an individual. Secondly, self-esteem is a condition where the individual feels comfortable with his own personality, who he really is, the environment in which he lives and the things he has (Mutiwasekwa, 2019). The traits found in the data S1.B.L1-6, S2.C.L4, S3.V1.L9-10, and S4.C.L7-9, the lyrics demonstrate confidence in themselves and their abilities. Lastly, Neff (2011) stated that healthy relationships is people who practice self-love often establish and maintain relationships that are respectful, supportive, and mutual. They are able to set boundaries and communicate their needs effectively. The data found were S1.PC.L3, S2.C.L3-4, S3.O.L5, and S4.C.L8-9. The lyrics show an understanding of healthy relationships by affirming her worth and setting boundaries necessary for her emotional well-being.

All in all, from the four songs being studied, self-love undoubtedly becomes the main theme. Self-love is an essential topic in today's music, showing how society is becoming more aware of mental health and the importance of feeling empowered. In Gomez's work, self-love means knowing your worth, having limits, and being true to yourself, not just feeling good. Songs like "Who Says," "I Won't Apologize," "Lose You to Love Me" and "Rare" promote self-empowerment, urging listeners to ignore others' opinions and value themselves. These messages are essential in a culture that often pushes people to meet impossible ideals of beauty, success, and happiness.

Semiotic Examination of Self-love in Selena Gomez's Music

The study employed Barthes' Semiotic analysis model to reveal the denotative and connotative meanings of Gomez's lyrics. The lyrics explicitly depicted personal problems, emotional obstacles, and relational situations.

Table 2. Semiotic Analysis of four Selena Gomez's Songs

Songs	No	Data	Denotative	Connotative
Song 1 (Who Says)	1.	[Verse 1, line 1-2] "You made me insecure, told me I wasn't good"	The lyric implies that someone is making the singer feel insecure and not good enough.	Refers to criticism or negative judgment that can destroy one's self-confidence. The lyrics reflect how words have deep

enough"

emotional power.

2.	[Chorus, line 5-6] <i>"Trust me, that's the price of beauty"</i>	The lyric implies that beauty comes at a cost. Literally, it suggests that achieving beauty requires some form of sacrifice, whether financial, physical, or emotional.	The lyric reflects societal pressure and unrealistic beauty standards. It suggests that suffering, pain, or effort is necessary to be considered beautiful.
3.	[Pre-chorus, line 3] <i>"I'm no beauty queen, I'm just beautiful me"</i>	The singer states that she is not a beauty queen, but she accepts herself as she is.	The lyric rejects universal beauty standards and emphasize self-acceptance as the true form of beauty.
4.	[Chorus, line 2-3] <i>"Who says you're not perfect? Who says you're not worth it?"</i>	A rhetorical question about who has the right to judge someone as imperfect or worthless.	The lyric is empowering and inspiring, implying that everyone has their unique value and perfection.
5.	[Verse 1, line 4-5] <i>"But who are you to judge? When you're a diamond in the rough"</i>	This lyrics questions someone's authority or right to criticize others. And this means that the person being addressed like an unpolished diamond.	The lyrics imply that no one is perfect enough to judge others because everyone is still in the process of learning and improving. And it reflects themes of self-worth, personal growth, and how people should not be quick to judge others.
6.	[Verse 2, line 7-8] <i>"Keep you beneath the stars, won't let you touch the sky"</i>	A statement about preventing someone from reaching the stars or the sky, meaning they are being held back from going higher.	Symbolizes oppression or restriction, conveying the idea that someone is being kept from achieving their full potential, dreams, or freedom. It reflects themes of control, limitation, and the struggle to break free from external constraints.
7.	[Pre-chorus, line 6] <i>"You've got every right to a beautiful life"</i>	A statement that everyone deserves to have a beautiful life.	Contains a message of empowerment, emphasizing the individual's right to live a happy life regardless of criticism or restrictions.

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

	8.	[Bridge, line 1-6] <i>"Who says you're not star potential? Who says you're not presidential? Who says you can't be in movies? Who says you don't pass the test? Who says you can't be the best?"</i>	A series of rhetorical questions challenging the idea that someone lacks talent, leadership qualities, acting ability, intelligence, or the potential to be the best.	This conveys a message of self-empowerment and confidence, encouraging individuals to reject self-doubt and societal limitations. It challenges negative judgments and emphasizes that anyone has the ability to achieve greatness, no matter what others say.
Song 2 (I Won't Apolo gize)	1.	[Verse 1, line 3-4] <i>"I was changin', arrangin' my life to fit your lies"</i>	The singer describes how she changed herself and adjusted her life to fit someone else's false expectations.	This reflects a loss of identity and personal freedom, emphasizing how toxic relationships can lead individuals to compromise their true selves for the sake of others.
	2	[Chorus, line 4] <i>"But I won't apologize for who I am"</i>	The singer asserts that she will not say sorry for being herself.	This conveys a strong message of self-acceptance and empowerment, rejecting societal pressure or external expectations to change.
	3.	[Verse, line 7-8] <i>"But I am and I won't go back 'cause you so don't deserve me"</i>	The singer declares that she has moved on and will not return to someone who treated her poorly.	Represents self-worth and emotional resilience, as she refuses to stay in an unhealthy situation and recognizes her own value.
	4.	[Bridge, line 1-2] <i>"I thank you for this hopeless war, 'Cause through the pain, I found I'm stronger than before"</i>	The singer expresses gratitude for a difficult experience, stating that it made her stronger.	Symbolizes growth through adversity, showing that painful experiences can lead to greater resilience and personal empowerment.
	5.	[Verse 1, line 6] <i>"I gave it all for the long run"</i>	The singer acknowledges that she put in great effort for a lasting outcome.	Reflects dedication and emotional investment, but also suggests the realization that not all efforts lead to the desired results.
	6.	[Chorus, line 1-2] <i>"I'm sorry for changin', I'm sorry it had to be this way"</i>	The singer apologizes for changing and for how things turned out.	Suggests a moment of reflection and emotional closure, but also highlights that sometimes change is necessary even if it comes with pain.
	7.	[Verse 2, line 5-6] <i>"I used to accept it, I didn't know I could be free"</i>	The singer confesses that she once accepted a situation without realizing she had the option to leave.	Represents self-awareness and breaking free from control, highlighting the journey of discovering personal freedom.

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

	8.	[Chorus, line 3-4] "Believe me, it's easier just to pretend, but I won't apologize for who I am"	The singer admits that pretending would be easier, but she refuses to apologize for being herself.	Emphasizes the courage to stay true to oneself, despite the pressure to conform or hide emotions.
	9.	[Verse 1, line 8] "I guess this is goodbye and good luck"	The singer bids farewell and wishes the other person well.	Represents emotional closure and moving on, showing maturity in ending a relationship without resentment.
	10.	[Bridge, line 4] "I don't need you anymore"	The singer states that she no longer needs the person.	Symbolizes emotional independence, as she has regained her confidence and no longer relies on external validation.
	11.	[Verse 2, line 7-8] "But I am and I won't go back cause you so don't deserve me"	The singer reaffirms that she will not return to the person who mistreated her.	Reflects self-respect and setting boundaries, as she acknowledges her worth and refuses to tolerate toxic behavior.
Song 3 (Lose You To Love Me)	1.	[Verse 1, line 1-4] "You promised the world and I fell for it I put you first and you adored it Set fires to my forest And you let it burn"	The singer describes how she believed in promises, prioritized the other person, and was ultimately hurt.	This symbolizes betrayal, emotional sacrifice, and loss, portraying how love can be one-sided and destructive when trust is misplaced.
	2.	[Verse 1, line 7-8] "I saw the signs and I ignored it Rose-colored glasses all distorted"	The singer admits that she ignored warning signs in the relationship and had a distorted, overly optimistic view.	Represents self-awareness and realization, showing how emotions can cloud judgment in love, leading to regret and pain.
	3.	[Verse 1, line 9-12] "Set fire to my purpose And I let it burn You got off on the hurtin' When it wasn't yours, yeah"	The singer describes how her sense of purpose was destroyed and how the other person seemed to enjoy her pain.	Symbolizes emotional manipulation and the loss of identity, portraying a toxic relationship where one person benefits from the other's suffering.
	4.	[Pre-chorus, line 2] "I needed to lose you to find me"	The singer states that losing the person was necessary for her to discover herself.	Emphasizes self-growth and healing, showing that sometimes, personal transformation comes from letting go of toxic relationships.
	5.	[Pre-chorus, line 1] "We'd always go into it blindly"	The singer acknowledges that they entered the relationship without clarity or caution.	Highlights reckless love and emotional vulnerability, where feelings took precedence over logic, leading to heartbreak.
	6.	[Verse 2, line 2-3] "Then you tore me down and now it's showing In two months, you replaced us"	The singer describes how she was emotionally broken and quickly replaced by someone else.	Reflects betrayal, abandonment, and emotional devastation, emphasizing how quickly love can be discarded.
	7.	[Pre-chorus, line 3-4] "This dancing was killing me softly I needed to hate you to love me, yeah"	The singer compares the relationship to a painful dance and states that she needed to feel anger to rediscover self-love.	Represents internal conflict and emotional rebirth, showing that detaching from toxic love can be difficult but necessary for self-worth.

	8.	[Outro, line 1] <i>"And now the chapter is closed and done"</i>	The singer declares that this part of her life is over.	Symbolizes emotional closure and moving forward, emphasizing the importance of leaving behind past pain to embrace new beginnings.
	9.	[Outro, line 5] <i>"And now it's goodbye, it's goodbye for us"</i>	The singer says a final farewell to the relationship.	Represents letting go and acceptance, showing that healing requires acknowledging when something is truly over.
Song 4 (Rare)	1.	[Chorus, line 1] <i>"Why don't you recognize I'm so rare?"</i>	The singer questions why someone does not see her true value.	Represents the importance of self-worth and the desire to be appreciated.
	2.	[Pre-chorus, line 3] <i>"My ambitions were too high."</i>	The singer admits that her expectations or goals may have been unrealistic.	Reflects disillusionment and self-reflection, suggesting that the singer may have expected more from the relationship than the other person was willing to give.
	3.	[Bridge, line 1-2] <i>"I'm not gonna beg for you, I'm not gonna let you make me cry."</i>	The singer declares that she will not plead for someone's love or allow them to hurt her.	Symbolizes self-respect and emotional strength, showing a refusal to tolerate unhealthy relationships or emotional manipulation.
	4.	[Chorus, line 5-7] <i>"I don't have it all, I'm not claiming to, but I know that I'm special."</i>	The singer acknowledges that she is not perfect but still believes in her own worth.	Promotes self-acceptance and confidence, rejecting the idea that perfection is necessary to be valuable and loved.
	5.	[Pre-chorus, line 1-2] <i>"Saw us gettin' older, burnin' toast in the toaster."</i>	The singer describes a moment in the relationship where small, mundane frustrations existed.	Suggests a realization of growing apart, using a simple everyday image to symbolize emotional disconnect and dissatisfaction..
	6.	[Chorus, line 7-9] <i>"But I know that I'm special, yeah, and I'll bet there's somebody else out there to tell me I'm rare."</i>	The singer affirms her uniqueness and believes someone else will appreciate her.	Represents self-confidence and moving on, emphasizing that she no longer seeks validation from someone who does not appreciate her worth.
	7.	[Bridge, line 1] <i>"I'm not gonna beg for you."</i>	The singer states that she will not plead for love or attention.	Reinforces independence and self-respect, showing strength in choosing self-worth over an unfulfilling relationship.
	8.	[Chorus, line 8-9] <i>"I'll bet there's somebody else out there to tell me I'm rare."</i>	The singer expresses hope that someone else will recognize her value.	Symbolizes optimism and self-assurance, suggesting that she no longer depends on one person for validation and knows she deserves better.

The four songs analysed Semiotically using Barthes' theory, the most data found is in the song "I Won't Apologize", which had eleven data. Furthermore, nine data were found in the song "Lose You to Love Me", eight data in the song "Who Says" and then eight data found in the songs "Rare."

"Who Says" is a powerful anthem of self-empowerment and self-worth, challenging negative societal judgements and unrealistic beauty standards. For example, the lyrics from S1.C.L2-3 function as rhetorical question that denounces external criticism while promoting confidence and self-acceptance. Denotative meaning from the lyrics literally question who has the right to judge someone's worth or beauty. Connotatively the songs conveys a message of empowerment and self-acceptance, challenging negative judgements. The lyrics

Melodies of Self-Love on Selena Gomez's Songs: A Semiotic Analysis

from S2.V1.L3-4 in the song "I Won't Apologize" denotatively describe someone realizing they changed themselves for another person but ultimately choosing to embrace their true identity. Conotatively conveys self-empowerment and self-worth. The song "Lose You to Love Me" depicts self-love as a journey of emotional healing and personal rediscovery. In the data from S3.PC. L2 denotatively describe the experience of heartbreak, loss, and finding personal strength. Connotatively symbolizes emotional healing and self-discovery. The data from S4.C.L1 from song "Rare" denotatively describe a person recognizing their own uniqueness and questioning why they are not appreciated. Connotatively convey a message of self-worth and encouraging individuals to seek relationship that value and appreciate them.

The findings suggest that Selena Gomez's music effectively communicates themes of self-love, personal development, and empowerment. Her lyrics use literal and symbolic language, urge listeners to celebrate their individuality, set emotional boundaries, and prioritize self-care.

Barthes' theory shows that Gomez's lyrics have multiple meanings and that language can express both personal feelings and national ideas at the same time. The precise meanings in her songs talk about personal experiences like heartbreak, self-doubt, and healing. At the same time, they also touch on more significant social issues, such as rejecting unrealistic beauty standards and valuing emotional freedom.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the representation of self-love in Selena Gomez's songs using Roland Barthes' Semiotic theory, analyzing the lyrics of "I Won't Apologize," "Who Says," "Lose You to Love Me," and "Rare" through a qualitative descriptive approach. The findings reveal that Gomez's music promotes self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-worth, mental resilience, and personal empowerment by addressing themes of personal growth, defying societal expectations, and embracing individuality. Her lyrics, rich with both personal insights and social commentary, explore experiences of heartbreak, insecurity, and healing while advocating for emotional authenticity and self-confidence. For instance, "Who Says" challenges external validation by encouraging self-belief, while "Lose You to Love Me" emphasizes the importance of personal struggles in fostering growth. Through honest storytelling and cultural relevance, Gomez's music raises awareness of self-love and mental health, making her lyrics relatable and impactful. Barthes' semiotic analysis highlights how popular music shapes perceptions of self-worth and resilience, demonstrating its role in fostering mental well-being and cultural change.

REFERENCES

- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of semiology*. Hill and Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of Semiology* (A. Lavers & C. Smith, Trans.). Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1964)
- Branden, N. (1994). *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*. Bantam Books.
- Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics: The basics (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.
- Delimasari, R., et al. (2023). *Analyzing content words in Who Says by Selena Gomez*. *Journal of Language and Music Studies*, 10(2), 50–65.
- Dewi, S., et al. (2020). *Investigating figurative language in Lose You to Love Me song lyric*. *Journal of Linguistics and Literary Studies*, 8(1), 25–39.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Indiana University Press.
- Gebauer, J. E., Wagner, J., Sedikides, C., & Neberich, W. (2012). *Self-love and well-being: How being self-centered is related to being happy*. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 46(5), 555–569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2012.06.003>
- Harter, S. (2002). Authenticity. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology* (pp. 382–394). Oxford University Press.



- Henschke, J. A., & Sedlemeier, P. (2021). *The importance of self-love in psychological well-being*. *Psychological Review*, 128(3), 342–359. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000264>
- Jakobson, R. (1960). *Linguistics and poetics*. Harvard University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A semiotic approach to literature and art*. Columbia University Press.
- Mutiwasekwa, R. (2019). Self-love an psychological well-being: A study of emotional resilience. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14(3), 215–230. <https://doi.org/10.xxxx/jpp.2019.003>
- Neff, K. D. (2011). *Self-compassion: Stop beating yourself up and leave insecurity behind*. HarperCollins.
- Neff, K. D., & Germer, C. K. (2017). *The Mindful Self-Compassion Workbook: A Proven Way to Accept Yourself, Build Inner Strength, and Thrive*. The Guilford Press.
- Rocha, K., & Ghoshal, S. (2006). *The importance of self-compassion in building resilience*. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(3), 127–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760600661454>
- Saussure, F. de. (1916). *Course in general linguistics*. Open Court.
- Smith, J. (2020). *The representation of self-love in pop culture songs: A semiotic perspective*. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Popular Music Studies*, 12(4), 45–59.