

## **Mental Illness as The Other and Hope in Selected Lyrics by TOMORROW X TOGETHER**

Alif Abdul Majid  
Universiti Brunei Darussalam  
mdalifabdulmajid@gmail.com

**Article History:** **Abstract.** This article is a thematic analysis of selected song lyrics by Korean pop boy band, TOMORROW X TOGETHER. TOMORROW X TOGETHER is known for their profound and relatable lyrics that appeal to young people particularly when it comes to mental health issues. Mental illness is regarded as uncommon, and individuals suffering from it are being identified as the “Other” by society. This paper will analyze three of TOMORROW X TOGETHER’s song lyrics from their repackaged album, *The Chaos Chapter: Fight or Escape* (2021) namely *Loser=Lover*, *Anti-Romantic*, and *OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)*. This article aims to examine the themes of mental illness as the Other and hope that can be found in the lyrics of the songs. In addition, the narrative exploration reveals a link between the three songs, revealing a persona that is facing depression and anxiety while seeking to find hope in life, illustrating the misconception of complete powerlessness.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Korean pop boy band, TOMORROW X TOGETHER’s song lyrics usually addressed the themes of heartbreak, loss, insecurity, and uncertainty in their songs—the experiences that “Othered” an individual. TOMORROW X TOGETHER’s song lyrics that will be examined in this paper are song lyrics from their repackage album, *The Chaos Chapter: Fight or Escape* (2021) which are *Loser=Lover*, *Anti-Romantic*, and *OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)* which deals with the themes of hope and mental illness that othered an individual as well; especially the way society views people who have a mental illness. The concept of the Other in literary criticism is the concept of Self and Other where the Other is being dehumanized and demonized by the self who is the authority of the relationship between the two parties involved. According to Kalampalikis and Haas (2008), the Other is a concept that instigates difference and might include adjectives of being foreign, strange, and unusual. Typically, in literary studies, the concept of The

Other is applied in a postcolonial context to comprehend the interaction between the west and the east, as well as the relationship between the bourgeoisie and proletariat.

The notion of "Other" in this article relates to individuals with mental illness who are frequently viewed as a threat and people who are different and violent in society (Goffman, 1963). It is a conflict between an individual and society. Therefore, individuals who are suffering from mental illness may perceive themselves as inferior, leading them to dehumanize and demonize themselves to the point where they label themselves as the "Other". People who have depression and anxiety are considered to have mental illness and they avoid communicating their feelings, experiences, and struggles as it is possible that they fear they would be considered "insane" or "mad" by society or people around them (Karp, 1995). The stigma surrounding mental health and mental illness can also lead to the illness being considered the Other by the Self because people who are mentally well do not understand the experience that people with mental illness are going through. This is the case for the persona in the song lyrics of TOMORROW X TOGETHER; the persona sees himself as the "Other" due to the fact that he has a mental illness and he would start to think about rejecting his life as he sees himself as an outcast. However, in this article, I argue that despite his mental health condition, the persona still managed to find hope in his life which is in line with the statement by Chandran and Pai (2017) on how it is a misconception that one is completely powerless and people who are considered to be naturally malleable "have broken chains and chose to stand up for themselves" (p. 24).

In addition, the emphasis on self-care, self-love, and reclaiming self in Korean popular music is common nowadays. In today's competitive society, Korean pop groups are producing songs that tell the story of how it is important to love yourself, take care of yourself, and not listen to societal pressure. Korean pop bands recognize young people's difficulties in dealing with societal pressure where they are expected and pressured to perform above expectations to be accepted in society. O'brien (2019) also points out that the attitude toward mental health and mental illness is still stigmatized in Korean society, and it is a taboo topic that should not be discussed publicly. Park and Jeon (2016) further remark that the stigma surrounding mental health problems should be promptly recognized by Korean society because it has a negative influence on those living with mental illnesses, which can lead to social and economic losses. Thus, people suffering from mental illnesses may find it difficult to seek treatment from mental health professionals because of the stigma associated with mental illness.

Mendez (2021) highlights that one of the members of TOMORROW X TOGETHER, Yeonjun, underlines that he wanted the lyrics from their album *The Chaos Chapter: Fight or Escape* (2021) to incorporate the theme of togetherness, especially to those who have lost hope during the coronavirus pandemic; to some extent, people would also find a sense of comfort in their music. The repackaged album *The Chaos Chapter: Fight or Escape*, according to the group's company official website, shows a world in which a boy who feels lost, inferior and frozen,

whose aspirations have been swept away by the towering presence of reality. The boy has vowed to fight and escape beyond the freeze (“REPACKAGE ALBUM THE CHAOS CHAPTER: FIGHT OR ESCAPE”, 2021)”. It is also worth noting that TOMORROW X TOGETHER debuted under the same entertainment company as the internationally known and successful K-Pop boy band, BTS, which is Big Hit Entertainment. Big Hit Entertainment's objective in creating music was to alleviate music listeners' feelings of loneliness and isolation, which many people felt, by writing more profound, meaningful song lyrics that listeners can relate to as people feel more alienated nowadays (Knows, 2020). BTS are the pioneers of self-love and uplifting themed music, with songs like *No More Dream* (2013), *Wings* (2016), and *Spring Day* (2017) encouraging their audience to love themselves. Their *Love Yourself* album series has a storyline that depicts a person's path to self-acceptance (Dyer, 2019). Thus, TOMORROW X TOGETHER is likely to have produced songs on how people with mental health issues and mental illness are perceived as the Other and how they aim for people to find hope in their life in spite of their mental illness, given the statement of vision by Big Hit Entertainment in terms of creating music.

Furthermore, Frith (2007) points out that the value of popular music has been questioned by critics. The aesthetic of popular music is considered “aesthetically worthless” because of its commercial form. Music is manufactured for business instead of authenticity as it is possible that artists who produce popular music due to a particular pattern in the music market instead of producing music that they are passionate about. Frith also underlines the fact that the music is being distributed through mass media as mass culture for easy consumption of the audience. Despite the backlash directed towards popular music, it is still seen as an art form with each person's musical experience being unique. This is consistent with Randle and Evans' (2013) assessment of popular music, they stated that even “meaningless dance music” usually has an underlying story, and that pop music narrativity is overlooked in academia. This includes music from TOMORROW X TOGETHER whose music is regarded as being “cohesive and unique in its execution” (Rami, 2019). It is also worth noting that TOMORROW X TOGETHER has 11.8 million followers on Twitter and over 7,499,206 monthly listeners on Spotify. In spite of their popularity, academic research on their music and lyrics are still lacking.

In this paper, I argue that the narrative in the first three tracks of TOMORROW X TOGETHER'S repackage album, *The Chaos Chapter: Flight or Escape* (2021) are connected and each of the three tracks has the same persona. It can be argued that the songs depict a story about a persona who tries to find meaning in his life to the point where he develops depression and anxiety and starts to consider himself and his illness as the Other. At the same time, the songs also have an optimistic tone, which implies the persona is seeking to find hope in life despite his mental health conditions which give an illustration of how complete powerlessness is a misconception. The song lyrics of *Loser=Lover* tell a storyline of a persona who has struggled in life and is on the verge of giving up on life. The persona also claims himself as a loser which gives an illustration of him being an

outcast or the Other. In this song, the persona also exhibits suicidal ideation, overthinking about death while simultaneously being anxious about death, implying that he is lonely. *Anti-Romantic* is the second track from the album, the song tells the story of the persona who managed to have hope in life after having depressive episodes and anxious thoughts. The persona can be seen to be choosing healing over being self-destructive. Finally, the third track from the album *OX1-Lovesong (I Know I Love You)* tells a story of the persona being scared of life because of how lonely life is and begging for people in his life to love him with an anxious and defeated tone in the lyrics.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This article focuses on three TOMORROW X TOGETHER songs from their repackage album *The Chaos Chapter: Flight or Escape* (2021) namely *Loser=Lover*, *Anti-Romantic* and *OX1-Lovesong (I Know I Love You)* and it is worth mentioning that the song lyrics were written in Korean with a few English phrases, the English translation of the songs from the website Genius was utilized in this article, which is a site acknowledged by TOMORROW X TOGETHER themselves.

This article utilized close reading as a method. Close reading focuses on paying close attention to literary texts such as novels, poems, or song lyrics to seek the text's meaning, how the meaning is developed and how the effects are accomplished (Kaan, 2021). Kaan emphasizes that close reading is often employed to respond to the question "how is the story told" in structural analysis. This paper also used thematic analysis and narrative analysis. Anwar (2018) emphasizes that thematic analysis is a method for identifying themes or patterns within a literary text for which codes must first be determined. For example, in this article, the themes of depression, anxiety, and hope will be examined using thematic analysis. Narrative analysis, on the other hand, is when researchers collect stories and analyze them thematically, revealing events that may appear "discontinuous or isolated" but it can be interpreted through storytelling (SAGE Research Methods Datasets, 2019). In the context of this article, the narrative study exposes a connection between the three songs, presenting a persona who is dealing with depression and anxiety while trying to find hope in life and illustrating the misunderstanding of total impotence.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The lyrics of the songs convey the intensity of the persona's depressive episode, to the point where he regards himself as the Other. A depressive episode is defined by American Psychiatric Association (APA) as a period in an individual's life where they exhibit symptoms of major depressive disorder such as hopelessness, emptiness, a sense of worthlessness, and the inability to find joy in life ("What Constitutes a Depressive Episode?", n.d.). In *Loser=Lover*, it can be argued that the song portrays the story of a persona who has struggles in life and is on the verge of giving up in life which is a sign of having a depressive episode.

*In a car colored gray I'm running away  
Beyond this fucked up world (Oh, oh)  
My hand clutching yours, it's all banged up  
It doesn't matter when I'm with you*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The darkness of his depressive episode can be seen in the first verse where he states that he wants to get away from “this fucked up world” in a “car colored gray”, which exhibits an individual without any sense of direction in life. Gray is often linked with uncertainty; this is how the persona feels about his life and how he wishes he could get away from it as he has no interest in living, which gives the impression of hopelessness, loneliness and isolation. The line “my hand clutching yours” relates to the persona’s attempt to cling on to his life, while the words “banged up” refer to the fact that his life is already in shambles as a result of his melancholy episode. The word “you” in the line “It doesn't matter when I'm with you,” illustrates his negative thoughts and how he has lived with his negative views for so long that he no longer sees any worth in his life.

The persona in the song can be argued to have a self-destructive behavior with constant intrusive thoughts about himself; the persona demonized himself and his mental illness:

*Couldn't win, fighting, bleeding, losing and now I'm sick of it  
If I can't have it, I fuckin' keep it low  
Crying, crying, crying, forget it now*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The pessimistic tone of the word uttered by the persona “couldn’t win, fighting, bleeding, losing, now I’m sick of it” gives an illustration of how the persona is beating himself up for losing in life constantly; it gives him a blurry and dark view of life. The repetition of the word “crying” shows the persona going through a sorrowful life to the point where he feels like he has no hope in life anymore. This gives an image of the person’s intrusive thoughts. Intrusive thoughts refer to the unwanted negative thoughts or images that become lodged in a person’s head and are difficult to erase in some situations (Sreenivas, 2021). The image of losing continues to appear in his thoughts, and he finds it difficult to entirely erase from his mind, causing him to become depressed and demonize himself. The depressive episode continues in the second verse:

*This life like a war I'm always the loser  
You were my savior (No doubt, no doubt, no doubt)  
On the edge of the cliff your light leads me  
Making me a winner (So right, so right, so right)*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The persona declares his life to be “like a war” and how he is always “the loser”. This demonstrates how the persona perceives everyday life as a war; it would be pointless for the persona to continue living because he will constantly be the loser to everyone. The persona calls himself a loser which illustrates the persona as an outsider and outcast who does not fit in the society which is an act of demonizing and dehumanizing of self from the persona. As stated by Goffman (1963), society refers to individuals with mental illness as people who are a threat, different and violent in society. Hegel (1807), in his theory of self-consciousness, argues that self-consciousness is the notion where an individual is putting emphasis on another’s awareness of the individual; it is where the Other sees himself through the lens of another. An individual learns about themselves through the lens that others have on them instead of viewing themselves through their own lens. Relating the theory to this text, rather than humanizing himself, the persona sees himself through the perspective of others and believes that having a mental illness is strange.

The word “you” alludes to his unfavorable self-perceptions and ideas. The persona also mentioned the word cliff, along with the line “your light leads me” and “making me a winner,” which conjures up an image of the persona standing on a cliff, having self-destructive thoughts about his life. It also gives an illustration of an individual who thinks it would be much better if he ended his life, as this would finally make him a winner in life as he would finally succeed at something. The phrase “so right” appears three times, implying that the voice in the persona’s head is trying to ensure that he is allowing intrusive ideas and self-destructive thoughts to win. This gives an illustration of how the persona does not know what to do with his feelings, he does not respond to his negative emotions in a healthy and constructive way. As a result, he Othered his own illness.

In the lyrics of *Anti-Romantic*, even though the song focuses on the theme of being hopeful, the depressive episode is also visible where in the first verse:

*I don't know who loves me  
And I don't care, it's a waste anyway  
I'm a little scared of this romantic feeling*

*'Anti-Romantic' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The persona says that “I don’t know who loves me” and “I don’t care, it’s a waste anyway” which gives an image of loneliness and life that is not worth living for as he finds trying to know someone who loves him is a waste of time. It can be argued that it also appears that the persona has no one in his life to support him; the line depicts how he is always alone and lonely at the same time, which could be the reason why he is allowing himself to be consumed by intrusive thoughts. In the chorus of *Anti-Romantic*, the persona is showing a sign of unworthiness in himself:

*Sorry I'm an anti-romantic  
I don't believe anymore in being romantic*

*'Anti-Romantic' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The line “sorry, I’m an anti-romantic” implies that the persona may not believe in love, in giving love to others or in giving love to himself as a result of his sadness taking over his life. “I don't believe anymore in being romantic” confirms his rejection of the concept of love because he is entirely numb; the thought of romance does not appeal to him which gives an illustration of how he is Othering himself because of his experience with mental illness.

The depressive episode is also apparent in *OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)*. The Other, loser, and unworthiness narratives are mentioned in the first line, and in this verse is also where suicide ideation from the persona is demonstrated:

*From this bottomless pit  
You're the only (one) shining gold  
Now I can't stop thinking 'bout you  
When I'm sinking alone  
Angel who appeared to me  
Take me away to your hometown  
I know it's real I can feel it*

*'OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The persona has the impression that his unhappy life is eternal, similar to a “bottomless pit”. He has no choice but to consider ending his life; this portrays a person who is overwhelmed by negative emotions due to his depressive episode. The word “angel” in this verse refers to the angel of death and the word “you” in this verse alludes to the angel, the person is begging the angel to take him to the angel’s hometown, which gives an illustration that the persona wishes for the angel to end his life. He has the inability to stop thinking about death, the line “now I can’t stop thinking about you” proves this statement. The angel’s hometown is generally associated with holiness and divinity, therefore, “hometown” in this verse symbolizes heaven. The line “I know it’s real I can feel it” refers to the feeling and emotions that are going through the persona’s body when thinking about the angel. He has heartfelt affections for the angel, to the point that he believes he can feel the angel’s touch on his body, inviting him to the angel’s hometown. The persona romanticizes the angel in the hopes of having a better life in the angel’s hometown as he has a bad experience on Earth. This shows how the persona views mental illness as bizarre, and he would rather end his life than try to find a purpose in existence.

Additionally, in the chorus of the song as it is excerpted below,

*I'm full of problems, love sick*

*No way to go  
I was fine to die  
I'm a loser in the game  
The only (one) rule of this world  
Save me  
Take my hand  
Please use me like a drug (I know I love you)*

*'OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

the persona emphasizes that he is “full of problems, love sick”; he has “no way to go” and “I was fine to die” which displays the emotions of the persona being lost, overwhelmed with emotions and negativity as he clearly mentioned that he is full of problems. The phrases “take my hand” and “please use me like a drug (I know I love you)” in the chorus also refers to the persona begging the angel to consume his life and a sign of worthlessness that can be felt by the persona due to his depression. It also suggests that he does not care if he is no longer in the world with a convincing and confident tone of the line “I know I love you”, this line exemplifies the persona, professing his love for the angel and believing that the angel’s decision to take him away from Earth would be a good decision. This is also an act of self-demonization and self-othering because he believes he no longer deserves to live due to his mental illness.

The notion of being Othered for having or experiencing anxiety is also evident in the lyrics of the songs. Anxiety, according to Adwas, Jbireal, and Azab (2019), is a pathological counterpart to natural fear that manifests itself in mood, thinking behavior, and physiological activity. As previously discussed, the persona in the songs has depressive episodes where he does not see life as worth living. However, the persona feels overwhelmed with anxiety thinking about death even though he has suicide ideation in the first place. In *Loser=Lover*, this can be demonstrated in the third verse of the song:

*Falling is beautiful  
I gladly sink  
To the other side of the sky  
Just hope we can embrace  
By the end of my clumsy flight  
I don't care if everyone laughs  
I want to sink into your ocean*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The line “my clumsy flight” illustrates how the persona is constantly losing the battle of ending his life. The word “flight” alludes to his attempt to commit suicide and fly “to the other side of the sky”. This also shows how his passive suicidal ideation turns into active suicidal ideation, which is when a person considers and plans to commit suicide, including how to do so (Purse, 2022). The anxiety is



apparent in the line “I don’t care if everyone laughs”, even though he has thoughts about suicide and failed, he still cares about people’s perception of him. Therefore, he is trying to convince himself that he does not care if everyone laughs at him for failing to win his “clumsy flight”. In the lines “falling is beautiful”, “I gladly sink” and “I want to sink into your ocean”, he shows how again, he is trying to convince himself that he will win and end his life. It can be argued that this is motivated by the anxiety that he feels, therefore, this heightens his anxiety. By attempting to end his own life, he can finally be considered to be winning in his life because he would manage to succeed at something, and people would finally pay attention to him. This exemplifies how anxiety is Othered by the persona; instead of attempting to self-soothe and respond to his anxiety in a healthy manner, he opted to be self-destructive about it.

Furthermore, panic attacks caused by anxiety can be illustrated in the chorus:

*I say run  
Laugh like you've gone mad*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The persona tells himself to “run” and “laugh like you’ve gone mad” after stating that he wants “to sink into your ocean”. Even though the persona seems to have an active suicide ideation, he is still terrified of the idea of death. Hence, he is trying to convince himself to run away from the suicidal thoughts and just laugh at the thoughts. The words “gone mad” in the line exhibits chaos as the persona is filled with all sorts of emotion. It can also be argued that the persona feels overwhelmed with anxiety, he does not know what to do or react to the emotions and feelings that he feels. Instead of reacting healthily, he chose to ignore the anxious feelings and panic attack by running and laughing it off.

In *Anti-Romantic*, the theme of anxiety is apparent when the persona is having difficulties romanticizing his life. The persona mentions in the first verse:

*I'm a little scared of this romantic feeling  
Sweet and slightly bitter chocolate  
The aftertaste of it is always the same  
Like saddest movies  
There are only tears around my eyes*

*'Anti-Romantic' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

This first line uses the imagery of having a relationship with life as if life is a person, being romantic and viewing life as a pleasant place to live can be scary to the persona. The line “sweet and slightly bitter chocolate” echoes the feeling of seeing life positively as a bittersweet moment filled with much uncertainty. The

persona feels anxious about loving life because he knows that the feeling of loving life is temporary, and he would feel sad again afterward. The persona uses “saddest movies” as a metaphor for when an individual consumes a sad movie, they would feel melancholy; sometimes the feeling of despair would last long because of the trigger that the individual would feel after watching the movie. Davis (2016) contends that individuals who watched traumatic films would have a strong negative change in their mood; it is possible that this is what the persona is referring to regarding the “saddest movies”. Since the persona has anxiety, it gives “tears around” his eyes which indicates tears of sadness whenever he thinks about life this way, and he keeps on questioning whether it is possible for a human to be happy constantly, or it is just a temporary emotion. This demonstrates how the persona regards himself as a burden, and anxiety, as the Other, plays a role that interferes with the persona’s ability to be entirely joyful.

In the second verse, the anxiety can be seen again when the persona has thoughts about being self-destructive. He starts to think about life when he is addicted to sabotaging his own life:

*I deeply get drunk in you again  
You're like champagne  
I shouldn't do this  
I can see the entire ending  
It will be difficult, worse than a hangover*

*'Anti-Romantic' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

In South Korea, the society considers drinking the easiest way to relieve stress and build relationships because it is a part of their culture (Cho, 2016). Champagne symbolizes addiction in this verse as the persona is anxious about life as many would consume the drink whenever they need an escape from real-life stress such as school and work-life. The persona thinks that he wants to go back to his old addiction of hurting himself. The use of “you” presents his self-destructive behavior and how if he goes back to the old pattern of behavior he would get deeply “drunk” into the behavior again. The line “I shouldn’t do this” evokes the emotions of fear and concern for his faith. “I can see the entire ending” illustrates the idea of hell to the persona if he chose to hurt himself again.

The persona also mentions “it will be difficult, worse like a hangover”, the persona indicates that hurting himself would not be beneficial and it would cause many problems to him as he is concerned that it would be “worse than a hangover”. This remark also implies that the persona would drink as a coping strategy anytime he is struggling in life; therefore he understands how it feels to have a hangover. The line also shows how a hangover is a horrific experience for the persona, and that if something worse happened than a hangover, he would be disturbed or uneasy about it. Even though at first the persona views his anxiety as the Other, he started to be conflicted with himself as he is not sure whether to end his life or not; therefore, this gives an illustration of how the person started to

accept his mental illness and he does not want to stigmatize it and started to think reasons on why he should continue living instead.

In *OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)*, the theme of anxiety is visible in the second verse of the lyrics:

*I'm not going to make it  
I won't be able to get into heaven  
I don't belong there  
No place for me in heaven*

*'OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

In most societies, attempting suicide or losing a battle to suicide is considered as an unholy practice. This verse can be argued to be a conversation between the angel and the persona. The persona has a realization that even though the angel's "hometown" is heaven, he would not be able to make it to their hometown if he chose to end his life. Hence, the persona feels anxious that he is not going to make it to heaven if he chose to end his life. He does not have a sense of belonging in heaven, and that there would be no place for him in heaven. Not only does he feel anxious about the thoughts, but the abrupt realization by the persona overloads him with emotions of fear and guilt, causing him to overthink his faith in the hereafter. This is also the point at which the persona began to embrace his mental condition rather than acting on it destructively and Othering himself because of it.

In addition to the themes of depression and anxiety as the Other, the lyrics also include the notion of hope. In the song lyrics of *Loser=Lover*, the theme of hope can be displayed in how the persona tries to convince himself that he is a loser but he still attempts to force the feeling of love in his life. In the chorus, the persona can be seen attempting to push aside his unpleasant emotions about life:

*Time to say goodbye to tears  
Run  
Never look back*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

Tears in this verse symbolize hope as it gives the imagery of happiness that is about to come for the persona hence, the line "time to say goodbye to tears". Even with the dark thoughts clouding his mind, the persona still tries his best to find hope in life by running away from the negative thoughts he is experiencing. Chandran and Pai (2017) mention that it is a misconception that one is completely powerless and people who are considered to be naturally malleable "have broken chains and chose to stand up for themselves" (p. 24). This can be demonstrated in the line "never look back" which serves as an encouragement from the persona to the persona himself in order for the feeling of hope to be consistent in his life. If he

chose to look back on his self-destructive behavior, he would be stuck in that behavior which would make him return to his depressive and anxious thoughts. The line is viewed as the persona is having an optimistic view of life and it is a proof that one is not completely powerless.

In the post-chorus:

*I'm a loser (Oh-oh)*  
*I'm a loser (Oh-oh)*  
*Lover with a dollar sign*  
*Is a loser*

*I'm a lover (Oh-oh)*  
*I'm a lover (Oh-oh)*  
*Lover with a dollar sign*  
*Is a loser*

*'Loser=Lover' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The line "I'm a lover" is repeated twice and the statements "lover with a dollar sign is a loser" are mentioned afterward. This gives an illustration that even though he claims to be a loser, an outcast in society, he can still see himself as a lover despite what he goes through with the depression and anxiety. "Lover with a dollar sign is a loser" shows how the persona is embracing the life of an outcast. He can be a loving individual even though he lives with mental health problems; he still has hopes in his life, and he refuses to let his instructive thoughts win over him.

In *Anti-Romantic*, the theme of hope is evident throughout the lyrics. In the chorus of the song, the persona says:

*As my entire heart burns*  
*I'm afraid that only black ashes will remain*

*'Anti-Romantic' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The image of a dead person being cremated is shown in this verse. The line "as my entire heart burns" illustrates the body of the dead person being placed into a cremation chamber to be turned into ashes. The line "I'm afraid that only black ashes will remain" demonstrates how the persona is fearing the thoughts of being turned into ashes after death, perhaps, knowing the fact that he has not done anything that he is proud of in his life, considering he is in his depressive and anxious episodes most of his life. Therefore, this illustrates hope and how the character is enthusiastic about life to the degree where he fears death, despite the fact that he is self-destructive depicted in the aforementioned lyrics.

Additionally, in the pre-chorus, the persona reflects on his life:

*So stupid, this sweet love song  
An extravagant rom-com  
As much as I was happy  
There is a red line on the final bill*

*'Anti-Romantic' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The persona reflects on his life during his depressive period and how he believes it was foolish of him to act in such a self-destructive manner. The persona compares his life to a “sweet love song” where it can be soothing and calming to listen to, reminiscing the good moments that happened in his life. He also associates his life to an “extravagant rom-com” which illustrates him, starting to romanticize life for the sake of his well-being. Romantic comedies can bring joy and a sense of optimism to the person who consumes them (Shah, 2020). Even though he went through a lot in life, he still manages to find light and be hopeful about his life. He thinks that life is worth living even though he finds the world to be toxic sometimes. However, even though he is hopeful about life, the line “as much as I was happy” brings him back to his old behavior pattern of not seeing the good in life. The line “there is a red line on the final bill” is a metaphor used by the persona to echo the idea that nothing will last forever. The final bill symbolizes life, the red line gives the imagery of how there is a limit to joy to him. Just like happiness, it is temporary, once he has the intrusive thoughts back to him, he would be back to square one.

In the lyrics of *OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)*, the theme of hope is apparent in the bridge of the lyrics:

*The hole in my soul begins to mend  
Frigid air starts to thaw  
In this world of zero  
I found warmth that's you  
Take all of me*

*'OX1=Lovesong (I Know I Love You)' (TOMORROW X TOGETHER, 2021)*

The persona seems to view the world positively and in favor of living. “The hole in my soul begins to mend” gives an illustration of how the persona prioritizes healing over his destructive thoughts and the “frigid air starts to thaw” gives an illusion of how the world for the persona is starting to get better for him. Chakraborty (2021) emphasizes that *OX1=LOVESONG* is about believing in love when the world is getting chaotic, with overwhelming emotions such as doubts and sorrows coming into an individual's mind. The person still believes the world is “zero” for him, but he has found “warmth” in it, indicating that he is at peace with himself and has chosen to believe in love, whether for the chaotic world or for himself, even if it is difficult for him. “You” in this bridge refers to the angel of death mentioned earlier because of the angel; it makes the persona realize that it is

not worth it to end his life even though it is distressing for him because he will not “get into heaven”. In spite of the fact that mental illness is initially regarded as The Other, the persona remains optimistic about what life and the universe have in hand for him and goes with the flow.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the narrative in the lyrics shows a link between the three songs, revealing a persona that is facing depression and anxiety while seeking to find hope in life. The persona in the song lyrics is struggling in life which leads to him having depressive episodes that cause him to be self-destructive, have intrusive thoughts and have a suicide ideation. The persona feels unworthy of his existence, and he has lost faith in romance as a result of his unhappiness to live, which is an act of Othering himself. The persona identified himself as the Other because he has a mental illness; he also viewed mental illness as the Other because mental illness is seen as uncommon by society. The persona does not believe that life is worth living. He considers himself a loser, and he is always plagued by negative thoughts, which exacerbate his anxiousness. Although he first views mental illness as the Other, he is also concerned about ending his life due to his fear of not entering heaven and his faith. In the end, he has begun to accept and destigmatize his mental illness. Although his standing is as the Other, the persona pushes himself to find love in his life which highlights the fact that complete powerlessness is a myth. He also prioritizes healing over destructive thoughts, and he dreads death while hoping for a better life because of the image of ashes in his mind. He also considers his act of self-destruction to be foolish.

In general, pop music lyrics need to be examined more because research on the analysis of pop music lyrics is still limited. Particularly, in terms of how people engage with pop music and how they can form their identity based on the music they listen to. It would be beneficial to conduct research on these topics in order to make sense of people’s behavior, especially in sociological studies. The music and lyrics of TOMORROW X TOGETHER require more academic attention because the lyrics contain complex themes, imagery, and symbolism that should be examined, particularly their debut song *Crown* (2019) and their follow-up song *Run Away* (2019).

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