



**THE ESSENCE OF ALIENATION FROM THE PARK BENCH SONG WITH
THE TITLE WORKER USING THE APPROACH OF KARL MARX AND
FRIEDRICH ENGELS' THOUGHT**

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(Naskah diterima: 1 January 2026, disetujui: 28 January 2026)

Abstract

This study aims to describe the essence of alienation reflected in the song Pekerja by Bangku Taman, using Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' theoretical framework. Alienation in capitalism is understood as the separation of workers from the product of their labor, the production process, their own human essence, and from fellow human beings. The lyric excerpt "Morning, noon, until night / Time passes so quickly / Heat and rain unavoidable / Workers must keep moving" illustrates the exhausting routine of workers, where time flows rapidly without rest, external conditions such as heat and rain cannot be avoided, and yet workers are compelled to continue their labor. This reflects alienation from the production process, which becomes monotonous and inhuman, and alienation from the self, as workers lose opportunities to express creativity and individuality. The findings show that the song Pekerja not only portrays the social reality of the working class but also reinforces the relevance of Marx and Engels' theory of alienation in contemporary contexts. Music functions as a powerful medium of social critique, voicing the struggles of workers while raising collective awareness of the injustices embedded in capitalist systems.

Keywords: Alienation, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Workers, Music, Social Critique

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan esensi keterasingan (alienasi) yang tercermin dalam lagu *Pekerja* karya Bangku Taman dengan menggunakan pendekatan pemikiran Karl Marx dan Friedrich Engels. Alienasi dalam sistem kapitalisme dipahami sebagai kondisi di mana pekerja terpisah dari hasil kerja, proses produksi, diri sendiri, dan sesama manusia. Penggalan lirik "*Pagi siang hingga malam, terjadi begitu cepat, panas hujan tak terelak, pekerja tetap harus tetap bergerak*" merepresentasikan rutinitas kerja yang melelahkan, di mana waktu berjalan cepat tanpa memberi ruang bagi pekerja untuk menikmati hidup, sementara kondisi eksternal seperti panas dan hujan tidak dapat dihindari. Hal ini menunjukkan keterasingan pekerja dari proses produksi yang monoton dan tidak manusiawi, serta keterasingan dari diri sendiri karena kehilangan kesempatan untuk mengekspresikan potensi dan kreativitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lagu *Pekerja* tidak hanya menggambarkan realitas sosial kelas pekerja, tetapi juga menguatkan relevansi teori alienasi Marx dan Engels dalam konteks kontemporer. Musik berfungsi sebagai medium kritik sosial yang efektif, menyuarakan penderitaan dan keterasingan pekerja sekaligus membangun kesadaran kolektif terhadap ketidakadilan sistem kapitalisme.

Kata Kunci: Alienasi, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Pekerja, Musik, Kritik Sosial



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I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of alienation is a key concept in Karl Marx's thought. Alienation arises when workers lose control over the results of their work, the work process, and even themselves due to the capitalist system. Friedrich Engels further strengthened Marx's analysis by highlighting the real conditions of workers living under limitations, exploitation, and social injustice.

The song "Park Bench" (Workers) vividly represents this condition. The lyrics depict a grueling, relentless, and forced work routine:

Morning, noon, and night

It happens so quickly

The heat and rain are inevitable

Workers must keep moving

Work

These lyrics demonstrate how workers must continue moving regardless of the conditions of nature or their bodies. This repetitive and exhausting routine reflects workers' alienation from the work process, where work is no longer a means of self-expression but merely an obligation to survive.

The essence of alienation (Entfremdung) according to Karl Marx is the disconnection of humans from their true humanity due to the capitalist system. In this system, labor becomes economic coercion, not self-expression. This alienates workers from the fruits of their labor, the labor process, their fellow human beings, and themselves, as surplus value is appropriated by capitalists. This shifts the human relationship from creativity to commodity, and makes humans feel like objects within a system they themselves created, thus becoming "alienated" from their true potential.

According to Karl Marx, there are four dimensions of alienation. The first, alienation from the product of labor, is a condition in which workers lack control over the product of their labor, which then becomes the property of capitalists and is often beyond the reach of the workers themselves, making it a foreign object that does not reflect their identity. This creates a distance between workers, products, the labor process, themselves, and their fellow human beings. This happens because in capitalism, work is no longer self-expression but economic coercion for the benefit of capital owners, making workers disconnected from their

human essence (Gattungswesen), secondly Alienation from the work process, as stated by Karl Marx, is a condition in which workers feel alienated from their work because the capitalist system turns it into a repetitive monotonous task, eliminating creativity, autonomy, and satisfaction, so that workers only become cogs in the production machine instead of being complete creators, feeling not the owners of their products, and separated from fellow workers. This is one of the new forms of oppression in the capitalist system, where workers no longer feel connected to the results of their work, only becoming tools for the profit of capital owners, thirdly is Alienation from oneself in the context of work means that work that should be a means of self-development actually becomes a burden, making individuals feel disconnected from their human essence, feel they have no control over the process and results of their work, and only become part of the production machine, not an authentic subject, so that they become foreign to themselves and are only forced to work to survive. This is a key concept of Karl Marx's theory of Alienation (Alienation), where capitalism reduces the meaning of work to a commodity and robs workers of inner satisfaction. Alienation from fellow human beings, is a condition in which social relations become distorted and severed due to economic interests and class structures in capitalist society, making individuals feel alienated from others because their interactions are dominated by competition and exploitation, not true solidarity, so that human connections are eroded by material gain and a mechanistic division of labor.

Lyrics: *"Morning, noon, until night, it happens so quickly, the heat and rain are inevitable, workers must keep moving, working..."*

These lyrics depict a work routine that continues without interruption. Workers are depicted as individuals who must move according to the demands of the system, without control over the time, conditions, or meaning of their activities.

In Marx's theory, alienation from the work process occurs when workers lack control over the activities they perform. Work becomes mechanical, repetitive, and no longer a means of self-expression.

- Correlation with lyrics:

- "Morning, noon, until night" indicates work that continues without limits, as if personal time is lost.

- "The heat and rain are inevitable" indicates inhumane working conditions, where workers must keep moving despite unfavorable conditions.
- "Still must keep moving" emphasizes compulsion, that work is not a free choice, but rather a constraining obligation.

This aligns with Marx's concept that in capitalism, workers do not control the work process but are subject to a system of production determined by the owners of capital.

Alienation from Oneself (Species-Being) Marx stated that humans are essentially species-beings, creatures that should express their creative and human potential through work. However, under capitalism, work becomes merely a means of survival, leaving workers alienated from themselves.

- Correlation with lyrics:

- "It Happens So Fast" depicts the loss of the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of life; work becomes merely a routine devoid of existential value.
- Workers are depicted as individuals constantly on the move, but have lost their freedom in their activities.
- Work is no longer an expression of self, but merely an obligation for wages.

This reflects alienation from oneself: workers are unable to realize their creative and human potential, as work is reduced to a physical activity for survival.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

2.1 The Concept of Alienation in Karl Marx's Thought

Karl Marx's concept of alienation (Entfremdung) in his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 explains the alienation of humans from their true nature (Gattungswesen) under capitalism, where work becomes an economic burden, not self-expression, resulting in four forms of alienation: from the product, the work process, other human beings, and themselves, as workers are forced to sell their labor power for the profit of capitalists. This system transforms humans into commodities, reducing their essence to a means of production, and leading to reification (treating humans like objects).

Marx outlined four dimensions of alienation:

2.1.1 Alienation from the Product of Work

- Workers have no control over the results of their labor. The products they produce belong to the capitalist, not the worker.
- The product of work becomes a foreign object that does not reflect the worker's identity.
- Correlation with lyrics: The repeated word "Work" in the song "Worker" emphasizes that the results of labor never return to the worker but merely serve as a symbol of obligation.

2.1.2 Alienation from the Work Process

- Work activities become mechanical, repetitive, and monotonous.
- Workers lose personal meaning in their work activities, becoming mere cogs in the production machine.
- Correlation with the lyrics: "Morning, noon, until night, it happens so fast" indicates a timeless work routine, where workers lose control over the rhythm of their lives.

2.1.3 Alienation from Oneself (species-being)

- Work should be a means of self-development, but under capitalism, it becomes a burden.
- Workers lose their creative potential and freedom, thus feeling alienated from themselves.
- Correlation with the lyrics: "It happens so fast" illustrates the lost opportunity to reflect on the meaning of life. Work is no longer an expression of self, but merely an obligation for wages.

2.1.4 Alienation from One's Fellow Human Beings

- Social relationships between individuals are distorted by economic interests and class structures.
- Solidarity weakens, replaced by competition and exploitation.
- Correlation with the lyrics: "Hot rain is inevitable, workers must keep moving" indicates inhumane working conditions, where the pressure of the production system weakens solidarity between workers.

2.2 Friedrich Engels' Thoughts on the Condition of the Working Class

Friedrich Engels' thoughts in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) vividly describe the suffering, exploitation, and injustice of workers due to the industrial capitalist system, demonstrating brutal working conditions (14+ hours, low wages, poor conditions), squalid housing, and the role of the state in protecting the ruling class, all of which reinforce Marx's argument about class struggle and the need for proletarian revolution to achieve a classless society and human liberation. Labor exploitation: Workers are forced to work in extreme conditions, without adequate protection.

2.3 Music as a Medium for Social Criticism

Music is more than just entertainment; it is a powerful medium for social criticism and a meaningful cultural text. Adorno's view is that popular music can criticize the injustices of capitalism and voice the concerns of workers by combining art, ideology, and power to drive social change. According to Theodor W. Adorno, a philosopher from the Frankfurt School, criticizing the "Culture Industry," where popular music is often mass-produced to capitalist standards, can also be a tool of resistance. For Adorno, music can reflect the irrationality and alienation of modern society dominated by capitalism.

Music's representational function represents the collective experience of the working class. Lyrics' critical function serves as a means of conveying political and social messages. Music's awareness-raising function builds collective awareness of oppressive working conditions. Correlation with the song: The lyrics "Workers must keep moving" symbolize a critique of the capitalist system that suppresses human freedom.

2.4 Relevance of Alienation Theory to the Workers' Song

Analysis of the lyrics of the song "Workers" shows that:

- Long work routines ("morning, noon, until night") → alienation from the work process.
- Inhumane working conditions ("heat, rain, inevitable") → alienation from oneself.
- The compulsion to continue working ("must keep moving") → alienation from freedom and fellow human beings.

Thus, the song "Workers" becomes a concrete representation of Marx and Engels' theory of alienation, while also serving as a medium for social criticism of the capitalist system.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Research Approach

A qualitative approach is a research method that aims to understand social phenomena in depth using non-numerical data (words, text, images) to explore the meanings, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of individuals or groups, often answering "how" and "why" questions through observation, interviews, and in-depth analysis, rather than measuring numbers. This method emphasizes contextual understanding, researcher subjectivity as a tool, and inductive theory building from field data. This study employed a qualitative approach with textual analysis. This qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of the research was to understand the meaning contained in the lyrics of the song "Workers" and relate them to Marx and Engels' concept of alienation. Textual analysis was used to interpret the symbols, words, and sentences in the lyrics as representations of the social conditions of the working class.

3.2 Type of Research

The type of research applied was descriptive-analytical. Descriptive-analytical research is defined as a research method that combines description (describing facts as they are) with analysis (analyzing those facts to find patterns, relationships, or cause and effect). The goal is to provide a detailed description of a research object, then process the data in depth to understand the phenomenon and find more comprehensive answers, often to test relationships between variables or identify triggers for an event. Descriptive research aims to describe the phenomenon of alienation as it appears in song lyrics, while analysis is conducted to connect this phenomenon to alienation theory. Descriptive research describes an object or phenomenon according to its actual conditions through collected data (observations, interviews, documents). Analytical research analyzes the described data to discover meaning, patterns, or relationships between variables, not just descriptions.

The difference between pure descriptive and analytical research is that pure descriptive research only describes "what is" without drawing general conclusions or seeking causal relationships, while analytical descriptive research goes further, processing descriptive data

to understand "why" something occurs, such as testing hypotheses or exploring relationships between variables.

3.3 Research Object

The definition of a research variable according to Sugiyono (2019) (and other sources such as 2019:68 and 2019:69) in his books, is not the object of research, namely: "A research variable is an attribute, characteristic, or value of a person, object, or activity that has certain variations determined by the researcher to be studied and then conclusions drawn." The object of research is something broader, namely the scientific goal to obtain data about something, which can be in the form of variables. The object of research is the scientific target or target studied by the researcher to obtain data, understand a phenomenon, or find answers to a problem. It can be a person, characteristic, value, activity, symptom, or a particular phenomenon that has variations and becomes the focus of the study, such as consumer behavior, financial data, or an organization. The object of this research is the lyrics of the song "Workers" by Benku Taman, specifically the excerpt:

"Morning, noon, until night. It happens so quickly. The heat, the rain, is inevitable. Workers must keep moving."

These lyrics were chosen because they explicitly describe exhausting work routines, forced work, and inhumane working conditions, which are relevant to Marx's concept of alienation.

3.4 Data Sources

Research data sources are the sources of information for research. They are generally divided into primary data (directly from respondents/objects via interviews, observations, questionnaires) and secondary data (from documents, reports, publications, and previous research). Tertiary data is also a summary of secondary data. Data sources can be people, places, or documents. Primary data sources are original data collected directly by researchers for specific research purposes, primarily through interviews, direct observation, questionnaires/surveys, and experiments, or can also be from focus group discussions and panels to obtain new, relevant and specific information. In this study, the primary data are the lyrics of the song "Workers" from Benku Taman, which serves as the main text analyzed. Secondary data sources in research are existing data collected by others, not directly by the researcher. These data, such as books, journals, government reports, statistics, archives,

newspaper articles, and public databases, support primary data and make research more efficient because researchers can directly use them to gain an overview or support field findings. The secondary data sources in this study include: Karl Marx's theoretical literature: Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, *Das Kapital*; Friedrich Engels's literature: *The Condition of the Working Class in England*; and supporting literature: books, articles, and journals on alienation, music as a medium for social criticism, and studies of popular culture.

3.5 Data Collection Techniques

Common types of research data collection include observation, interviews, questionnaires, documentation (literature studies), and experiments. These can be used separately or in combination, depending on the type of research (qualitative or quantitative) to obtain primary and secondary data. This technique aims to collect data from the subject directly (primary) or from existing sources (secondary) such as documents or archives. In this study, a Documentation Study was used, namely by collecting song lyric texts, Marx and Engels' theoretical literature, as well as related academic references and library studies by reviewing books, articles, and journals that are relevant to the concept of alienation and music as a medium of social criticism.

3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic analysis in qualitative research is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns (themes) in a data set (such as interview transcripts or observation notes) to gain a deeper understanding of the research topic, organize the data, and uncover shared meanings or experiences from participants. This method is flexible, systematic, and aims to find "common threads" or themes that emerge naturally from the data, rather than from pre-existing theories. The thematic analysis conducted included identifying key themes in song lyrics related to the concept of alienation. The analytical steps began with text identification, which involved identifying lyrical fragments relevant to the concept of alienation. Thematic categorization began by grouping the lyrics into Marx's four dimensions of alienation: alienation from the product of labor, alienation from the work process, alienation from oneself (species-being), and alienation from fellow human beings. The next step was interpretation of meaning by interpreting how the lyrics reflect the conditions of worker alienation. Theoretical correlations were sought by linking the findings

of the lyric analysis to Marx and Engels' theory of alienation. Conclusions can be drawn from the steps taken regarding the role of music as a medium for social criticism of the capitalist system.

3.7 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a visual depiction or logical description of the relationships between the variables to be studied, built on theory and previous research, to explain the researcher's thought process and serve as the basis for developing a research model or hypothesis. It serves to guide the research by identifying concepts, variables, and the relationships between them to systematically achieve the research objectives.

The conceptual framework used in this study is:

- The lyrics of the song "Workers" → represent the experiences of workers.
- Karl Marx's Theory of Alienation → provides an analytical framework for understanding workers' alienation.
- Engels's thinking → strengthens the analysis with the real conditions of the working class.
- Music as a medium for social criticism → explains the function of songs as a means of collective consciousness.

3.8 Data Validity

The validity of qualitative research data is the extent to which the researcher's findings and interpretations accurately and contextually reflect the participants' realities. This is achieved through techniques such as triangulation (multiple sources/methods), member checking (confirmation with participants), extended research time, and negative case analysis to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data, rather than simply statistical measurements as in quantitative research.

To maintain data validity, this study uses triangulation of sources from various theoretical and cultural studies literature to strengthen the analysis. Consistency of interpretation is achieved by maintaining consistency between the song lyrics and alienation theory at every stage of the analysis. Contextualization involves placing the lyrics within the socio-economic context of workers under capitalism.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

1. Identifying Forms of Alienation in Worker Song Lyrics

- Alienation from the product of work: The repeated lyric "Work" suggests that the results of labor never return to the worker, but rather become the property of the capitalist. The product of labor becomes a foreign object that does not reflect the worker's identity.
- Alienation from the work process: The lyric "Morning, noon, until night, it happens so quickly" depicts a monotonous, long, and exhausting work routine. Workers lose control over the rhythm of their lives, so work becomes mechanical and repetitive.
- Alienation from self (species-being): The lyric "It happens so quickly" signifies the loss of opportunities to reflect on the meaning of life. Work is no longer an expression of self, but merely an obligation for wages.
- Alienation from fellow human beings: The lyric "Hot rain is inevitable, workers must still keep moving" demonstrates inhumane working conditions. The pressures of the production system weaken solidarity among workers, as social interaction is replaced by demands for productivity.

2. Connection to the Theories of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

- The research findings reinforce Marx's theory of alienation in his Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, stating that capitalism separates workers from their essential humanity.
- Engels, in The Condition of the Working Class in England, emphasized brutal working conditions, which are relevant to the depiction in the song's lyrics.
- The Workers' Song becomes a concrete representation of Marx's four dimensions of alienation: product, process, self, and fellow human beings.

3. The Role of Music as a Medium for Social Critique

- Workers' Songs not only depict the suffering of workers but also serve as a medium for social critique of the capitalist system.
- Music becomes a means of collective awareness, building solidarity, and strengthening class consciousness about injustice.
- In line with Adorno's view, popular music can be a tool of resistance against capitalist industry while simultaneously voicing the concerns of workers.

4. Relevance in a Contemporary Context

- Research shows that Marx-Engels' theory of alienation remains relevant for understanding modern social phenomena.
- Workers' Songs serve as cultural texts that connect critical theory with the real experiences of today's working class.
- Workers' grueling work routines, forced labor, and inhumane conditions are still experienced by workers in the modern capitalist system.

Key Findings

Bengku Taman's Songs successfully represent the four dimensions of Karl Marx's alienation and reinforce Engels's analysis of the conditions of the working class. The lyrics depict alienation from the fruits of labor, the work process, oneself, and one's fellow human beings. This research confirms that music can be an effective medium for social critique, voicing the suffering of the working class while building collective awareness of the injustices of capitalism.

Research Implications

1. Theoretical Implications

- This research extends the application of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' theory of alienation to the study of popular culture, particularly music.
- It demonstrates that the classical concept of alienation remains relevant for reading contemporary social phenomena, particularly in the context of modern workers who still experience alienation.
- It contributes to communication studies, the sociology of music, and critical theory by connecting cultural texts (songs) with social theory.

2. Practical Implications

- For musicians and artists: Music can be an effective means of social criticism. Simple yet powerful lyrics such as "keep moving" can express the concerns of the working class.
- For the general public: Workers' Songs helps people realize that music is not merely entertainment, but a reflection of oppressive social conditions.
- For academics and researchers: This research can serve as a reference for further studies on the relationship between music, social theory, and the realities of the

working class, as well as opening up opportunities for comparative studies with other musical works on the theme of work or social criticism.

3. Social Implications

- Class Consciousness: Workers' Song highlights the intensification of work that erases the boundaries of personal time, thereby raising public awareness of the alienated conditions of workers.
- Social Solidarity: Lyrics emphasizing the compulsion to work encourage solidarity between workers and the community to demand more humane working conditions.
- Music as Advocacy: This song can be used as an advocacy medium to voice workers' rights and build collective awareness against the injustices of capitalism.

4. Academic and Educational Implications

- Critical Literacy: This research can be used as teaching material in sociology, philosophy, or cultural studies courses, as it provides concrete examples of the application of alienation theory.
- Arts and Culture Curriculum Development: Demonstrates that musical works can be the object of serious academic study, encouraging the integration of music as a cultural text in education.
- Inspiration for Further Research: Opens opportunities for comparative studies with other songs on themes of work, exploitation, or social criticism, thus broadening the scope of music studies from a critical theory perspective.

Key Implications

This research confirms that music, specifically the song "Workers" by Bangku Taman, can be a medium for social reflection, ideological critique, and collective consciousness-raising. Marx-Engels' theory of alienation is not only relevant in economic and philosophical studies but can also be applied to the analysis of popular culture. Thus, this research makes significant theoretical, practical, social, and academic contributions to understanding worker alienation in the era of modern capitalism.

V. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that the song "Worker" by Bangkutaman is an artistic representation of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' concept of alienation. The connection with the song "Worker" by Bangkutaman. Where in the lyrics of this song there is a depiction of

the alienation of workers in everyday life. Workers are busy with work to the point of losing time. Workers begin to feel disgusted and annoyed because of their attachment to money. The lyrics reflect the condition of alienation as described by Karl Marx, workers are bound to the wage labor system, lose their freedom, and feel alienated from themselves. The song also illustrates how modern workers still experience alienation from the results of their work, the work process, their fellow workers, and from their human potential. Capitalism not only exploits labor, but also creates a false consciousness that makes workers accept alienation as normal. This analysis shows the relevance of Marx-Engels' thoughts in reading contemporary social phenomena through the medium of popular culture (music), which was written and sung by Bangkutaman. This research also confirms that the song "Worker" by Bangkutaman is a real representation of alienation in the capitalist system according to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The lyrics depict workers' alienation from the fruits of their labor, the work process, themselves, and their fellow human beings. Music serves as an effective medium for social criticism, voicing the suffering of the working class while simultaneously building collective awareness of the injustices of capitalism. According to Adorno, popular music can be a tool of resistance against capitalism. Music functions as a representation of the collective experiences of the working class, and as a medium for criticism and conveying political and social messages. Music also serves as a medium for raising awareness and building collective consciousness against injustice.

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