

Debunking the Myth of “Corporate Slaves” Among Generation Z Through the Lyrics of Hindia’s Song “Just Dance—This Career Has No Meaning”

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Abstract

The emergence of Generation Z in the modern workplace has introduced new perspectives on career values, work-life balance, and professional identity. The dominant narrative that equates personal success with productivity, career achievement, and organizational loyalty has created psychological pressures among young workers, often represented through the concept of the “corporate slave.” This study aimed to examine how the myth of corporate slavery among Generation Z was deconstructed through the lyrics of Hindia’s song “Berdansalah, Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya” using Roland Barthes’ semiotic perspective. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with textual analysis as the primary method. The primary data consisted of the song lyrics, while secondary data were obtained from relevant academic literature. Data analysis focused on three levels of Barthes’ semiotics: denotation, connotation, and myth. The findings revealed that the lyrics represented workplace anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and resistance toward excessive career-oriented values. At the denotative level, the song portrayed everyday experiences of workers seeking freedom from rigid work routines. At the connotative level, these expressions symbolized forms of everyday resistance against dehumanizing work cultures. At the mythical level, the song challenged the ideology that career achievement determines human worth and offered an alternative narrative emphasizing freedom, authenticity, and self-constructed meaning. The study concluded that Hindia’s song functioned not only as an artistic expression but also as a medium of symbolic resistance reflecting Generation Z’s struggle to redefine success and personal freedom in contemporary society.

INTRODUCTION

Art is a reflection of the spirit of the times. In its various forms—music, painting, literature, and film—art functions as a medium for reflecting, critiquing, and challenging established social structures. It extends beyond mere entertainment by serving as a vessel for expression that awakens collective consciousness and provides space for narratives that are often marginalized. Throughout history, art has repeatedly served as both a witness to and a catalyst for social change. Arliani and Adiyanto (2023) found that music, with its universal emotional power, can reach individuals from diverse backgrounds by conveying messages that transcend spatial and temporal boundaries.

In relation to freedom of expression, many artistic works have played an important role in fostering awareness and resistance (Almahfali et al., 2024; Rahman, 2025). According to Boris (2023), freedom of expression in art constitutes a humanistic foundation encompassing creativity, aesthetics, emotion, and human nature, providing a sense of humanity that cannot be exchanged or commodified. Barthes (1977) describes art as a “necessary disruption” of social norms, creating space for critical dialogue that is essential for social change. Rancière (2004) emphasizes that art creates a “space of dissensus,” in which dominant structures can be questioned and challenged. Prayudi and Fachdar (2023) assert that art serves as a tool for reflecting, preserving, and enriching cultural identity while also functioning as a universal medium of expression and communication.

Within this context, Hindia’s song “Berdansalah, Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya” offers a profound reflection on freedom and resistance. Hindia, through his poetic and critical songwriting style, explores themes of individual anxiety in response to social and economic pressures. The song’s lyrics depict the tension between personal freedom and restrictive social expectations, particularly within the modern workplace, where individual worth is often measured through productivity and career achievement (Adie et al., 2025; Orlandini et al., 2025). These messages strongly resonate with younger generations who experience pressures within contemporary capitalist work structures.

The phenomenon of high turnover intention among younger generations has been highlighted in various national-scale studies in Indonesia (Aloufi, 2023; Billups, 2023). Generation Z, which has increasingly entered and shaped the workforce, demonstrates a higher tendency to leave employment compared with previous generations (San Jose, 2025). This tendency is influenced by various psychological and structural factors, including work-life imbalance, career uncertainty, and workplace pressure. A study by Putri and Indrayanti (2023) from Gadjah Mada University involving 215 Generation Z respondents found that work-life interference significantly increased turnover intention. Similarly, Septianini (2023), who studied 60 Generation Z workers in Bekasi Regency, confirmed that work-life balance had a significant negative effect on turnover intention ($p < 0.005$), while workplace stress increased employees’ intention to leave ($p < 0.024$). Fathan and Sary (2024) further found that although the work environment alone did not significantly influence turnover intention, the combination of work environment and work-life balance produced a significant simultaneous effect.

Job insecurity represents another critical factor influencing turnover intention. Lutfiyani and Hutahaeen (2024) found a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.427$, $p < 0.001$) between job insecurity and turnover intention among 140 Generation Z employees at a startup company in Bekasi, with job insecurity explaining more than half of the variation in turnover intention. Kusumawati, Sofiah, and Prasetyo (2021), who compared 32 millennials and 52 Generation Z workers in Surabaya, found that although work engagement did not differ significantly between generations, Generation Z demonstrated a higher level of turnover intention than millennials. Overall, these studies indicate that Generation Z has distinct psychological expectations in the workplace, including stronger sensitivity toward work-personal life boundaries, greater willingness to leave organizations that do not provide opportunities for growth, and a preference for inclusive and psychologically healthy work environments.

The song “Berdansalah, Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya” achieved significant public attention, receiving more than 10 million views on YouTube and 56 million streams on Spotify.

Beyond these numerical achievements, the song successfully captured the collective anxiety of urban workers who feel trapped in meaningless work routines. Unlike the politically oriented social resistance presented in .Feast's works, Hindia introduces another dimension of resistance—personal, existential, and reflective. This positioning makes Hindia a prominent contemporary artist who presents alternative narratives regarding emotional exhaustion, existential struggles, and the pursuit of authentic living, which are often underrepresented in mainstream resistance music.

Semiotic analysis provides one of the most relevant approaches for understanding the role of art in freedom of expression. Art functions not only as an aesthetic expression but also as a sign system that represents and constructs social and cultural realities. Within Roland Barthes' semiotic framework, art is understood as a complex field of meaning production, where signs operate not only at the literal level but also at the connotative and mythical levels, carrying ideological meanings.

Barthes (1972) rejected the assumption that signs possess only a single fixed and universal meaning. He explained that the meaning of signs is constructed through multiple layers: denotation as literal meaning, connotation as symbolic or emotional meaning, and myth as a second-order sign system that naturalizes ideological concepts. Previous studies applying this approach include Nugara (2016), who analyzed nationalism values in the song "Bendera"; Erlangga, Utomo, and Anisti (2021), who examined romanticism values in "Melukis Senja"; and Sari et al. (2021), who explored connotative meanings in "Bertaut" by Nadin Amizah (Table 1). This study distinguishes itself by focusing on the deconstruction of the corporate slave myth through themes of social resistance and freedom represented in Hindia's song, while integrating a comprehensive semiotic analysis across the structural components of the lyrics.

Table 1. Comparison of Previous Research

No.	Researcher / Year / Title	Similarities	Differences
1	Rahmadya Putra Nugara (2016) Constructing Nationalism Values in Song Lyrics: Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis of "Bendera" Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi dan Sosial, Vol. 5, No. 3	1. Both use qualitative methods. 2. Both analyze song lyrics using semiotics.	1. Previous study focuses on nationalism values in "Bendera". 2. This study focuses on freedom and resistance representation in Hindia's lyrics.
2	Christopher Yudha Erlangga, Ichsan Widi Utomo, Anisti (2021) Constructing Romanticism Values in Song Lyrics: Roland Barthes Semiotic Analysis of "Melukis Senja" Jurnal Linimasa, Vol. 4, No. 2	1. Both use Roland Barthes' semiotic approach. 2. Both analyze meaning in song lyrics.	1. Previous study highlights romanticism in "Melukis Senja". 2. This study focuses on social resistance and myth in Hindia's song.
3	Itika Purnama Sari, Fira Febriyanti, Triana Ayuningsih	1. Both use qualitative descriptive methods.	1. Previous study focuses on connotative meaning in "Bertaut".

No.	Researcher / Year / Title	Similarities	Differences
	Ujung, Frinawaty Lestarina Barus (2021) Analysis of Connotative Meaning in "Bertaut" by Nadin Amizah Jurnal Diksa: Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia, Vol. 7, No. 1	2. Both examine meanings in song lyrics.	2. This study deconstructs social myths in Hindia's song lyrics.

Etymologically, the term “semiotics” derives from the Greek word semeion, meaning “sign.” Sobur (2016) explains that a sign represents something else based on socially agreed-upon conventions, indicating that meaning is not inherent in an object but is socially constructed. Kriyantono (2009) further states that semiotics is a branch of communication studies that systematically examines sign systems and explores how signs function in the construction of meaning through processes of signification and representation. The sign systems studied in semiotics include the internal structure of signs, particularly the relationship between the signifier and the signified, as well as the ways signs are used and interpreted within society.

Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the concept of the linguistic sign, which consists of two elements: the signifier (the physical form of a sign) and the signified (the mental concept associated with the sign). Their relationship is arbitrary, meaning that meaning emerges from social conventions rather than from a natural connection between the sign and its referent (Saussure, 1988). The arbitrary nature of signs indicates that meaning is produced through a differential system within language rather than through a direct correspondence between signs and reality. The concept of social convention is therefore essential, as it enables signs to acquire dominant legitimacy and shared interpretations within a particular society (Sobur, 2016).

Roland Barthes extended Saussure’s theory by introducing the concept of orders of signification, which consists of two primary levels: first-order signification and second-order signification. First-order signification produces denotative meaning, referring to the literal and most immediately understood meaning of a sign without involving deeper cultural interpretation. Second-order signification produces connotative meaning, which emerges through cultural and social associations. Connotation is interpretive because it is influenced by social backgrounds, cultural values, and collective experiences; therefore, its interpretation may vary depending on the cultural context in which a sign operates. Through connotation, various social values are embedded within signs, causing them to appear as natural and inseparable elements of reality (Barthes, 1972).

At a further level, Barthes (1972) identified myth as a second-order ideological sign system that functions to naturalize ideology, making socially and historically constructed values appear as universal truths. Myth conceals the historical and cultural processes through which certain beliefs are formed and presents them as natural, objective, and unquestionable realities. Barthes criticized myth because it can function as a mechanism for maintaining ideological dominance, particularly within capitalist societies and mass media systems. Through myth, ideological values are embedded within ordinary and seemingly neutral signs. For example, the

myth of “success” in neoliberal culture associates hard work with individual achievement while overlooking broader structural inequalities that influence social outcomes. This framework makes Barthes’ semiotics highly relevant for analyzing artistic expressions that seek to represent or critique social issues, including perspectives on freedom in working life, professional identity, and individual existence.

METHOD

This research was classified as a text analysis or discourse analysis study (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). It employed a qualitative descriptive approach to examine how meaning was constructed within the lyrics of “*Berdansalah Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya*” by Hindia through Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory. The analysis focused on the representation of freedom as a form of resistance reflected in the lyrics (Williams & Maxwell, 2025). As a form of artistic expression, music was examined as a medium for communicating universal human anxieties and social experiences.

Data Sources

Data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are the lyrics of “*Berdansalah Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya*” by Hindia, representing freedom as a perspective of resistance in the disruption era. Secondary data include journals, books, theses, and other relevant references that complement the primary data analysis.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted through text study involving reading and recording. Recording involved noting in detail the lyrics contained in the song, then sorting them based on their relevance to the theory being used. Reading served as the initial step to understand the content of the data sources, while recording was used to collect data related to the problem being studied (Benchimol et al., 2015).

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis method is qualitative descriptive. According to Sugiyono (2016), descriptive research describes or analyzes results without making broader generalizations. According to Moleong (2018), qualitative research is interpretive — data in the form of words, actions, or documents must be understood through research subjects’ perspectives. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005), the interpretive paradigm places social reality as something constructed through human experience and interaction.

The analysis steps include: (1) data collection through reading the research object; (2) data recording relevant to freedom representation and resistance perspective; (3) re-reading; (4) data identification by selecting texts with freedom-as-resistance representation tendencies; (5) data discussion using Roland Barthes’ semiotic theory examining denotation, connotation, and myth in the song lyrics; and (6) conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Description of Research Object

1. Song Lyrics of “*Berdansalah Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya*”

This research focuses on the representation of freedom and resistance in the song "Berdansalah Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya" by Hindia. The analysis is conducted through three layers of meaning: denotation (literal meaning), connotation (cultural and emotional meaning), and myth (ideological narratives that perpetuate or deconstruct dominant values). The complete lyrics of the song analyzed in this study are as follows:

"Besok coba kau izin pulang cepat / Bilang saja siapa sedang sakit / Lusa coba izin terlambat / Bilang saja kau celaka sedikit / Habiskan cutimu sebelum resign / I know you're scared, but it's totally fine / Karena kau bukan mesin assembly line / Lihat promo liburan, babe that's a sign / Oh, karena kutahu / Kalimat itu ada di ujung mulutmu / Oh, karena kau tahu / Tak mau lakukan itu seumur hidupmu / Lakukan apa yang kau mau, sekarang / Saat hatimu bergerak, jangan kau larang / Hidup ini tak ada artinya, maka / Kau bebas mengarang maknanya seorang / Lakukan apa yang kau mau, sekarang / Saat hatimu bergerak, jangan kau larang / Lagipula hidup akan berakhir, maka / Lakukan apa yang kau mau, sekarang / Berdansalah, kau raja dunia! / Karier ini tak ada artinya / Berdansalah, kau ratu dunia! / Hidup ini tak ada artinya / Besok coba kau berbohong sedikit / Lalu kau melupa saat diungkit / Bisa juga kau jujur saja / Separahnya kau akan makin lega / Oh, karena kutahu / Kalimat itu ada di ujung mulutmu / Oh, karena kau tahu / Utamakanlah dirimu di sisa hidupmu"

2. Profile of Hindia

Daniel Baskara Putra, better known by the stage name Hindia, was born in Jakarta on February 22, 1994. A Communication Science graduate from FISIP Universitas Indonesia, he began his music career in 2012 as vocalist of .Feast, then launched his solo project Hindia in 2018. The solo project is positioned as a medium for personal therapy and expressing stories close to young people's anxieties — more intimate and personal than the collective social issues .Feast addresses. His popularity grew significantly from 2019 onward, particularly after one of his songs was used as the soundtrack for the film "Nanti Kita Cerita Tentang Hari Ini" (NKCTHI) in early 2020.

On digital platforms, Hindia's work has garnered millions of monthly listeners on Spotify. Awards include the Anugerah Musik Indonesia (AMI) for Best Alternative Album in 2024 through the album "Lagipula Hidup Akan Berakhir," as well as Billboard Indonesia Music Awards for Top New Artist of the Year and Top Social Artist of the Year. Beyond music, Baskara founded the mental wellness center BagiKata, serves as brand manager at Double Deer Records, and built the record label Sun Eater Coven, which manages Hindia's music, supports other musicians, produces merchandise, and manages a YouTube channel featuring music and visual content.

3. Album "Lagipula Hidup Akan Berakhir"

The album "Lagipula Hidup Akan Berakhir" is Hindia's second studio work, released in July 2023 in two parts — Part 1 on July 7 and Part 2 on July 21. Consisting of 28 songs involving various collaborating musicians, the album presents broader reflections on transience, existential anxiety, and young people's efforts to find meaning amid contemporary pressures. Unlike Feast's political social commentary, this album approaches universal themes: death, happiness, and the meaning of continued existence. Its track listing is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Track Listing of Album "Lagipula Hidup Akan Berakhir" by Hindia

Part	Track Title
Part 1 (July 7, 2023)	1. Malaikat Berputar Diatas Pencakar Langit 2. Janji Palsu 3. Matahari Tenggelam 4. Satu Hari Lagi 5. WAWANCARA LIAR PT.1 6. Ibel 7. Siapa Yang Akan Datang Ke Pemakamanmu Nanti? 8. Selebrisik (feat. Tuantigabelas & Rubina) 9. Cincin 10. WAWANCARA LIAR PT.2 (feat. Matter Mos) 11. Kami Khawatir, Kawan 12. Apa Kabar, Ayah? 13. Iya... Sebentar 14. Bunuh Idolamu
Part 2 (July 21, 2023)	15. I'm Not A Robot/CAPTCHA 16. Forgot Password (feat. Nadin Amizah) 17. Perkara Tubuh 18. Pesisir 19. WAWANCARA LIAR, PT.3 20. Masalah Masa Depan 21. Alexandra 22. Jangan Jadi Pahlawan (feat. Teddy Adhitya) 23. Bayangkan 24. Bayangkan Jika Kita Tidak Menyerah 25. Kita Ke Sana 26. Berdansalah, Karier Ini Tak Ada Artinya 27. Nabi Palsu 28. WAWANCARA LIAR, PT.4

Analysis Results

The following subsections present a semiotic analysis of each structural component of the song through the three levels of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth, as specified in Roland Barthes' semiotic framework.

1. Analysis of the First Verse

Table 3. Semiotic Analysis of the First Verse

Lyric Excerpt	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
"Tomorrow, try requesting early leave / Just say someone is ill /	Depicts an office worker seeking brief relief from strict work rules. "Requesting early leave"	Contains satire against rigid work culture demanding full compliance. Actions symbolize everyday	Critiques the capitalist ideology that naturalizes endless work as a normal life condition. Modern work

Lyric Excerpt	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
The day after, try requesting to be late / Just say you had a minor accident / Use up your leave before resigning / I know you're scared, but it's totally fine / Because you are not an assembly line machine / Look at the vacation promo, babe, that's a sign"	and "requesting to be late" refer literally to common workplace practices. "Use up your leave before resigning" is practical advice. "You are not an assembly line machine" directly reminds workers of their human limitations. "Look at the vacation promo, that's a sign" is a literal invitation to notice vacation opportunities.	resistance strategies (Scott, 1985). "Use up your leave before resigning" criticizes the burnout phenomenon and Gen Z's high turnover rate. "Not an assembly line machine" carries humanistic connotation against capitalism's dehumanization of workers. Gallup (2023): 50% of Indonesian workers experience daily stress; 41% report anger during work. Putri & Handayani (2021): 61% of young workers experience physical fatigue and decreased motivation.	systems demand full discipline: arriving on time, leaving on schedule, maintaining productivity — presented as though natural. "You are not an assembly line machine" rejects capitalism's dehumanization logic. Counter-myth offered: humanity, rest, and emotional well-being are values equally as important, even more valuable, than mere career achievement.

At the denotative level, the first verse presents a series of realistic activities: leaving early, arriving late, taking leave, and going on vacation. There is no complex symbolism at this layer — only a literal narrative documenting workers' simple strategies for momentarily stepping out of work obligations. Bait ini secara denotatif menghadirkan narasi literal tentang situasi kerja yang sangat familiar bagi para pekerja muda urban.

At the connotative level, these actions represent what James C. Scott (1985) calls everyday resistance — small, non-frontal acts of resistance significant for maintaining self-balance within an oppressive work system. The line "use up your leave before resigning" voices deep criticism of the burnout phenomenon; leave is formally a worker's right, but in practice many workers feel guilty using it for fear of being perceived as lazy or disloyal. Hindia reverses this narrative by endorsing full utilization of benefits even before making the decision to resign.

At the mythical level, this verse critiques the dominant capitalist ideology that naturalizes endless work. The statement "because you are not an assembly line machine" is central to Hindia's deconstruction: it historicizes the naturalized expectation that workers should function like industrial machines — consistent, predictable, maximally productive. The counter-myth positions human limitations, rest, and emotional well-being as equally legitimate values, challenging the myth that total work devotion constitutes the only path to being an "ideal worker."

2. Analysis of the Second Verse

Table 4. Semiotic Analysis of the Second Verse

Lyric Excerpt	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
"Oh, because I know / Those words are at the tip of your tongue / Oh, because you know / You don't want to do that for the rest of your life"	Describes an internal dialogue between the narrator and a worker figure. "Those words are at the tip of your tongue" literally means someone has almost-spoken words being held back. "You don't want to do that for the rest of your life" explicitly states rejection of making monotonous routine work a permanent life path.	Symbolizes the emotional burden carried but not dared to express publicly — what Scott (1985) calls the "hidden transcript": discourse suppressed in public space but alive in individual minds as silent resistance. The line "you don't want to do that for the rest of your life" represents existential resistance against career as the only valid life path. Deloitte (2023): 46% of Gen Z experience burnout; 44% plan to resign within two years. Sari & Dewi (2022): 63% of workers aged 20-28 consider their work "meaningless."	Deconstructs the illusion of lifelong work loyalty as a measure of morality and individual worth. The system mythologizes that staying loyal to one job for decades is honorable, while mobility is seen as disloyal or irresponsible. Hindia exposes that "loyalty" is not a free choice born of love for work, but a form of ideological bondage produced by power relations between workers and the system. Counter-myth: recognizing dissatisfaction and claiming authenticity is legitimate resistance.

At the denotative level, this verse is a psychological portrait of a worker in conflict between what is felt and what must be endured. The phrase "those words are at the tip of your tongue" presents a simple yet powerful image: someone has something to say but chooses not to say it. There is no hidden symbolism; the lyrics only depict the act of "holding back words" that almost escape.

At the connotative level, the suppressed expression represents the political silence of workers — resistance that remains invisible but always present beneath daily compliance. The capitalist system normalizes this silence through fear of consequences. The line "you don't want to do that for the rest of your life" functions as a collective awakening: recognizing that career loyalty is not an inherent virtue but a structural product of power.

At the mythical level, the verse exposes how modern work culture maintains the illusion that lifelong loyalty to a job signals moral integrity. Hindia's counter-myth reveals that what appears as voluntarily chosen loyalty is often compelled by economic fear and social stigma — and that the suppressed desire to leave, far from being disloyal, reflects a legitimate human aspiration for authentic living.

3. Analysis of the First Refrain

Table 5. Semiotic Analysis of the First Refrain

Lyric Excerpt	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
"Do what you want, now / When your heart moves, don't restrain it / Life has no meaning, so / You are free to compose its meaning alone / Do what you want, now / When your heart moves, don't restrain it / Life will end anyway, so / Do what you want, now"	An explicit invitation to follow the heart's desire. "Do what you want, now" is a direct instruction to act based on personal will. "When your heart moves, don't restrain it" advises against suppressing natural impulses. "Life has no meaning" states that life has no predetermined fixed meaning. "You are free to compose its meaning alone" affirms individual freedom to create personal meaning.	"Now" is a political keyword delegitimizing the deferral logic of modern work culture — the promise that present sacrifice will pay off later. The word "now" demands immediacy as an act of resistance against postponement of pleasure. "When your heart moves, don't restrain it" validates emotional needs as legitimate rather than disruptive to productivity. "Life has no meaning" resonates with existentialist thought — not nihilism, but creative freedom. "Compose its meaning alone" metaphorically positions the individual as author of their own life, replacing external scoring (position, salary) with internal criteria.	Deconstructs the belief that life's meaning has been externally determined by social norms. Capitalism, education, and family teach that meaningful life occurs through stable career, steady income, and measurable achievement. Hindia deconstructs the myth "life = career" with "life has no meaning" — a rhetorical strategy revealing that life's meaning is not given from outside but created by the individual. Counter-myth: life = what you compose yourself; freedom is the act of creating meaning, not receiving it from institutions.

At the denotative level, the first refrain presents a series of explicit statements: an invitation to do what is desired, encouragement not to suppress inner voice, assertion that life has no predetermined meaning, and acknowledgment that every individual is free to create their own meaning. There is no complex symbolic layer; all lines can be understood literally as practical guidance for action.

At the connotative level, the imperative "do what you want, now" functions as a powerful political statement. The word "now" undermines the deferral logic so characteristic of modern work culture — career paths consistently demand sacrifice in the present for rewards in an uncertain future. The phrase positions freedom as an immediate practice, not a reward for productivity. The line "life has no meaning" resonates with existentialist philosophical tradition: if meaning is not inherently embedded in the world, then the space for individual creative freedom becomes vast. Crucially, Hindia does not stop at this declaration of meaninglessness — he immediately follows it with an affirmation of agency: "you are free to compose its meaning alone." This transforms potential nihilism into a manifesto of personal sovereignty.

At the mythical level, this refrain performs what Barthes calls demystification: it tears apart the "natural" appearance of the dominant myth that equates meaningful life with career achievement, status, and institutional recognition. The counter-myth offered

positions individual authorship of life — through autonomous meaning-making — as the alternative to externally prescribed success. In Barthes' terms, the construction "life = career" is broken and replaced with the narrative "life = what you compose yourself."

4. Analysis of the Second Refrain

Table 6. Semiotic Analysis of the Second Refrain

Lyric Excerpt	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
"Dance, you are king of the world! / This career has no meaning / Dance, you are queen of the world! / Life has no meaning"	"Dance" is literally an invitation to perform dancing activity — a physical movement following musical rhythm. "King/queen of the world" is a symbolic title of honor. "Career has no meaning" directly states that career or work is not significant. "Life has no meaning" reaffirms the absence of predetermined universal meaning.	"Dancing" in popular culture serves as a metaphor for freedom, release of burden, and self-celebration — a moment when the body moves freely without external rules. "King/queen of the world" does not denote monarchical status but symbolizes self-sovereignty achieved through breaking free from career hegemony. "Career has no meaning" functions as a direct critique of capitalist ideology making career the primary individual identity, repositioning career as just one aspect of life, not its center.	"Dancing" symbolizes liberation of the body from capitalism's hegemonic grip over productive time. The dominant myth equates "king/queen of the world" with high office, wealth, and formal career achievement. Hindia subverts this: someone becomes "king" or "queen of the world" not through career but through the courage to dance — to celebrate existence over compliance. Counter-myth: sovereignty = authenticity and self-celebration; career achievement $\neq$ ultimate human worth.

At the denotative level, the second refrain combines a literal invitation to dance with explicit declarations about career and life. "Dance" is understood as an activity of rhythmic bodily movement; "king and queen of the world" are symbolic titles of honor; "career has no meaning" directly states career's insignificance.

At the connotative level, "dancing" in this cultural context is far more than physical movement. It is a metaphor for the condition of authentic freedom — when a person is truly liberated from career pressure and can move according to their own rhythm. The titles "king/queen of the world" symbolize self-sovereignty: authority over one's own life direction, rather than subjection to external rules. The declaration "career has no meaning" challenges the deeply embedded cultural assumption that professional achievement is the ultimate measure of human worth.

At the mythical level, the popular culture myth that "king/queen of the world" status belongs to those with high positions, wealth, and acknowledged career achievements is systematically deconstructed. Hindia's alternative coronation — through dancing rather than professional achievement — is profoundly subversive: it relocates the center of human worth from the institutional to the personal realm. This counter-myth positions personal sovereignty and authentic self-celebration above

capitalist-defined success, completing the song's ideological intervention against the corporate slave myth.

5. Analysis of the Third Verse

Table 7. Semiotic Analysis of the Third Verse

Lyric Excerpt	Denotation	Connotation	Myth
"Tomorrow, try lying a little / Then forget it when brought up / You could also just be honest / As bad as it gets, you'll feel more relieved / Oh, because I know / Those words are at the tip of your tongue / Oh, because you know / Prioritize yourself in the rest of your life"	Presents two literal choices: lying or being honest when facing work pressure. "Lying a little" means providing false reasons for personal benefit. "Be honest" means sharing the actual condition. "As bad as it gets, you'll feel more relieved" means both choices lead to emotional relief regardless of outcome.	"Lying a little" symbolizes moral compromise — a common small practice protecting oneself from an inhumane system, representing everyday resistance. Wulandari (2021): 48% of Indonesian office workers regularly practice everyday resistance including intentional lateness and false excuses. "Be honest" symbolizes existential courage to voice truth despite professional risks. "As bad as it gets, you'll feel more relieved" suggests emotional freedom is more important than blind compliance with external rules.	Deconstructs the ideology of full compliance. Capitalist work systems mythologize that the ideal worker is always honest, disciplined, and rule-abiding — positioning compliance as a universal moral virtue. Hindia reveals that both lying and honesty are valid survival strategies when the result is emotional relief. The myth of compliance as moral virtue is exposed as a mechanism of control. Counter-myth: worker value is measured not by obedience to institutions but by the ability to maintain emotional well-being and self-integrity.

At the denotative level, the third verse presents a familiar dilemma: the choice between lying or being honest when workplace pressure becomes unbearable. Both choices are ultimately directed toward one goal — the relief of emotional burden. There is no hidden complex symbolism; the verse acknowledges a realistic psychological condition for anyone who has experienced demanding work environments.

At the connotative level, the verse exposes the ethical complexity facing modern workers. "Lying a little" is not simply a moral failing but a survival strategy — a form of everyday resistance that workers employ to carve out personal space within systems that offer no other legitimate outlet for exhaustion. Research by Nugroho and Prasetyo (2020) found that small lies are the most common strategy among workers for maintaining mental health when facing excessive demands. Meanwhile, "being honest" carries connotations of existential courage: speaking truth to power relationships where honesty itself carries professional risk. The phrase "prioritize yourself in the rest of your life" marks a decisive shift: from institutional loyalty toward self-care as the primary ethical obligation.

At the mythical level, this verse demolishes the ideology of full compliance that capitalist work culture has naturalized as universal virtue. The myth that "the ideal

worker is always honest, disciplined, and rule-abiding" functions as a control mechanism, hiding the fact that compliance serves the system's productivity needs rather than workers' human needs. Hindia's counter-myth repositions moral value: not at obedience to external institutions, but at the capacity to maintain emotional well-being and self-integrity. The verse thereby completes the song's systematic deconstruction of the corporate slave myth.

3.2.6 Counter-Myth of the Corporate Slave Myth in Generation Z

The comprehensive semiotic analysis across all five structural components of the song reveals a systematic and coherent deconstruction of the corporate slave myth through three interconnected levels of meaning. At each level, Hindia's lyrics challenge a different dimension of the myth that equates human worth with productivity, career achievement, and institutional compliance.

The central ideological mechanism the song targets is what Barthes calls naturalization: the process by which historically contingent values (work discipline as moral virtue, career as life's center, loyalty as honorable character) are made to appear natural, inevitable, and universal. The song's lyrics systematically expose the cultural and historical construction behind these seemingly natural values, using the full range of Barthesian semiotic tools — from literal denotation to cultural connotation to mythological deconstruction.

The counter-myth offered by Hindia positions human freedom, emotional authenticity, and individual right to self-definition as the alternative framework. The metaphor of "dancing" serves as the culminating symbol: it is the body's declaration of sovereignty over the productive demands made upon it by the capitalist system. The act of dancing — purposeless by industrial standards, expressive by human standards — embodies the counter-myth's core: that human worth cannot be reduced to economic output.

Crucially, this deconstruction has empirical resonance. The Gallup Global Workplace Report (2023) documents that 50% of Indonesian workers experience daily stress, with 41% reporting anger during work activities. The Deloitte Global Gen Z & Millennial Survey (2023) records that 46% of Gen Z in Indonesia experience burnout, while 44% plan to resign within two years because their work is not aligned with personal values. These data confirm that the corporate slave myth Hindia critiques is not merely a cultural construct but a lived condition experienced by millions of young workers. The song's popular resonance — 10 million YouTube views, 56 million Spotify streams — suggests that it successfully articulates a collective anxiety that existing cultural and institutional narratives have failed to address.

The song's contribution lies not merely in its critique of existing conditions, but in its construction of alternative meanings (Anugrah et al., 2025). In the digital era, where technological and social changes occur rapidly, art transforms into a tool to respond to the dynamics of the times in unique and powerful ways (Shabila Abdi et al., 2020). Manuel Castells Castells, (2009) shows that in the digital era, individual and collective expression often confronts technological and economic forces that shape public opinion. Deuze, (2007) highlights pressures faced by creative workers to balance freedom of expression with market demands. Within this context, Hindia's song

occupies a significant position: it functions simultaneously as cultural criticism, existential reflection, and collective healing — offering young urban workers a linguistic framework through which to name, legitimize, and communicate their resistance to oppressive work structures.

In the framework of communication science, this song demonstrates that popular music is not a neutral medium but an arena where various social discourses and ideologies compete for legitimacy (Kumar et al., 2026; Way, 2019). Through Barthes' analytical lens, the lyrics of "Berdansalah Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya" form a narrative of freedom in the context of the gig economy, formal work disruption, and the collective identity crisis experienced by young people. These lyrics ultimately become not only personal emotional expression but also a communicative vehicle of broader structural conditions — and must therefore be read semiotically as a culturally rich text.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of the lyrics of "Berdansalah, Karir Ini Tak Ada Artinya" by Hindia, this study concluded that the song effectively functioned as a medium of social criticism and existential reflection that deconstructed the corporate slave myth embedded in modern work culture. At the denotative level, the lyrics represented the everyday realities of workers experiencing routine pressures, such as requesting early leave, arriving late, and seeking temporary relief from work obligations. At the connotative level, these ordinary actions were interpreted as symbols of everyday resistance, representing subtle forms of opposition undertaken by workers to maintain personal space and emotional well-being within a system that demands excessive productivity, organizational loyalty, and continuous compliance. At the mythical level, the song deconstructed dominant narratives that equate career achievement, work commitment, and productivity with the primary measures of human success, while offering an alternative narrative centered on personal freedom, emotional authenticity, and individuals' ability to construct their own meanings in life. The metaphor of "dancing" functioned as a symbol of liberation from restrictive work ideologies, emphasizing personal agency over institutional conformity. Through the integration of these three semiotic levels, the analysis demonstrated that Hindia's music transcended entertainment value by becoming a medium for expressing Generation Z's collective anxiety toward contemporary work culture and illustrating how music can operate as a form of symbolic resistance against prevailing social and cultural structures. Future research is recommended to expand this analysis through audience reception studies or comparative analyses with other musical works addressing similar themes, thereby providing a broader understanding of how music contributes to the development of critical consciousness among young people navigating challenges in the contemporary era of social and technological transformation.

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