



International Journal of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Humanities

Journal Homepage: <https://ijmshe.com/index.php/ijplh>



Research Article

Attachment Patterns in Musical Discourse: A Metaphorical Analysis of Multo by Cup Of Joe

Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto^{1*} | Mary Lou P. Toroy² | Life Gabriel F. Osumo³

¹⁻² Central Mindanao Colleges, Kidapawan City, Philippines

³ Professor, Central Mindanao Colleges, Kidapawan City, Philippines

Article Info

Article history:

Received: 9 January 2026

Revised: 27 February 2026

Accepted: 25 March 2026

Keywords:

Musical Discourse Analysis,
Metaphor in Song Lyrics,
Attachment Theory, Filipino
Popular Music, Affective Meaning
in Music

Abstract

This study examines the metaphorical and musical discourse of Multo by Cup of Joe to understand how lyrical metaphors and musical elements represent attachment patterns, relational ambivalence, and emotional persistence. Anchored in Attachment Theory, Framing Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism, the research applies Musical Discourse Analysis to analyze selected lyrical lines and their corresponding musical structures. The analysis involved identifying recurring figurative expressions in the lyrics and examining how these are reinforced by compositional elements such as tonal quality, tempo, vocal texture, and dynamic progression. Particular attention was given to musical features, including minor tonalities, slow tempo, echoing vocals, and gradual dynamic shifts that accompany key lyrical segments. The findings reveal recurring metaphors such as “*binaon na ang lahat*,” “*dahan-dahang nililibing nang buhay pa*,” and references to a lingering or haunting presence. These metaphors depict themes of unresolved longing, emotional restraint, and anxious-preoccupied attachment. The musical arrangement reinforces these symbolic meanings by sustaining a subdued tonal atmosphere and restrained progression, creating an affective environment that may influence the listener's interpretation of relational tension, presence, and absence. The study shows that the integration of lyrical metaphor and musical structure provides a meaningful representation of complex emotional experiences often reflected in contemporary Filipino popular music. By combining linguistic, musical, and psychological perspectives, the research highlights how songs can function as cultural texts that represent attachment-related emotions and interpersonal struggles. The study also suggests that examining music through interdisciplinary frameworks can contribute to discussions in music education, discourse analysis, and emotional literacy. Overall, Multo illustrates how metaphor and musical composition work together to express relational experiences in Filipino popular music.

Cite as: Dafieltomoto, A. M., Toroy, M. L., & Osumo, L. G. (2026). Attachment Patterns in Musical Discourse: A Metaphorical Analysis of Multo by Cup Of Joe. *International Journal of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Humanities*, 1(2), 109–126. <https://doi.org/10.70847/700277>

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

1. Introduction

Music functions as a powerful form of emotional discourse through which experiences of longing, desire, vulnerability, and relational loss are symbolically communicated. Rather than relying solely on literal language, musical expression conveys complex emotional meanings through the interaction of lyrics, sound, and performance (Davies, 1994; Zangwill, 2007; Iveland, 2024). Scholars argue that music enables individuals to interpret emotional experiences at both cognitive and affective levels, allowing listeners to construct personal meanings from musical texts and sonic elements (Cox, 2016; Arel, 2021).

In contemporary popular music, metaphorical language has become an important device for articulating complex emotional and relational experiences. Metaphors allow artists to represent feelings of attachment, separation, and unresolved intimacy in ways that resonate with listeners while maintaining symbolic depth (Bamford et al., 2024). Through figurative imagery and symbolic expressions, songs often portray emotional tensions such as longing for an absent partner, the persistence of memories, or the ambiguity of unresolved relationships. Studies in musical discourse analysis further suggest that these meanings are intensified through sonic elements, including vocal delivery, melodic structure, and tonal atmosphere (Cumming, 2000; Van Leeuwen, 2017). Soft vocal timbre, minimal instrumentation, and melancholic tonalities, for instance, can create an affective space where emotional closeness and distance coexist, reinforcing the symbolic meanings expressed in the lyrics (Liu et al., 2025; Nilan & Maunati, 2025).

Within this broader context, contemporary pop music increasingly reflects themes of emotional absence, imagined presence, and lingering attachment. These themes resonate strongly with audiences because they mirror everyday relational experiences, particularly in an era

where digital communication often reshapes the dynamics of intimacy and separation. As a result, metaphor-rich musical narratives frequently become sites where listeners negotiate feelings of attachment, memory, and emotional uncertainty. In the Philippine context, the song *Multo* by Cup of Joe has emerged as a notable cultural phenomenon in Original Pilipino Music (OPM). The track has achieved remarkable commercial success, becoming one of the most-streamed Filipino songs on Spotify and gaining widespread circulation across digital platforms such as TikTok and YouTube (MYX Global, 2025). Its popularity can be attributed not only to its melodic composition but also to its emotionally evocative narrative, which portrays the lingering presence of a past relationship through the metaphor of a “ghost.”

The song’s stripped-down musical arrangement and melancholic storytelling further enhance its emotional resonance, allowing listeners to connect with themes of attachment, separation, and unresolved longing. Despite the cultural and commercial prominence of *Multo*, limited scholarly attention has been given to how its metaphorical symbols and musical structures work together to construct relational meaning. Existing studies on popular music often focus either on lyrical interpretation or on musical composition, but relatively few integrate linguistic, musical, and psychological perspectives to examine how emotional narratives are produced simultaneously through both language and sound. Consequently, there remains a need to explore how metaphorical language and musical discourse jointly shape listeners’ interpretations of relational experiences in contemporary Filipino pop music. Addressing this gap, the present study employs Musical Discourse Analysis to examine how metaphorical imagery and musical elements in *Multo* function as symbolic carriers of emotional and relational meaning. Drawing on insights from Attachment Theory, the study

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

analyzes how the song's lyrical metaphors and sonic features represent experiences of lingering attachment, absence, and emotional memory. By integrating linguistic, musical, and psychological frameworks, the research contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship on music, language, and emotional cognition.

Furthermore, this study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, by promoting critical engagement with cultural texts and artistic expression, and with SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, by contributing to a deeper understanding of the emotional and relational experiences reflected in popular music. The findings are intended to inform scholarly discussions on music discourse, cultural studies, and emotional communication, and may serve as a reference for educators, researchers, and music practitioners interested in the intersection of music, language, and human relationships.

Research Questions

1. How are metaphorical symbols expressed through the lyrics and musical composition of *Multo* by Cup of Joe?
2. In what ways do these metaphorical symbols embody attachment patterns and relational dynamics as conceptualized in Attachment Theory?
3. How does the musical discourse of *Multo* shape listeners' perceptions and interpretations of emotional bonds and attachment experiences?

Essence of the Study

The essence of this study lies in its contribution to understanding how language, metaphor, and musical discourse function as tools for expressing complex emotional and relational experiences, with direct implications for linguistic practice, quality education, and well-being. By analyzing the metaphorical and stylistic elements of *Multo* by Cup of Joe, this research demonstrates how figurative language

and musical cues can be systematically interpreted to reveal patterns of attachment, emotional persistence, and relational ambivalence, providing linguists and educators with practical insights into the role of language in shaping meaning and emotional engagement. In the context of quality education, the study highlights the value of integrating culturally relevant materials—such as popular music—into curricula to enhance students' critical thinking, interpretive skills, and emotional literacy. From a well-being perspective, understanding how metaphorical language and music mediate emotional reflection offers practical avenues for emotional processing, self-awareness, and coping with relational challenges, making the research significant not only as a contribution to the body of knowledge in linguistics and stylistics but also as a practical resource for enhancing emotional and cultural literacy.

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored in *Attachment Theory* (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978), which provides a framework for understanding how individuals experience, interpret, and express emotional bonds in relationships, particularly in contexts of presence, absence, longing, and relational persistence.

In the context of the song *Multo* by Cup of Joe, attachment dynamics are explored through metaphors and musical expressions that convey emotional intimacy, lingering connection, and relational ambivalence, illustrating how attachment experiences are symbolically represented in artistic texts.

Complementing this, *Framing Theory* (Goffman, 1974) is used to examine how the song structures and presents emotional narratives, shaping listeners' perception of relational experiences and emphasizing specific aspects of longing or absence. Additionally, *Symbolic Interactionism* (Blumer, 1986) provides a lens for interpreting how metaphorical symbols in lyrics and musical elements are socially and

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

emotionally meaningful, enabling listeners to construct personal and relational meanings from the song. Together, these frameworks guide the analysis of Multo by linking lyrical and musical metaphors to patterns of attachment, illustrating how music functions as a medium for expressing, negotiating, and reflecting emotional bonds.

Literature Review

This section presents a review of related literature that explores metaphorical symbolism in song lyrics and musical composition, the representation of relational experiences through musical narratives, and the role of musical discourse in shaping listeners' interpretations of emotional meanings, providing a scholarly foundation for understanding the symbolic and affective dimensions of Multo by Cup of Joe.

Metaphorical Symbols in Song Lyrics and Musical Composition

Metaphorical language has long been recognized as a central feature of lyrical discourse, enabling the conceptual mapping of emotional experience through symbolic imagery (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Zangwill, 2007; Poliakova, 2023). Within songwriting, metaphors function not only as poetic devices but also as discursive tools that frame how emotions, memories, and relationships are conceptualized in cultural texts.

According to Cook (1999), song lyrics operate as a form of discourse in which linguistic expression interacts with musical structures to produce layered meanings. Through this interaction, artists communicate emotional narratives that extend beyond literal language (Cook, 2001).

Studies in music discourse further suggest that figurative language frequently represents intangible emotional states such as longing, absence, and remembrance (Simbolon et al., 2025; Abd Al-Hussein, 2025). From the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, such expressions allow listeners to understand

abstract emotional experiences through concrete symbolic images (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In many cases, metaphors in songs are reinforced by musical elements such as melody, harmony, tempo, and vocal texture. These elements shape the emotional interpretation of lyrics and contribute to the creation of a coherent expressive environment (Lippman, 1953; Moore, 2016).

Music semiotics scholars also emphasize that meaning in songs emerges from the interaction between lyrics and sound structures. Tagg (2013) explains that musical elements such as timbre, tonal movement, and rhythmic pacing function as semiotic signs that guide listeners' emotional responses.

Similarly, discourse analysis highlights that musical texts operate within broader cultural contexts where symbolic meanings are shaped by shared experiences and interpretive conventions (Fairclough, 2013). Research further shows that atmospheric instrumentation and gradual dynamic progression often intensify the perception of emotional depth, particularly in ballads that explore themes of love, longing, and memory (Bruhn, 2022; Metzer, 2016, Tagg, 1999).

In the context of Filipino popular music, scholars note the frequent use of poetic and culturally grounded symbolism that reflects subtle expressions of affection, nostalgia, and emotional restraint (Garfias, 2004; Vitor, 2024). Such symbolic traditions often rely on imagery that evokes memory and emotional presence rather than explicit declarations of feeling.

These findings suggest that songs such as Multo by Cup of Joe may convey metaphorical meanings not only through lyrical imagery but also through compositional features that create a reflective and haunting sonic atmosphere.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

Metaphorical Symbols as Representations of Relational Experiences and Emotional Bonds

Music has long been examined as a medium through which relational experiences and emotional bonds are symbolically represented. Song narratives often portray themes of intimacy, separation, emotional persistence, and unresolved longing through metaphorical images such as shadows, echoes, or lingering presence (Tolbert, 2001; Finnegan, 2012; Nikam, 2025). These metaphors function as conceptual frames that allow listeners to interpret relational dynamics in ways that resonate with their own experiences of connection and loss.

From a discourse perspective, metaphorical expressions in music contribute to the construction of relational meaning by shaping how emotions are linguistically and symbolically represented (Fairclough, 2012). The use of haunting or spectral imagery in romantic songs, for example, often reflects emotional attachment that continues despite physical absence. Within conceptual metaphor theory, such imagery can be understood as mapping emotional persistence onto spatial or supernatural metaphors that symbolize memory and psychological presence (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Research also highlights the role of music as a reflective space for processing interpersonal experiences. Emotional expression in songs allows listeners to revisit memories, reinterpret relationships, and engage in emotional reflection (Diaz, 2019; Wah, 2019; Bournot, 2025). Through repeated listening and interpretation, songs become symbolic narratives that represent enduring emotional bonds. In this way, metaphorical symbols embedded in songs may depict relational experiences as lingering, unresolved, or deeply internalized.

Within Filipino musical traditions, expressions of love and emotional attachment are often conveyed indirectly through poetic symbolism rather than explicit articulation (Garfias, 2004).

This stylistic tendency reflects broader cultural patterns of emotional restraint and subtle communication. Consequently, the metaphorical imagery found in Multo may represent complex relational experiences in which emotional bonds persist in memory even after separation.

Musical Discourse and Listener Interpretation of Emotional Meanings

The interpretive nature of musical discourse highlights the active role of listeners in constructing emotional meaning from songs. Music listening is not merely a passive activity but an interactive process in which personal memories, cultural background, and emotional states influence interpretation (Becker & Becker, 2004; Fisher, 2021). As Cook (1991) explains, meaning in music emerges through the interaction between the musical text and the listener's interpretive framework.

Research in music psychology indicates that emotional responses to songs are often intensified through mechanisms such as imagery, autobiographical recall, and affective resonance (Vuust & Frith, 2008; Juslin, 2016; Omer, 2025). These processes allow listeners to associate songs with personal experiences, making music a powerful medium for emotional reflection. Semiotic approaches further suggest that listeners interpret musical signs—such as melodic movement, harmonic tension, and vocal tone—in ways that align with culturally learned patterns of meaning (Tagg, 2013).

Within discourse analysis, songs can therefore be understood as cultural texts that invite multiple interpretations depending on the listener's social and emotional context (Fairclough, 2013).

In the Filipino setting, romantic ballads frequently shape how audiences interpret themes of love, heartbreak, and longing, often functioning as emotional narratives that guide personal reflection (Manalili & Malcampo, 2025).

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

These songs become part of everyday emotional discourse, influencing how individuals understand and articulate relational experiences. Accordingly, the musical discourse of Multo may shape listener interpretations by combining metaphorical imagery with evocative

sonic elements. Through this interaction, the song may encourage listeners to interpret emotional bonds as lingering presences shaped by memory, absence, and unresolved attachment.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a musical discourse analysis research design to examine how meaning is constructed through the interaction between lyrical language and musical elements in the song “Multo” by Cup of Joe. Musical discourse analysis views songs as cultural texts in which language, sound, and performance jointly contribute to the construction of meaning (Cook, 2001; Tagg, 2013). From this perspective, song lyrics are not merely poetic expressions but forms of discourse that communicate emotional experiences and relational narratives through symbolic language and musical structure.

The study is further informed by the principles of critical discourse analysis, which consider discourse as a social practice embedded within cultural contexts (Fairclough, 2013). This approach allows the researcher to explore how metaphorical language within the lyrics reflects emotional meanings and relational experiences.

In addition, insights from multimodal discourse analysis emphasize that meaning in music is communicated through multiple semiotic resources, including words, melody, vocal delivery, and musical atmosphere (Van Leeuwen, 2005). By integrating these perspectives, the research design enables a comprehensive interpretation of how metaphorical expressions and musical features interact to shape the song’s emotional discourse.

This design is appropriate for the present study because it enables a focused and interpretive examination of metaphorical symbolism within the lyrical and musical structure of Multo,

allowing the researcher to explore how emotional meanings are expressed and communicated through both language and sound.

2.2 Analytical Framework and Metaphor Identification

To ensure a systematic analysis of metaphorical expressions in the song lyrics, the study applies the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) developed by Steen et al. (2010). This procedure provides a structured method for identifying metaphors within discourse and is widely used in linguistic and discourse studies.

The analytical process began with repeated reading of the complete lyrics of Multo while simultaneously listening to the musical recording to understand the overall narrative and emotional context of the song. After familiarization with the text, the lyrics were divided into lexical units or meaningful segments for closer examination. Each lexical unit was then interpreted according to its contextual meaning within the line of the song.

Following this step, the contextual meaning of each word or phrase was compared with its more basic, literal meaning using dictionary references. When the contextual meaning differed from the basic meaning but could be understood through comparison or analogy, the expression was identified as metaphorical. Through this process, metaphorical expressions within the lyrics were systematically identified and documented.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

This procedure allowed the researcher to move beyond intuitive interpretation and instead apply a structured approach to identifying metaphorical language within the song.

2.3 Coding and Analytical Process

After metaphorical expressions were identified through the MIPVU procedure, the analysis proceeded through several stages of coding and interpretation.

Initially, the identified metaphorical expressions were organized according to their lexical units and corresponding lines in the song. Each expression was then examined to determine its conceptual meaning within the emotional narrative of the lyrics.

In the next stage, the metaphors were grouped into thematic categories that reflected shared conceptual meanings, such as emotional presence, memory, longing, or relational attachment. This classification allowed the researcher to identify patterns in how metaphorical language was used to represent emotional experiences within the song.

The final stage involved interpreting the identified metaphors in relation to the song's musical elements of the song. Particular attention was given to how melodic movement, vocal delivery, tempo, and overall musical atmosphere contributed to the emotional interpretation of the lyrics. By examining the interaction between lyrical metaphors and musical expression, the analysis aimed to understand how the song communicates complex emotional meanings through both linguistic and sonic features.

2.4 Research Instrument and Validation

The study utilized a researcher-developed discourse analysis guide to support the systematic identification and interpretation of metaphorical expressions in the song lyrics. The guide was designed to organize the analytical process by including categories such as the lyric line, lexical unit, contextual meaning, basic

meaning, metaphor classification, and interpretive notes regarding the musical context.

To ensure the instrument's reliability and credibility, the discourse analysis guide underwent expert validation by a linguistic evaluator with expertise in discourse analysis and figurative language interpretation.

The evaluator reviewed the instrument to assess the clarity of the analytical categories, the consistency of the coding structure, and the appropriateness of the prompts used to guide interpretation.

Based on the feedback provided during the validation process, minor revisions were made to improve the organization of the analytical categories and to ensure that the guide supported a clear and systematic identification of metaphorical expressions. This validation process strengthened the methodological rigor of the study and enhanced the reliability of the analytical procedure.

2.5 Analytical Procedure

The analytical procedure involved a detailed and iterative examination of the song lyrics, supported by repeated listening to the musical recording of Multo. Each line of the lyrics was carefully analyzed using the metaphor identification procedure, and identified metaphors were documented and coded according to their conceptual meaning.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher continually revisited the lyrics and the musical recording to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in both the song's textual and sonic contexts.

This iterative process allowed for a deeper understanding of how metaphorical language and musical expression interact to convey emotional and relational meanings.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

Through this systematic approach, the study uncovered patterns of metaphorical symbolism and emotional discourse embedded in the song, providing insight into how lyrical imagery and musical elements jointly contribute to the representation of relational experiences in contemporary Filipino popular music.

2.6 Applied Ethical Practice

This study adhered to ethical standards by ensuring that no human subjects were involved and that no direct participation was conducted, thereby eliminating any risks to privacy, consent, or psychological harm.

Informed Consent. Since there were no participants, formal consent was not required; however, transparency was maintained by clearly specifying that the data used consisted entirely of publicly available song lyrics and recordings from Multo by Cup of Joe.

Confidentiality and Privacy. No personal or sensitive information was collected, recorded, or analyzed, ensuring that the study did not compromise individual privacy.

Legality and Data Use. All data were sourced from publicly accessible media, and the study strictly complied with copyright laws and intellectual property regulations, avoiding any breach of legal or ethical standards.

Integrity of Analysis. Interpretations and conclusions were based solely on textual and musical analysis, with all theoretical applications and literature references properly cited, ensuring academic honesty and credibility.

Collectively, these measures demonstrate that the study was conducted responsibly and ethically, in accordance with established research standards, and that it fully respects intellectual property and public data use.

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the study's findings, showing how Multo by Cup of Joe uses metaphorical lyrics and musical discourse to convey attachment patterns, influence listeners'

emotional interpretations, and create culturally and personally resonant experiences of relational longing and ambivalence.

Table 1.Metaphorical Symbols in Multo by Cup of Joe.

Lyrics	Metaphorical Symbol	Interpretation
“Humingang malalim, pumikit na muna / At baka sakaling namamalikmata lang”	Deep sigh / closing eyes	Symbolizes emotional fatigue and introspection, suggesting an attempt to momentarily escape relational distress
“Binaon naman na ang lahat / Tinakpan naman na 'king sugat / Ngunit ba't andito pa rin?”	Buried wounds	Represents unresolved emotional pain and continuing relational attachment despite efforts to move forward
“Tanging panalangin, lubayan na sana / Dahil sa bawat tingin, mukha mo'y nakikita”	Prayer / lingering presence	Suggests continued emotional longing and difficulty detaching from memories of a relationship

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

“Ako ay dahan-dahang nililibing nang buhay pa”	Buried alive	Conveys emotional entrapment and internal struggle caused by unresolved attachment
“Hindi na makalaya, dinadalaw mo ‘ko bawat gabi”	Haunting presence	Represents the persistent psychological presence of a past relationship
“Hindi mo ba ako lilisanin? / Hindi pa ba sapat pagpapahirap sa 'kin?”	Plea / rhetorical questioning	Expresses emotional conflict between longing and distress

Table 1 demonstrates how Multo employs metaphorical language to construct representations of emotional struggle, unresolved attachment, and relational conflict. The song’s lyrical discourse relies heavily on symbolic imagery to express internal emotional states, which is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of figurative language in song lyrics for articulating complex emotional experiences (Poliakova, 2023; Joy & Sherry, 2003).

The opening lines, “Humingang malalim, pumikit na muna / At baka sakaling namamalikmata lang,” introduce metaphors of deep breathing and closing the eyes. These expressions symbolically represent emotional exhaustion and introspection. Within the framework of Attachment Theory, such imagery may reflect attempts to manage distress associated with perceived relational loss or absence (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978). Studies have shown that metaphorical lyricism often functions as a mechanism for expressing internal emotional experiences in culturally nuanced ways, particularly in musical traditions where indirect emotional expression is common (Poliakova, 2023; Joy & Sherry, 2003; Garfias, 2004; Vitor, 2024).

Similarly, the lines “Binaon naman na ang lahat / Tinakpan naman na 'king sugat / Ngunit ba’t andito pa rin?” present the metaphor of buried wounds. This imagery suggests the persistence of emotional pain despite conscious attempts to

suppress or resolve it. From the perspective of Framing Theory, such metaphors structure how relational experiences are represented within the narrative of the song (Goffman, 1974). The lyrical framing emphasizes the tension between emotional closure and the continued presence of unresolved attachment, which aligns with studies identifying recurring metaphors of lingering emotional pain in music narratives (Tolbert, 2001; Nikam, 2025).

The metaphor of prayer and recurring presence in the lines “Tanging panalangin, lubayan na sana / Dahil sa bawat tingin, mukha mo’y nakikita” further reinforces the theme of emotional persistence. Through the lens of Symbolic Interactionism, these symbolic expressions function as interpretive signs that convey relational meanings embedded within cultural and emotional contexts (Blumer, 1986). Previous research indicates that music often serves as a reflective medium for representing interpersonal memories and emotional experiences, allowing symbolic imagery to communicate relational dynamics (Diaz, 2019; Vuust & Frith, 2008; Omer, 2025).

A particularly striking metaphor appears in “Ako ay dahan-dahang nililibing nang buhay pa,” which represents emotional entrapment and internal struggle. The imagery of being buried alive metaphorically conveys the overwhelming psychological impact of unresolved attachment. Research on musical narratives suggests that such intense metaphors are frequently used to

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

depict emotional conflict and internalized distress in songs addressing themes of love and loss (Bruhn, 2022; Metzger, 2016; Moore, 2016).

The metaphor of haunting presence in “Hindi na makalaya, dinadalaw mo ‘ko bawat gabi” further reinforces the persistence of relational memory. Similar symbolic representations appear in studies discussing haunting imagery in music as a metaphor for enduring emotional connections

(Finnegan, 2012; Nikam, 2025). The rhetorical questioning in the post-chorus—“Hindi mo ba ako lilisanin? / Hindi pa ba sapat pagpapahirap sa 'kin?”—illustrates emotional ambivalence, highlighting the tension between continued attachment and emotional suffering. This duality contributes to the song’s narrative complexity, emphasizing that relational experiences are often marked by conflicting emotions.

Table 2. Metaphorical Symbols as Representations of Attachment Patterns in Multo.

Lyrics	Metaphorical Symbol	Attachment Patterns	Analysis
“Humingang malalim, pumikit na muna / At baka sakaling namamalikmata lang”	Deep sigh / closing eyes	Anxiety toward relational absence	Suggests attempts to regulate emotional distress associated with perceived loss
“Binaon naman na ang lahat / Tinakpan naman na 'king sugat / Ngunit ba't andito pa rin?”	Buried wounds	Unresolved attachment	Reflects tension between emotional closure and continuing relational memory
“Tanging panalangin, lubayan na sana / Dahil sa bawat tingin, mukha mo'y nakikita”	Lingering presence	Persistent relational focus	Symbolizes continuing emotional preoccupation with an absent partner
“Ako ay dahan-dahang nililibing nang buhay pa”	Buried alive	Emotional entrapment	Illustrates internal conflict and overwhelming attachment-related distress
“Hindi na makalaya, dinadalaw mo ‘ko bawat gabi”	Haunting presence	Continuing relational impact	Suggests psychological persistence of relational memory
“Wala mang nakikita, haplos mo'y ramdam pa rin sa dilim”	Invisible touch	Emotional continuity	Indicates attachment maintained through memory and imagination
“Hindi mo ba ako lilisanin? / Hindi pa ba sapat pagpapahirap sa 'kin?”	Plea / rhetorical questioning	Attachment ambivalence	Reflects tension between desire for closeness and emotional pain

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

Table 2 shows that the metaphorical symbols identified in Multo can be interpreted as representations of attachment-related emotional experiences. The recurring metaphors of buried wounds, haunting presence, and invisible touch collectively illustrate relational persistence and emotional ambivalence.

Within Attachment Theory, these symbolic representations may reflect characteristics associated with anxious-preoccupied attachment, including emotional persistence and heightened sensitivity to relational cues (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978). The metaphors used in the lyrics emphasize internal emotional struggle and difficulty disengaging from relational memories. Prior literature similarly notes that figurative language in songs frequently expresses internalized emotional experiences and relational tensions (Poliakova, 2023; Joy & Sherry, 2003).

The metaphor of buried wounds reflects unresolved relational experiences that continue to influence emotional states. Research suggests that such imagery often appears in narratives addressing enduring emotional bonds and unresolved interpersonal experiences (Tolbert, 2001; Nikam, 2025). Likewise, the metaphor of haunting presence symbolically represents the psychological continuation of attachment despite physical separation, reinforcing interpretations of relational persistence (Finnegan, 2012).

Symbolic Interactionism further explains how such metaphors operate as interpretive symbols that communicate relational meaning within

broader cultural contexts (Blumer, 1986). Through symbolic imagery, songs may represent emotional experiences that resonate with shared cultural understandings of love, memory, and longing. Studies also suggest that musical narratives provide spaces for reflecting on interpersonal relationships and emotional memories (Diaz, 2019; Omer, 2025; Vuust & Frith, 2008).

Beyond the lyrics, the musical composition of Multo also contributes to the construction of emotional meaning. The use of minor tonalities, slow tempo, and echoing vocal effects creates a reflective sonic environment that complements the metaphorical imagery found in the lyrics. Research on music and emotional expression indicates that musical features such as tonal structure and vocal delivery play important roles in shaping the affective atmosphere of songs (Lippman, 1953; Moore, 2016; Bruhn, 2022; Metzger, 2016).

Taken together, the metaphorical language and musical elements in Multo construct a narrative of unresolved attachment and emotional ambivalence. The song presents relational experience as an ongoing psychological process characterized by longing, memory, and internal conflict. These findings support previous studies highlighting the symbolic and emotional dimensions of music and underscore the role of metaphorical language in representing complex relational experiences in popular music (Poliakova, 2023; Manalili & Malcampo, 2025; Garfias, 2004; Vitor, 2024; Diaz, 2019; Bournot, 2025; Wah, 2019).

4. Conclusion

This study examined how the song Multo by Cup of Joe uses metaphorical language and musical elements to represent emotional attachment and relational experiences.

The analysis shows that the song's lyrics rely on strong figurative expressions such as “binaon na

ang lahat” and “ako ay dahan-dahang nililibing nang buhay pa” to depict unresolved emotional bonds, longing, and internal conflict. These metaphors illustrate how relational memories persist and how emotional attachment may remain even when individuals attempt to move forward.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

The musical composition also contributes to the song's emotional tone. The use of minor tonalities, a slow tempo, echoing vocals, and a gradual instrumental progression creates a reflective atmosphere that complements the metaphorical imagery in the lyrics. Together, the lyrical and musical elements construct a narrative that highlights emotional persistence and relational ambivalence.

5. Implications

For scholars in linguistics, stylistics, and discourse studies, the findings show that metaphorical language in song lyrics can serve as a valuable resource for examining emotional and relational experiences in popular music. Studying figurative expressions alongside musical elements enables researchers to better understand how meaning is constructed in lyrical discourse.

For music educators, composers, and content creators, the results highlight how musical features such as tempo, tonality, and vocal delivery contribute to a song's emotional atmosphere. These elements may be intentionally used to support the themes expressed in lyrics and strengthen the overall narrative of musical compositions.

6. Recommendations

Future studies may expand this line of inquiry by examining a wider range of Filipino songs that explore similar emotional themes. Comparative analyses across different artists, genres, or cultural contexts may provide deeper insight into how metaphorical language and musical structure represent attachment and relational experiences in popular music.

Further research may also incorporate audience-based methods, such as listener interviews or surveys, to explore how

Overall, the findings suggest that *Multo* functions not only as a musical work but also as a form of emotional discourse. Through the interaction of language and sound, the song represents attachment-related experiences and reflects themes of longing, memory, and unresolved emotional connection.

The findings also suggest possible value in counseling and therapeutic contexts. Songs that portray themes of attachment, loss, and emotional conflict may provide individuals with a relatable medium for reflecting on personal experiences. In this way, music can serve as a starting point for conversations about emotional processing and relational memories.

More broadly, the study emphasizes the importance of culturally grounded music in representing shared emotional experiences. Filipino popular songs often rely on poetic symbolism and subtle emotional expression, making them meaningful sources for examining how culture shapes the language of love, longing, and relational memory.

Individuals interpret metaphorical lyrics and musical atmosphere in relation to their own emotional experiences. Such approaches would complement textual and musical analysis by providing empirical perspectives on how songs are understood and experienced. Interdisciplinary studies that combine linguistics, musicology, psychology, and cultural studies may also contribute to a richer understanding of how metaphor, music, and emotional meaning interact within contemporary popular music.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

7. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in that it does not involve human subjects or direct participant interaction, as the analysis is based solely on the lyrics and musical composition of "Multo " by Cup of Joe. Consequently, the findings reflect interpretive, text-based insights rather than empirical data from listeners' personal experiences or reactions. While the study provides a detailed examination of metaphorical symbols, musical discourse, and their relation to attachment patterns, it cannot account for the full range of

individual differences in listener perception, emotional engagement, or cultural interpretation. These limitations suggest that, while the study contributes to understanding the linguistic, stylistic, and musical expression of relational dynamics, further research incorporating audience feedback and experiential data would be necessary to validate and extend the interpretations presented.

Supplementary Details

Supplementary Materials & Data Availability Statement: The present study does not include supplementary files such as additional figures, tables, or videos. The primary data for analysis consisted of publicly available lyrics and musical compositions from the song Multo by Cup of Joe. These materials were used as a textual and musical corpus for metaphorical and multimodal discourse analysis. To ensure transparency, reproducibility, and verification of findings, the analyzed data can be made available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author. This approach underscores the study's reliance on publicly accessible materials, aligning with ethical research practices while preserving intellectual property rights.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed significantly to the conceptualization, execution, and manuscript preparation of this study. Alexa Monique N. Dafieltoto led the conceptualization of the study, the design of the methodology, the data analysis, and the preparation of the original manuscript draft, including the visualization of results. Mary Lou P. Toroy managed data curation, verified the coding and analysis, and contributed substantially to the review and editing of the manuscript.

Life Gabriel F. Osumo, LPT, MEd-LT, CRS served as project supervisor, providing guidance on study design, methodological rigor, and overall project administration, while also reviewing and refining the manuscript to ensure alignment with academic standards. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript and accepted responsibility for the integrity, accuracy, and scholarly content of the work.

Funding Information

This research received no external funding. All study activities, including data collection, analysis, and manuscript preparation, were supported by institutional resources provided by Central Mindanao Colleges, Philippines.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Statement

This study analyzed publicly available song lyrics and musical materials and did not involve human participants. Therefore, ethical approval from an Institutional Review Board was not required, as no human subjects were involved or personal data was collected.

Informed Consent Statement

No informed consent was necessary since the research did not involve human participants, personal data, or sensitive information. All data

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltoto@cmc.edu.ph

used were publicly accessible and utilized strictly for academic purposes.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Central Mindanao Colleges, Philippines, for providing institutional support and research resources that facilitated this study.

Appreciation is also extended to colleagues who provided constructive feedback on earlier drafts, which enhanced the manuscript's clarity, rigor, and scholarly quality.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this research or its outcomes.

Disclosure Statement (Use of AI Tools)

During manuscript preparation, AI-assisted tools such as ChatGPT were employed solely to support language refinement, formatting consistency, and organizational clarity. All outputs generated by AI tools were critically reviewed, validated, and edited by the authors to ensure that interpretation, analysis, and conclusions remain entirely the responsibility of the research team.

References

- Abd Al-Hussein, T. S. (2025). *A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Selected Song Lyrics* (Doctoral dissertation, College of Education for the Humanities Department of English A Critical Stylistic Analysis of Selected Song Lyrics A Thesis Submitted to the Council of the College of Education for Humanities, University of Kerbala).
- Abidin, C., & Pang, N. (Eds.). (2025). *Internet popular culture and (everyday) politics: methodological & ethical critiques from Southeast Asia*. Taylor & Francis.
- Ainsworth, M. D., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of attachment.
- Arel, D. (2021). *A Song of Love and Freedom: The Tension Between Authenticity and Intimacy, and Its Resolution Through a Musical Style of Communication*. University of Haifa (Israel).
- Bamford, J. S., Vigl, J., Hämäläinen, M., & Saarikallio, S. H. (2024). Love songs and serenades: a theoretical review of music and romantic relationships. *Frontiers in psychology*, 15, 1302548.
- Becker, J. O., & Becker, J. (2004). *Deep listeners: Music, emotion, and dancing* (Vol. 2). Indiana University Press.
- Blumer, H. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Univ of California Press.
- Bournot, M. (2025). Intimate listening: A performative experiment based on re-enactments of intimacy. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies*, 10(1-2), 131-141.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss v. 3 (Vol. 1).
- Bruhn, M. J. (2022). 'Poetry is passion': Lyrical Balladry as Affective Narratology. *Romanticism and*

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

- Consciousness, Revisited*, 121-143.
- Cook, N., & Everist, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Rethinking music*. OUP Oxford.
- Cook, N. (2001). Theorizing musical meaning. *Music theory spectrum*, 23(2), 170-195.
- Cox, A. (2016). *Music and embodied cognition: Listening, moving, feeling, and thinking*. Indiana University Press.
- Cumming, N. (2000). *The sonic self: Musical subjectivity and signification*. Indiana University Press.
- Díaz, X. A. (2019). Conceptual design for INTIMAL: a physical/virtual embodied system for Relational Listening. *The Journal of Somaesthetics*, 4(2).
- Davies, S. (1994). *Musical meaning and expression*. Cornell University Press.
- Esdaille, E. A. (2020). *The notion of song, identities, discourses, and power: Bridging songs with literary texts to enhance students' interpretative skills*. Columbia University.
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Routledge.
- Finnegan, R. (2012). Music, experience, and the anthropology of emotion. In *The cultural study of music* (pp. 353-363). Routledge.
- Fisher, V. J. (2021). Embodied songs: Insights into the nature of cross-modal meaning-making within sign language informed, embodied interpretations of vocal music. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 624689.
- Garfias, R. (2004). *Music: the cultural context* (Vol. 47, pp. 1-38). Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Geng, Y. (2025). Exploring the Sonic Identity of Popular Music: Detailed Characteristics and Expressions. *Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Science*, 9(7).
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard university press.
- Iveland, K. L. (2024). Lyrics, Voices and the Stories They Tell. *University of Adger*.
- Joy, A., & Sherry Jr, J. F. (2003). Speaking of art as embodied imagination: A multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience. *Journal of consumer research*, 30(2), 259-282.
- Juslin, P. N. (2016). Emotional reactions to music. *The Oxford handbook of music psychology*, 197-213.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: Univ. Press, Chicago/IL.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

- Lippman, E. A. (1953). Symbolism in music. *The Musical Quarterly*, 39(4), 554-575.
- Liu, L., Li, T., & Xiong, W. (2025). Psychological reality and mapping relationships of spatial distance metaphors for emotional concepts. *Current Psychology*, 44(7), 5796-5808.
- Manalili, E. J., & Malcampo, M. C. (2025). A narrative exploration of romantic experiences and ideal relationship standards among Filipino Gen Z. *International Review of Social Sciences Research*, 5(2), 126-155.
- Mehl, K., Gugliano, M., & Belfi, A. M. (2025). The role of imagery and emotion in the aesthetic appeal of music, poetry, and paintings. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*, 19(6), 1373.
- Metzer, D. (2016). The power ballad and the power of sentimentality. *Journal of American Studies*, 50(3), 659-677.
- Moore, A. F. (2016). *Song means: Analysing and interpreting recorded popular song*. Routledge.
- MYX Global. (2025, August 18). The only “ghosting” we want: Cup of Joe’s “Multo” haunts Spotify PH all the way to No. 1. <https://myx.global/the-only-ghosting-we-want-cup-of-joes-multo-haunts-spotify-ph-all-the-way-to-no-1/>
- Nguyen, X. T. (2024). *A Linguistic Exploration of Modal Verbs in Billboard's Top Charting Songs* (Master's thesis, University of Windsor (Canada)).
- Nikam, S. (2025). *Literary Echoes: Exploring Themes, Voices and Cultural Narratives*. Chyren Publication.
- Nilan, P., & Maunati, Y. (2025). Popular Culture and Digital Media in Contemporary Southeast Asia. In *Decolonising Social Science Research in Southeast Asia: New Ways of Knowing* (pp. 59-84). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
- Omer, M. M. (2025). Exploring Emotional Resonance: Listener Perspectives on Music that Evokes Positive and Negative Emotions. *Contemporary Journal of Social Science Review*, 3(2), 1103-1115.
- Poliakova, H. (2023). Means of Creation of Conceptuality in Modern Song Texts. *Актуальні питання гуманітарних наук*, 70(2), 200-203.
- Simbolon, L., Suhadi, J., & Pratiwy, D. (2025). Exploring the experiential meaning of song lyrics: A systematic literature review. *SIBATIK Journal: Jurnal Ilmiah Bidang Sosial, Ekonomi, Budaya, Teknologi, dan Pendidikan*, 4(11), 3661-3672.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltomoto

*Corresponding Email: adafieltomoto@cmc.edu.ph

- Steen, G. J., Dorst, A. G., Krennmayr, T., Kaal, A. A., & Herrmann, J. B. (2010). A method for linguistic metaphor identification.
- Tagg, P. (1999). *Introductory notes to the semiotics of music*(pp. 66-1). nom de l'éditeur non identifié.
- Tagg, P. (2013). Music's meanings. *A modern musicology for non-musos*.
- Tolbert, E. (2001). Music and meaning: An evolutionary story. *Psychology of Music*, 29(1), 84-94.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (1999). Speech, music, sound.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2017). The critical analysis of musical discourse. In *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (pp. 553-565). Routledge.
- Vitor, F. E. (2024). Analysis of Spoken Poetry on Moral Values of Filipino Youth Using Literary Theories. *Library of Progress-Library Science, Information Technology & Computer*, 44(3).
- Vuust, P., & Frith, C. D. (2008). Anticipation is the key to understanding music and the effects of music on emotion. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 31(5), 599-600.
- Wah, A. (2019). Reflective Imagination: The Cognitive Process Underlying the Experience of Meaning through Music. *Journal of interdisciplinary music studies*, 9, 33-48.
- Wang, G. (2015). *Soundtracks of Asian America: Navigating race through musical performance*. Duke University Press.
- Zangwill, N. (2007). Music, metaphor, and emotion. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 65(4), 391-400.

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltoto@cmc.edu.ph



© **The Author(s) 2025.** This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

Creative Commons Licensing Terms

Authors retain copyright for their published articles, with the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) applied to their work. This license allows anyone in the community to copy, distribute, transmit, or adapt the article without needing permission from the author(s) or publisher, as long as clear and proper attribution is given to the authors. This attribution should clarify that the materials are being reused under the Creative Commons License. The opinions, views, and conclusions presented in the articles belong solely to the author(s). The Open Access Publishing Group and the International Journal of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Humanities disclaim responsibility for any potential losses, damages, or liabilities arising from conflicts of interest, copyright issues, or improper use of content related to the research. All published works meet Open Access Publishing standards and are freely accessible for educational, commercial, and non-commercial use, allowing for sharing, modification, and distribution under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

¹ Corresponding Author: Alexa Monique N. Dafieltoto

* Corresponding Email: adafieltoto@cmc.edu.ph