LOVE MYSELF CAMPAIGN: EXPLORING BRANDEN’S SIX PILLARS OF SELF-ESTEEM IN BTS SONGS

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Abstract

On November 2017, 7-member Korean idol group BTS (Bangtan Sonyeondan) launched the LOVE MYSELF campaign, partnering with UNICEF #ENDviolence program. This campaign was presented to build the young generation’s belief that “true love first begins with loving myself”. As a part of this campaign, BTS released the Love Yourself trilogy albums, and the recent one is titled Love Yourself: Answer. This research aims to discover the self-esteem expressions used in the lyrics of each song according to Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem (1994) and also to analyze the connection between the four songs in the album, namely: Epiphany, I’m Fine, Idol and Answer: Love Myself, and the campaign. A qualitative method with literary study was used to collect the data from the lyrics of the four songs. The result found out that three songs: I’m Fine, Idol and Answer: Love Myself, contain all Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem, namely: living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and personal integrity. While Epiphany also contains all of the pillars except self-responsibility. It can be concluded that all four songs matched with the LOVE MYSELF campaign. The findings of this study should give a support to the campaign and persuade the listeners about love and respect oneself.

Keywords: BTS, the LOVE MYSELF campaign, Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem.

1. Introduction

At the beginning of 2017, Korean Idol group BTS and its label Big Hit Entertainment prepared the LOVE MYSELF campaign (About LOVE MYSELF, 2017). This campaign can only be officially launched on 1 November in the same year after the proposal was received by The Korean Committee of UNICEF. The aim of this campaign is to protect and support children and teenagers from abuse and sexual violence, both in the domestic and school environment. In addition, educational programs for local communities that intend to prevent acts of violence were also provided.
In the same year, BTS released *Love Yourself* trilogy album which is part of the LOVE MYSELF campaign, namely *Love Yourself: Her*, *Love Yourself: Tear* and *Love Yourself: Answer*. The third album of this trilogy, *Love Yourself: Answer*, was released on August 24, 2018. Herman (2018b) reported that these three albums have a connection. The first two albums talked about finding and losing love. The third album, which is the last album of the trilogy, became a “conclusion” from the previous two albums. This album contains old songs, which also can be found in the previous two albums, and contains four new songs that emphasize the theme of self-love, explicitly explains that in finding a path of happiness in any relationship begins with loving yourself first. Those four songs are *Epiphany*, *I’m Fine*, *Idol*, and *Answer: Love Myself*. The four songs are part of the ongoing 2-year the LOVE MYSELF campaign.

The father of self-esteem, Branden (1987), argues that self-love and self-esteem have a close relationship. He states that self-esteem has two components: self-confidence and self-respect. He emphasizes that before learning to love oneself, there was no reason for someone to hate him/herself. In addition, Branden (1994) also emphasizes that by loving yourself, it will be easier for us to love others, “If I enjoy the fundamental sense of efficiency and worth, and experience myself as loveable, then I have a foundation for appreciating and loving others” (p. 8). Branden claims there are at least six pillars needed to build self-esteem, those are: living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and personal integrity.

Previous research on the relationship between music and self-esteem was done by Cook and Mundle (2014). They conducted a study toward 42 students at remedial school in Kingston, Jamaica. The purpose of this study was to find the relationship between music intervention programs and students’ self-esteem in the academic field. As a result, music has an effect on improving students’ academic abilities. Music enhances skills, creativity, reading skills, their awareness of the environment. Thus, their self-esteem also increases.

In addition, Seighalani, Gol and Rostami (2014) discover the effects of music therapy on self-esteem toward 30 patients with multiple sclerosis. The patients was divided into control and experimental groups. The experimental group was exposed to six sessions of live music and the result showed that their anxiety level decreased and their self-esteem level increased. Thus, music therapy can be used for patients with multiple sclerosis as an alternative therapy that tends to require large costs.

As far as the researcher concerned, there is no study researching self-esteem in songs’ lyrics. This study seeks the possibility of a parallel relationship between Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem with the LOVE MYSELF campaign and the four BTS songs discussed earlier. It will also find out what pillars include in the four songs and the compatibility of the songs with the campaign.

2. Literature Review

2.1 LOVE MYSELF Campaign and #ENDviolence Program

The LOVE MYSELF campaign is a part of the UNICEF’s #ENDviolence programs. The currently underway program has the same vision and mission as the LOVE MYSELF campaign. #ENDviolence program also aims to protect children and adolescents and take precautionary measures against all acts of violence (#ENDviolence, n.d.).

The LOVE MYSELF campaign was officially launched in Japan on April 15, 2018 (LOVE MYSELF partnered with Japan, 2018). BTS member, the Big Hit Entertainment Japan Office and Japan Committee for UNICEF attended the partnership agreement ceremony held in Tokyo, Japan.
On 24 September 2018, RM who is the leader of BTS delivered a speech at the United Nations General Assembly, New York as a representative of global youth. The speech is a part of the partnership event that BTS participates in, namely UNICEF Generation Unlimited. On the same day, the group and its label signed an official partnership agreement with UNICEF USA for the LOVE MYSELF campaign. After Japan and the USA, they expanded this campaign globally to North America and Europe to sponsor #ENDviolence program (From USA to UK, 2018).

In carrying this campaign, BTS donated some of their album sales income and 100% of the profits from the sale of goods from their social programs. As reported by Herman (2018a), the total number of BTS and Big Hit Entertainment donations is 500 million KRW or around $447,000 USD. In addition, they also launched BTS LOVE MYSELF Fund which aims to raise funds in running the campaign. A year later after the campaign was launched, the incoming funds reached 1.6 billion KRW or around $1.4 Million USD.

Since its debut in 2013, BTS has a goal to comfort young people through their music. This can be found from some of their songs, both on the albums at the beginning of their debut and on the album released after the campaign was launched. For example, a song titled Not Today invites listeners not to give up easily. As the lyrics run, “If you can’t fly, run/today we will survive/crawl if you can’t crawl to gear up” (KBS World TV, 2017).

In addition, the song titled Epiphany tells a person’s awareness to love himself for who he is. It can be found in the lyrics, “I’m the one I should love in this world/shining me, precious soul of mine/I finally realized, so I love me/not so perfect but so beautiful/I’m the one I should love/I may be a bit blunt, I may lack some things/I may not have that shy glow around me/but this is me/my arms, my legs, my heart, my soul” (BTS – Epiphany, n.d.).

2.2 Nathaniel Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem

Branden mentioned Six Pillars of Self-esteem (1994) as follows.

2.2.1 First pillar: Living consciously

Branden uses the term “conscious” to state the condition of someone who is aware of the reality of life. Being conscious is one way for someone to survive and be careful in taking every decision. Sometimes there is someone who has more intelligence than others, but that does not mean that the person has the ability to live consciously. He states that living consciously has nothing to do with the level of one’s intelligence. In other words, living consciously is aware of everything related to our actions, purposes, values and goals, and does in accordance with the best ability so everything that is done becomes something fun, not a burden.

To help someone start living consciously, Branden teaches a way of thinking to raise the awareness. He gave several questions, most of those began with “If I bring 5 percent more awareness to...”. Five of them are “If I bring 5 percent more awareness to my relationship with...”, “If I bring 5 percent more awareness to my concern about...”, “If I bring 5 percent more awareness to how I sometimes stand in my own way...”, “If I bring 5 percent more awareness to the outcomes of my actions...”, and “If I bring 5 percent more awareness to how sometimes I make it difficult for people to give me what I want...” (p. 87).

2.2.2 Second pillar: Self-acceptance

Branden states that if self-esteem is related to what have been experienced, then self-acceptance is related to what have been done. Self-acceptance is a person’s awareness to accept the reality about him (both good and bad) and to be kind to himself. Although self-
acceptance is identical by loving yourself for who you are, someone who has self-acceptance will not say the mistakes he made were something good. Instead, this error is used as a medium to improve himself to become a better person.

Just like the first pillar, Branden teaches a way of thinking that aims to raise self-acceptance. In this exercise, he suggests the readers to stand in front of a full-length mirror and see themselves, not to their clothes or make-up. Maybe this will be uncomfortable because it will show all the hated physical shortcomings or unacknowledged other aspects. However, while still standing in front of the mirror, Branden asks the readers to say the following sentence and understand the depth of its meaning “whatever my defects or imperfections, I accept myself unreservedly and completely” (p. 95). He claims that by doing exercises like this, a person will be able to accept himself better and improve his self-esteem.

2.2.3 Third pillar: Self-responsibility

Someone who has self-responsibility will be responsible in all aspects of his existences and decisions taken in each action. Every decision made is very influential to his future life. The questions that often arise in the minds of those who have self-responsibility are, “what actions are possible to me?”, “what needs to be done?” and “what will be the use of my energies in this situation?” (p. 112). He is responsible for himself and indirectly respect others and do not make others as servants in getting what he wants.

2.2.4 Fourth pillar: Self-assertiveness

Branden states that self-assertiveness is “…the willingness to stand up for myself, to be who I am openly, to treat myself with respect in all human encounters” (pp. 118-119). Self-assertiveness must be based on conditions that occur in reality. The opposite of self-assertiveness is the nature of silence and surrender to a situation and just go with the flow, only to be “accepted”. This is a bad trait because by only accepting what it is, someone’s potential will be forever hidden.

Many people equate self-assertiveness as a form of selfishness. Self-assertiveness does not necessarily maintain personal interests and opinions without first considering the interests and opinions of others, or arrogantly declaring that others do not have the same vision as themselves are wrong. Branden (1994) argues and emphasizes that self-assertiveness is closely related to how we bring ourselves into a society and behave without abandoning our sense of self, being self-sacrificing and betraying our standards and convictions.

2.2.5 Fifth pillar: Living purposefully

Living purposefully according to Branden is to focus all the possessed capabilities for the goals to be achieved. Those goals do not need to be great because great goals that are not able to be achieved will have no effect on life. Conversely, a simple but achievable goal will be a trigger for achieving other goals which certainly will come next. This is closely related to self-responsibility discussed earlier.

To live purposefully means to live productively without imposing others. That is why self-discipline is needed. Branden insists that “self-discipline is the ability to organize our behavior overtime in the service of specific task” (p. 132). Living purposefully is also closely related to living a conscious life. When the goal is achieved, a person’s self-esteem will automatically increase and make him happier.
2.2.6 Sixth pillar: Personal integrity

Just like the first pillar, personal integrity cannot be measured by one’s intelligence. Someone who is aware of the reality of life automatically has personal integrity. Branden (1994) asserts that personal integrity is the source of self-esteem. When a person has integrity, he can combine ideas, convictions, standards and beliefs in his daily life and habits. In achieving its goals, integrity means staying conscious and taking responsibility in every action and consequence, not running away from it. That is why personal integrity is usually closely related to trustworthy and reliable. Thus, personal integrity is a moral aspect of self-esteem. This can also be seen from Branden’s statement “If I have been consistent in my integrity, I will experience dishonesty on my parts as disturbing and will feel trust to resolve the dissonance and restore the inner sense of more cleanliness” (p. 158).

3. Research Method

The data were collected by listening and reading the lyrics of four BTS songs; Epiphany, I’m Fine, Idol, and Answer: Love Myself. Because the four songs are in Korean, the researchers were looking for the English official translation and found it in several resources such as the Official YouTube Channel of Big Hit Entertainment, ibighit, genius.com and KBS music bank from the KBS World Channel.

Three phases of data processing technique as suggested by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) are used in this study. The first stage was data condensation, where certain lines of the lyrics in accordance with Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem were located. The next stage was displaying data, where the lyrics were grouped based on two themes. The first theme was grouped by song title and the second one were grouped based on Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem discussed earlier. The last stage was conclusion drawing, where the results of the two previous stages were discussed.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, Branden’s Six Pillars of Self-esteem contained in the lyrics of the four BTS songs are discussed based on the title.

4.1 Branden’s Self-Esteem Pillars in “Epiphany”

In Epiphany (BTS – Epiphany, n.d.), there were five Pillars of Self-esteem. In the chorus of the song, we found five pillars at once, namely Living Consciously, Self-acceptance, Self-assertiveness, Living Purposefully and Personal Integrity. The lyrics are as follows:

“I’m the one I should love in this world/shining me, precious soul of mine/I finally realized, so I love me/not so perfect, but so beautiful/I’m the one I should love”.

The simple lyrics on the chorus actually convey the message of a strong invitation to love oneself for who s/he is. Aware of the reality of life that everyone is not perfect, does not make an excuse not to love himself and treat himself well. Before achieving other worldly goals, loving oneself is the main key in building integrity which is the moral aspect of self-esteem.

In addition to the chorus, on the bridge, there are lyrics that show acceptance of one’s own shortcomings, both physically and mentally. According to Branden (1994), acknowledging their own shortcomings and accepting them in a generous manner can increase the level of self-esteem to be higher.
“I may be a bit blunt, I may lack some things/I may not have that shy glow around me/But this is me/My arms, my legs, my heart, my soul”.

4.2 Branden’s Self-Esteem Pillars in “I’m Fine”

Unlike *Epiphany, I’m Fine* (KBS World TV, 2018) has all six Branden’s Pillars of Self-esteem. Living consciously can be seen in verse 1 below:

“My breath is quickening, my heart is racing/I can feel it so easily that I’m alive”.

It is very clear that awareness of life and self-existence are seen in the lyrics.

Self-responsibility, personal integrity, self-acceptance and living purposefully can be found in the chorus.

“I’m feeling just fine, fine, fine/I’ll let go of your hand now/I know I’m all mine, mine, mine/…/I don’t want to be sad anymore/I could see the sunshine, shine, shine”.

Branden (1994) states that a person who has self-responsibility must have that sense for all decisions that have been taken. Other than that, respect for others means to make another person not as his servant in achieving his goal. In addition, someone who has integrity also believes in his own abilities that make him trustworthy. This can be seen in the first two lines, “I’m feeling just fine, fine, fine/I’ll let go of your hand now”.

In the next line which is, “I know I’m all mine, mine, mine”, clearly shows an expression of acceptance of oneself. The last two lines, “I don’t want to be sad anymore/I could see the sunshine, shine, shine”, shows someone has a purpose in life and does not want to get worse on a problem. Sunshine in the lyric is an analogy to the bright future that is to be achieved.

The lyrics contained in the pre-chorus show self-assertiveness. Branden (1994) explains that assertiveness in living life is the ability to stand tall under any circumstances. In contrast to selfishness, assertiveness still respects any human encounters.

4.3 Branden’s Self-Esteem Pillars in “Idol”

Just like in *I’m Fine, Idol* (ibight, 2018) also has all Branden’s Pillars of Self-esteem. What is interesting is all six Branden’s Pillars of Self-esteem can be found in refrain two.

“I love myself/I love my fans, love my dance and my what/there are hundreds of myself inside of me/I’m facing a new me again today/it’s all me anyway/I just go at it rather than sit on it”.

Pillars of living consciously and self-acceptance can be easily understood in all lines. Self-responsibility and personal integrity which are closely related to take responsibility in each action and consequently, can be found in the last line “I just go at it rather than sit on it”. Self-assertiveness, according to Branden (1994), is the willingness to be open, can be found in lines three to five. The purpose of life is to love himself, the potential within himself and the people around him can be found in the first two lines.

In the bridge section, there is an expression of living consciously and self-acceptance.

“It’s OK, I’m in love with myself/It’s OK, I’m happy in this moment”.

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4.4 Branden’s Self-Esteem Pillars in “Answer: Love Myself”

This song, Answer: Love Myself (BTS – Answer: Love Myself, n.d.), is as interesting as Idol, where there are all six Branden’s Pillars of Self-esteem on one of its parts, namely verse two.

“Loving myself might be harder/ than loving someone else/ let’s admit it/the standards I made are stricter for myself/the thick tree rings in your life/it’s part of you, it’s you/now let’s forgive ourselves/our lives are long, trust yourself when in maze/when winter passes, spring always comes”.

Expression of Living Consciously connected from the first line to the last. A phrase in one of the lyrics, “let’s admit it”, shows awareness of a situation and life. Branden stated that “Our mind is our basic tool of survival. Betray it and self-esteem suffers.” (p. 68).

Self-acceptance can be found in lines five to seven that have a relationship with self-responsibility and self-assertiveness. Branden (1994) asserts that “self-acceptance is refusal to be an adversarial relationship to myself” (p. 91). “Let’s forgive ourselves” is an invitation not to do self-rejects. If it is connected with the previous two lines, it can be seen as an expression of responsibility for his own life and assertive of all the actions he performed.

Personal integrity found in the first to fourth lines. The lyrics describe someone who has high integrity trying to balance between his ideas and practice. Meanwhile, the last two lines show the purpose of life to enjoy all the challenges that might be faced.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the Six Pillars of Self-esteem proposed by Branden (1994) namely living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and personal integrity are very important aspects in one’s life. Among the four songs (Epiphany, I’m Fine, Idol and Answer: Love Myself) of BTS album that were analyzed in this study, Epiphany only contains five Pillars of Self-esteem: living consciously, self-acceptance, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and personal integrity. Whereas, the other three songs (I’m Fine, Idol and Answer: Love Myself) contain all Branden’s Pillars of Self-esteem, namely living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposefully and personal integrity. All four songs bring positive messages about the invitation to love oneself. It can be seen from Branden’s statement about self-love can make it easier to respect others. Thus, all songs are matched with the aim of LOVE MYSELF campaign: to prevent acts of violence.

References


