



FROM IMITATION TO EXPRESSION: THE USE OF DIRTY WORDS AMONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of harsh language by elementary school children at a public school in West Jakarta. A qualitative research approach, combining observation and interviews, was used to gather data from 20 participants. The aim was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the usage of offensive language in their environment. The findings reveal five categories of harsh language: Dyspeptic Swearing, Abusive Swearing, Idiomatic Swearing, Emphatic Swearing, and Cathartic Swearing. Additionally, several types of offensive language were identified, including Animal, Sex Organ, Sexual Activity, Scatological, Patronymic, Racial/Ethnic Insults, Ableism, and Body Shaming. The study also highlights that the usage of these offensive terms is influenced by neurological, psychological, and sociocultural factors. The results of this research provide valuable insights into the wide variety of harsh words used by elementary school children and emphasize the need for fostering the use of more positive language among students.

Keywords: *Swear Words, Elementary School Student, Psycholinguistics, Dirty Words.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language development in children is a complex and dynamic process that goes beyond simply learning the rules of politeness and social norms. It involves acquiring vocabulary and grammar, as well as understanding how to navigate the intricacies of communication (Askhatova A, 2020). According to Sudaryanto, as cited in Nurdiyanto (2018), swear words are a form of affective language that serves as an effective means of communication. These words arise in response to specific events or actions, acting as an emotional release influenced by a person's behavior, which in turn prompts reactions from others. Bergen (2016) adds that swear words are processed differently in the brain compared to other words. Research suggests that these words are easier to remember and more difficult to

suppress due to their emotional intensity and taboo status. Moreover, Meyer (2024) of the ADD Resource Center notes that children often imitate the language of adults, including profanity, as part of their social learning process. This behavior reflects their growing understanding of social interactions and emotional expression.

The family is one of the earliest and most important influences on a child's language development. Children typically learn their first words from parents, siblings, and extended family members. In households where swearing is commonplace, children are likely to adopt these words into their vocabulary. In such environments, language is introduced early on, and children are encouraged to use it in both formal and informal interactions (Adawiah, Rabiatur, et al., 2024; Kholisoh & Linggar Bharati, 2021;

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Sari et al., 2022; Lesiana et al., 2023). While parents or older siblings may not directly encourage swearing, their casual use of certain words can influence how children perceive language. For instance, a child might begin using a swear word simply because they hear it regularly in their surroundings. On the other hand, if swearing is considered unacceptable or discouraged within the family, children may avoid using such language in order to conform to family expectations and avoid reprimands. Thus, the family setting plays a significant role in either reinforcing or discouraging the use of swear words (Gundlach, 2014).

Peer interactions also play a key role in shaping children's use of swear words. Swearing tends to emerge in children's vocabulary at an early age, often through interactions with their peers. Children may use swear words to bond with others, attract attention, or express defiance. During the elementary school years, as children develop their social identities, peer influence becomes a crucial factor in shaping their behavior and language. Consequently, swearing can be a way for children to fit in or assert themselves within social groups. Research further suggests that swearing is not merely a form of verbal aggression, but can also serve as a tool for building solidarity or a strategy for politeness in peer interactions (Dyner, 2012, p. 27; Kit et al., 2024). A study by Simpson, Duarte, and Bishop (2016) found that exposure to profanity in both family and peer settings is linked to increased swearing among children. However, the acceptability of swearing varies depending on the social context. In formal settings, such as schools or workplaces, swearing is typically regarded as inappropriate and unprofessional, while more relaxed or informal settings may permit or even normalize its use. Therefore, the norms and values of a child's social environment play a major role in determining their use of swear words. In some circles, profanity is widely accepted, while in others, it is discouraged.

Social media and pop culture also contribute significantly to shaping language use, including the adoption of swear words. In today's digital age, viral trends have made certain swear words more normalized. Media and pop culture, particularly through platforms like YouTube and TikTok, amplify the frequency and acceptance of swearing, particularly among younger audiences (Tatar, 2016; Zulkifli et al., 2022; Rama et al., 2023). One of the primary ways children are exposed to swearing today is through content creators, especially in the gaming community. Influential figures like @Windah Basudara and @PascolKintil often use strong language in their streams or videos, and children tend to imitate these words without fully understanding their implications. In the gaming community, certain expressions, including swear words, gain popularity due to their frequent use in live streams, gaming videos, and social media platforms. These terms spread through memes, fan art, and viral content, becoming staples of Indonesian gaming culture and reinforcing a sense of community among gamers. Social media further amplifies this, creating an environment where particular swear words or phrases are normalized. Within gaming circles, swearing can serve as a mark of camaraderie or humor, further solidifying group identity. Linguist Tony McEnery notes that the social acceptability of swearing depends on the context, culture, and relationship between speakers. In some communities, profanity fosters a sense of belonging, while in others, it may reinforce social boundaries. Thus, media, gaming culture, and social dynamics all play a role in shaping how swearing is integrated into everyday language.

Furthermore, gaming platforms like Mobile Legends and Free Fire provide an environment where young players are frequently exposed to inappropriate language during interactions with others. This often occurs during competitive or high-stress moments, when emotions run high,

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prompting players to use offensive language or insults to express frustration or dominance. Features like in-game chat, voice communication, and messaging systems make this language exposure almost inevitable for children who participate in these virtual spaces. As online gaming communities grow—through forums, live streams, and social media groups dedicated to gaming—this exposure intensifies. Eager to fit in or emulate their peers and gaming idols, children may adopt this language as part of their identity within these communities. Over time, these interactions significantly influence how children perceive and use language, often normalizing swear words and harsh expressions in everyday conversations. This shift can blur the lines between acceptable and unacceptable behavior, especially in the absence of parental supervision.

This paper aims to investigate the development and use of dirty words among elementary school students, focusing on the most commonly used words, the factors that trigger their use, and the process through which children learn to swear. The study will explore how and why young children adopt taboo language, considering both innocent imitation of adults and more intentional uses, such as expressions of frustration, humor, or rebellion. By examining these factors, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the cognitive, emotional, and social development of children as they engage with language that is often considered inappropriate, offering a deeper understanding of how their perceptions of social norms and boundaries evolve.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of language acquisition in young learners has been a key focus in both linguistics and developmental psychology. Within this field, the use of swear words by children has gained increased attention due to its implications for cognitive, emotional, and

social growth. Previous studies have explored the factors that contribute to children's use of inappropriate language, the emotional triggers behind such expressions, and the influence of various social contexts such as family, peers, and media exposure. Maria Fe Sukanob-Nicolau's research, *Swear Words Among Young Learners: A Case Study of Elementary Students*, provides a key investigation into the use of swear words among elementary-aged children. Her study identifies the most frequently used swear words, the emotional states that trigger their use, and strategies children employ to mitigate the offensiveness of their language. The study found that anger is the primary emotion driving swearing and that mothers have a significant influence on children's use of such language. It also highlights how children often modify swear words creatively, such as through acronyms, to make them less offensive.

In addition to in-person interactions, digital environments also contribute to children's exposure to inappropriate language. Alshamrani et al. (2021) conducted a study on the prevalence of toxic language in YouTube comment sections and found that a large amount of inappropriate content is accessible to young viewers. This research underscores the important role digital media plays in shaping children's language behaviors, suggesting that online platforms serve as a medium for language acquisition, including swear words. Despite these findings, there remains a significant gap in research regarding how young children move beyond simply imitating swear words to using them as a form of self-expression. Most existing studies either focus on children's exposure to inappropriate language or analyze its usage among adolescents and adults. However, there is limited research specifically exploring how elementary school children internalize and adapt swear words, incorporating them into their communication as a tool for social negotiation and emotional regulation.

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This study, *From Imitation to Expression: The Use of Dirty Words Among Elementary School Students*, aims to fill this gap by examining not only how children learn swear words, but also how they gain agency in using them. By exploring the interplay between linguistic imitation, emotional expression, and social adaptation, this research seeks to offer a deeper understanding of the evolving language behaviors of young learners. Additionally, this study will contribute to the broader conversation on child language development, highlighting the impact of social and digital influences on early expressive abilities.

3. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method, as described by Bachri Haq, et al. (2020: 800) Arikunto (2009) and Creswell & Creswell (2017), which focuses on narrative data to explore the use of swear words among elementary school students. The method aims to uncover students' experiences and perspectives through interviews and observations, supplemented by tables and graphics to enhance the qualitative data. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the reasons, contexts, and impacts of swearing among elementary school children.

Data collection involved two techniques: observation and interviews. Observations were made at a public elementary school in West Jakarta during break times, where children from lower-income families typically exhibit less parental supervision or guidance on language use. The observations revealed how children use harsh words in various social contexts, including mockery and sarcasm. Interviews were conducted with 20 students, aged 7 to 12, from grades 1 to 6. The interviews sought to understand why they use swear words, exploring whether it was a form of emotional expression, an attempt to show courage, or simply mimicking peers. The combination of observation and interview data helps to contextualize the use of profanity among students, considering influences such as

frustration, peer pressure, and social media exposure.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results from the interviews conducted with 20 elementary school students revealed the use of dirty words that can be categorized into five different types. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of inappropriate language use among elementary school students, and to identify the factors that influence these types of words. Each type of dirty word has different characteristics and contexts of use, which provide insights into how children interact with the language they learn and hear in their everyday environment.

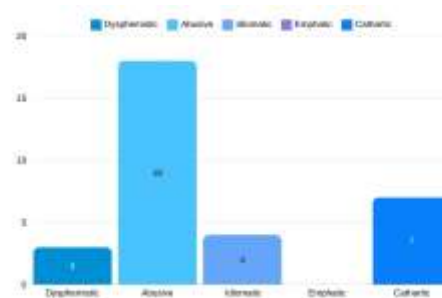


Figure 1. Classification of Swearing Words that Children Used

Five categories of these types of swearing obtained from the existing data:

1. Dysphemistic Swearing (used to express a negative view or insult)
2. Abusive Swearing (used to offend or attack someone)
3. Idiomatic Swearing (used casually without necessarily meaning it harshly)
4. Emphatic Swearing (used to emphasize a point or reaction)
5. Cathartic Swearing (used to release frustration or pain)

The graph reveals that “Abusive Swearing” is the most frequently used category, indicating that verbal aggression, particularly aimed at offending others, is a significant issue in the examined environment. Among the 20 interviewed elementary school students, 16 reported using words such as

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"anjing," "bego," "tolol," and "bangsat" to express anger or frustration, often during conflicts with peers or family members. These harsh words are commonly used in moments of resentment or disputes.

The second most common category is "Cathartic Swearing," used to release frustration or emotional distress. Seven students admitted to using words like "anjing" to cope with anger or frustration, especially during online games when they lost or felt upset.

"Idiomatic Swearing," which is used casually or humorously without intending harm, was found in 4 students who used harsh words in lighthearted or surprised contexts with friends. "Dysphemistic Swearing," aimed at insulting or demeaning others, was reported by 3 students, who used words like "pitak," "gendut," and "babi" to mock friends, reflecting a negative social dynamic.

Lastly, no students reported using "Emphatic Swearing," which is intended to emphasize or clarify emotions.

Overall, the dominant use of abusive and cathartic swearing highlights a need for greater attention to students' language use, as it could impact their social and emotional development. Additionally, the 21 most commonly used harsh words indicate a trend of inappropriate language that warrants further intervention.

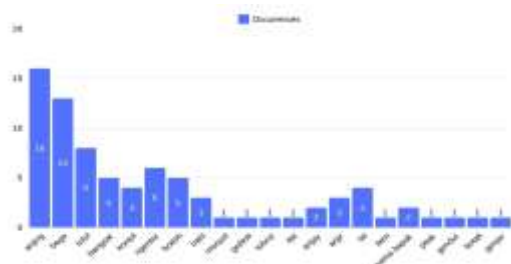


Figure 2. Dirty Word Frequency Among 20 children Based on Theme

The results of this research are then presented in graphs and tables that group the words according to relevant types. The table shows that the dirty words used by elementary students can be grouped into several categories, such as words related to animals, sex organs, sexual activity, racial/ethnic slurs, ableist discrimination, body shaming, and other types such as

scatological and patronymic. From this table, it can be seen that some themes are more dominant, such as animal and ableist. This indicates the need for more attention in educating children especially in school to understand the importance of using better and respectful language.

Table 1. Types of Dirty Word

No.	Types of Dirty Word	Frequencies
1.	Animal	30
2.	Sex Organ	6
3.	Sexual Activity	6
4.	Scatological	4
5.	Patronymic	2
6.	Racial/Ethnic Slurs	1
7.	Ableist	27
8.	Body Shaming	5
Total		81

In the analysis of swear words used by 20 elementary school students, a total of 79 swear words were recorded. The most frequently used term was "anjing," which appeared 16 times. This word, considered taboo in Indonesia due to its association with impurity in cultural and religious contexts, is commonly heard from peers, making it a strong expletive among children. Other variations, like "anjay" and "anjir," were also used, with "anjay" in particular shifting in meaning from a negative term to one expressing enthusiasm or admiration. This evolution, as highlighted by Sarbunan, shows how slang can soften offensive terms for social acceptability, especially among youth.

The word "bangsat" appeared seven times and is used by children to express frustration or to provoke reactions. Originally meaning a stray animal, it has evolved into a strong insult in modern Indonesian, often used by children to mimic adult behavior or draw attention. Additionally, "monyet" and "babi," used once each, fall under the animal-related theme. "Monyet" is used to insult others by comparing them to monkeys, while "babi" carries strong negative connotations due to religious views in Indonesia, particularly in Islam.

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Another commonly used word was "bego," which appeared 13 times. It is used to belittle someone's intelligence, similar to calling someone "stupid." Often used in a mocking tone, "bego" perpetuates harmful stereotypes about cognitive abilities and is a form of verbal aggression, typically used to insult classmates during conflicts or moments of frustration.

In the analysis of swear words used by elementary school students, several derogatory terms were identified. The most frequent were "tolol" (8 times) and "bego" (13 times), both used to belittle someone's intelligence. These terms reflect ableism and contribute to negative stereotypes, as noted by Sarrett (2023), who argues that terms like "moron" and "imbecile" have evolved from scientific classifications to insults. "Ngentot," a vulgar term for sexual intercourse, was used six times, with children often using it jokingly without fully understanding its meaning. Words like "kontol" (male genitalia) and "tobrut" (large breasts) were used less frequently, but indicate a growing awareness of sexual language, often used in jokes or playful contexts. "Tai," meaning "poop," was used four times and is a scatological term often employed to express frustration or insult. These findings suggest that children mimic language they hear without fully comprehending its deeper implications, highlighting the need for better awareness and education about language use and its social impact.

Furthermore, two participants used the phrase "nama bapak" or (father's name) in a mocking or joking manner. This phrase is commonly heard in Indonesia, particularly among school students. In this context, the use of patronymic as a joke is often meant to be lighthearted, but it can also carry a tone of mockery. The choice of using the father's name in such jokes is intentional, as it tends to provoke a surprising or uncomfortable reaction. However, while these jokes are generally meant to be harmless, they can sometimes have unintended effects. Aurora Yáñez, in the IDRA Newsletter, explains that teasing and name-calling in school environments can significantly impact children's emotional well-being. When children are subjected to persistent mockery, even if intended as playful, it can lead to

reluctance in sharing personal details out of fear of ridicule. Similarly, in the case of "nama bapak" jokes, some elementary school students may become hesitant or even afraid to share their father's name, as it may become a source of embarrassment. What may start as playful teasing can quickly be perceived as an insult, leading to emotional discomfort. Such humor, though commonplace, can impact a child's willingness to openly talk about their family, especially in an environment where respect for personal boundaries and family identity is not always well understood.

One participant used the word "hitam" (meaning "black") once, which can be used to mock someone, especially in terms of skin color. A study on Collocation and Connotation of the Indonesian Word "Hitam" by Aan Setyawan (2020) found that the word is frequently used in phrases with negative meanings, showing how its connotation has evolved beyond a neutral color descriptor. The study highlights how certain words in Indonesian, including "hitam," are often associated with negative traits, reinforcing discriminatory perceptions in everyday language. In this context, participants used to insult a friend based on their skin color. The friend's skin color was dark, so the term "hitam" was employed to highlight this racial or ethnic difference, which clearly reflects discriminatory or racist attitudes toward people based on their appearance. Additionally, the participant mocked their friend by implying they disliked eating rice, even suggesting they were afraid of seeing it. These remarks fall within the broader category of racial or ethnic slurs.

Several derogatory terms, such as "pitak," refer to physical characteristics that can be used to mock or insult others. In Javanese, "pitak" describes a bald spot or a patch without hair on the scalp or body. It can also refer to a scarred area on the scalp where hair does not grow back, often resulting from an injury. In Javanese culture, "pitak" is commonly associated with childhood injuries, as children who fall and hit their heads may develop a scar that prevents hair from growing in that area. Similarly, other derogatory terms targeting physical appearance have been observed in social interactions, particularly among children. Words like "gendut" (fat), "botak" (a crude

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term for baldness), and "genjor" (short for "gendut jorok," meaning dirty fat) are frequently used as insults. These terms are often heard in elementary school environments, where children, sometimes unaware of the impact of their words, use harsh language to tease their peers based on their physical traits.

Such words fall into the category of body-shaming insults, which directly target an individual's appearance and can have a negative impact on their self-esteem. These terms are often used in elementary school environments, where children may resort to harsh language to highlight perceived differences in others. The use of such insults reinforces harmful beauty standards and can lead to feelings of humiliation and social exclusion. According to interviews with elementary school children, many who use these terms claim they do so as a form of joking with their friends. However, what may seem like harmless teasing can have lasting emotional consequences, leading to increased self-consciousness, anxiety, and even long-term insecurities in those subjected to such remarks.

Timothy Jay's Neuro-Psycho-Social (NPS) Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding swearing behavior. It integrates neurological, psychological, and sociocultural factors to explain why individuals, including children, use swear words. Neurologically, certain brain regions are predisposed to process and produce taboo language. Psychologically, children's personalities and emotional states influence their propensity to swear. Socioculturally, the environment and cultural norms dictate the appropriateness and frequency of swearing.

Table 2. Frequency of Swear Words According to Neuro-Psycho-Social (NPS)

No	Factor Contributing Swearing	Frequencies	Percentage
1.	Neurological	16 occurrences	19.75%
2.	Psychological	32 occurrences	39.51%
3.	Sociocultural	33 occurrences	40.74%

Total	81	100%
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This table categorizes swearing into neurological, psychological, and sociocultural factors, with 81 recorded occurrences. Neurological factors were the least significant (16 occurrences, 19.75%). Psychological factors (32 occurrences, 39.51%) highlight emotions like frustration, anger, or excitement as key triggers. Sociocultural factors had the highest frequency (33 occurrences, 40.74%), emphasizing the role of peer influence and media exposure. While psychological and sociocultural factors are close in impact, the latter is most dominant. Overall, children's swearing is largely shaped by social and emotional influences rather than neurological conditions.

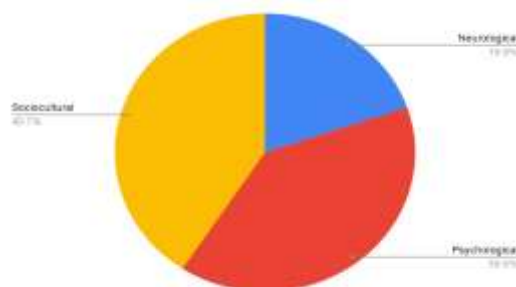


Figure 3. Percentage Distribution of Factors Contributing to Swearing

Swearing among elementary school children is predominantly shaped by their social environment, as children at this developmental stage are highly influenced by their friends, family, and school setting. Socialization plays a crucial role in shaping their behavior, including language use, as they often imitate the speech patterns and expressions of their peers, classmates, and family members. The desire to bond with friends and gain social acceptance is a significant driving force behind the adoption of swear words. Research by Rowell and O'Brien (2015) supports this notion, emphasizing that children are more likely to adopt behaviors that facilitate peer acceptance and social bonding. This phenomenon is further reinforced by peer pressure and the need to establish group identity, where swearing may serve as a means of asserting dominance, displaying humor, or strengthening social ties.

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From the interviews conducted, researchers found that children are often first exposed to swear words through their parents. Several participants reported that when they were scolded for misbehavior, their parents frequently used strong language, including words like “anjing” (dog), “setan” (devil), and “bego” (stupid). Furthermore, some participants mentioned that they overheard their parents swearing or making derogatory remarks while watching television programs. This early exposure to profanity within the household environment may contribute to children's language development, as they are likely to imitate the words they hear in everyday interactions. Additionally, studies on cultural socialization reveal that parental communication styles and early childhood experiences play a fundamental role in language development. Research analyzing parent-child conversations introduced the OMERS-Peds task, an observational measure designed to systematically identify and compare the content of cultural messages transmitted from caregivers to children during early school years (Smith et al., 2019). Findings from this study highlight the pivotal role of cultural socialization in shaping children's cognitive and emotional development.

Second, the school environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's linguistic and social behaviors. Based on researchers' findings from the interviews, most participants reported that they first learned swear words from their friends, with many being exposed to them as early as first grade. They frequently encountered these words in school settings, particularly during casual conversations, group activities, and peer interactions. Several participants admitted to repeating these words without fully understanding their meanings or the social implications behind them. Schools function as microcosms of broader societal interactions, where children observe, internalize, and adopt behaviors they perceive as socially advantageous. As children navigate social hierarchies and peer relationships, they may imitate the speech patterns of their friends to establish a sense of belonging or social acceptance. Research highlights that school-age children and pre-teens may use swear words for multiple reasons, including

expressing frustration, seeking peer validation, or imitating others, such as classmates, older students, and media influencers (Raising Children Network, 2023). The desire to fit in and gain social acceptance often motivates children to adopt linguistic patterns that align with their peer groups, including the use of informal or profane language.

Moreover, educational institutions play a fundamental role in language development through their curriculum, disciplinary policies, and the social dynamics within classrooms. Schools that foster inclusive and supportive learning environments promote positive language acquisition and effective communication skills. Conversely, institutions with high levels of peer conflict, bullying, or inconsistent disciplinary measures may inadvertently contribute to an increased prevalence of swearing and informal speech patterns. According to Maryville University (2022), cultural influences are deeply embedded in various aspects of child development, including language use, social behaviors, and academic achievement. This suggests that a child's school environment, shaped by its cultural and social context, can significantly influence their linguistic choices and behavioral tendencies.

Recent studies underscore the significant impact of sociocultural factors on children's language development and behavioral patterns. Socioeconomic status (SES) and school environments are particularly influential in shaping children's language use, including the adoption of swear words. Research indicates that children from lower SES backgrounds often face various stressors that can affect their linguistic and social development. The American Psychological Association (2020) notes that poverty is associated with multiple physical and psychosocial stressors, which can impact family stability, parenting practices, and overall developmental outcomes. Children raised in high-stress environments may be more likely to encounter and adopt aggressive or informal language as a means of coping or expressing frustration. In addition, the school environment, combined with socioeconomic and cultural factors, plays a central role in children's linguistic and social development.

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Exposure to diverse communication styles, peer interactions, and broader societal influences contributes to the ways in which children acquire and use language, including the adoption of swear words.

Third, exposure to various media, television, video games, and social media, significantly influences children's use of dirty words. Digital platforms provide unfiltered access to content where strong language is frequently used, shaping children's speech patterns and perceptions of acceptable communication. A study by Fischer et al. (2019) indicates that social media platforms create an environment where linguistic norms, including profanity, are shaped by peer engagement and algorithmic reinforcement, making explicit language more prevalent and widely accepted. Based on the Interviews with study participants revealed that most children had already been exposed to social media, often without parental supervision. Many children regularly watch gaming influencers such as @Windah Basudara and @PascolKintil, who frequently use explicit language. Without parental supervision, children are likely to imitate these figures without fully understanding the social and cultural implications of such language. Additionally, research suggests that repeated exposure to profanity in digital media can reduce sensitivity to offensive language, increasing the likelihood of its use in social interactions (Coyne et al., 2011; Tompkins et al., 2020).

In the gaming community, certain phrases and expressions, including swearing, often gain popularity due to their frequent use in live streams, gaming videos, and social media platforms. Over time, these expressions become embedded in gaming culture and are widely adopted by young viewers. A study titled "YouTubers' Effect on Children's Values: Parents' Views" (Görkem & Köse, 2020) and Dash (2022) examined the impact of YouTube personalities on children's behaviors and values. The research found that children frequently emulate the language and actions of popular YouTubers, which can lead to both positive and negative behavioral outcomes. Parents expressed concerns about their children adopting inappropriate language and behaviors from online content,

emphasizing the need for greater awareness and supervision.

Furthermore, the article "The Influence of Screen Time on Children's Language Development: A Scoping Review" (Madigan et al., 2020) explored the relationship between screen time and language acquisition. The review indicated that excessive screen exposure, particularly without adult interaction, may negatively impact children's language development. However, it also suggested that co-viewing and engaging with children during screen time can foster better language comprehension and acquisition. These findings highlight the importance of parental involvement in mediating children's exposure to digital content to minimize the potential negative effects on their speech and social behaviors.

Most of the participants interviewed by the researchers reported actively participating in online gaming, particularly in popular multiplayer games such as Mobile Legends and Free Fire. These gaming environments often facilitate real-time communication between players, either through voice chat or text messaging. As a result, many participants acknowledged frequently hearing and using swear words during gameplay, often as a response to in-game frustration, competition, or peer influence. Research suggests that online gaming communities can significantly impact children's language use, particularly in high-intensity, fast-paced games where strong language is commonly used among players (Kowert et al., 2021). A study by de Mesquita Neto and Becker (2021) found that competitive gaming environments foster a culture where swearing and aggressive language are normalized as part of in-game communication and emotional expression. Additionally, Common Sense Media (2022) reports that many online multiplayer games lack strict language moderation, further exposing young players to explicit and profane language, which they may imitate without fully understanding its impact. This aligns with the finding that sociocultural factors (40.74%) surpass both psychological and neuro-cognitive influences during early childhood development. Language development is deeply rooted in social interactions, and as children navigate an increasingly digital world, their linguistic

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habits are shaped by both real-world and online influences.

Psychological factors significantly influence swearing behavior among elementary school children, with emotional responses and personality traits contributing to these tendencies. In a study observing 81 instances of swearing, psychological factors accounted for 32 occurrences (39.51%), highlighting the substantial role of emotions such as frustration, anger, excitement, or stress in prompting swearing behavior (Jay, 2009; Wang & Miller, 2019). Notably, half of the participants reported frequently using the words "anjing" (meaning "dog") and "bego" (meaning "stupid") when angry. These terms, considered swear words in Indonesian culture, are often employed to express strong emotions. The majority of participants who used these swear words were boys, who indicated that they predominantly used such language during arguments with friends. Additionally, many children also mentioned using swear words in a joking manner, aiming to tease each other without any malicious intent. Therefore, swearing often serves as a coping mechanism for emotional regulation, allowing children to vent feelings of frustration, anger, or stress (Koole, 2009). This behavior can be a form of self-expression, especially when children feel overwhelmed or upset (Feldman & Rime, 2020).

Cognitive factors appear to play a less significant role in swearing behavior, with neurocognitive influences accounting for only 19.75% of the findings. Swearing at this stage is more impulsive and often a reflexive response to social or emotional stimuli. For example, one participant recalled an instance while playing with her friends when one of them suddenly exclaimed, "Anjing!" without any apparent reason or warning. She explained that it was simply a reflex. This phenomenon aligns with research indicating that swearing is often an automatic reaction to emotional arousal. A study by Stephens and Umland (2011) demonstrated that swearing in response to pain can increase pain tolerance, suggesting that such language serves as an immediate, non-reflective coping mechanism. Additionally, research indicates that swearing is processed in the brain's right hemisphere, which is associated with automatic and

emotional speech, further supporting the notion that swearing is often a reflexive response to stimuli.

5. CONCLUSION

The research revealed several patterns in the use of swear words among elementary school students, with five main categories identified: Abusive Swearing, Cathartic Swearing, Idiomatic Swearing, Dysphemistic Swearing, and Emphatic Swearing. The most prevalent was Abusive Swearing, used by 18 out of 20 interviewees. Cathartic Swearing was used by seven children, while Idiomatic Swearing was expressed by four, and Dysphemistic Swearing by three. Interestingly, no students used Emphatic Swearing.

The most frequently used words were related to Animal (30 occurrences) and Ableist (27 occurrences) themes, indicating that children often use swear words as expressions of frustration, humor, or to imitate adult language. The relatively lower frequency of words related to Sex Organ, Sexual Activity, and Scatological themes suggests a natural curiosity about taboo subjects. Less common terms like Patronymic and Body Shaming were also noted, reflecting children's growing awareness of social dynamics and the language they encounter. Overall, these findings show that children use swear words to test social boundaries and express emotions like anger or embarrassment.

The study highlights the significant influence of the sociocultural environment on children's swearing behavior. Peer influence and social learning play a more dominant role than psychological and neuro-cognitive factors in shaping how children use language. These results underline the importance of early childhood socialization, where children's behavior and language use are influenced by the norms and interactions they experience within their social contexts.

For future research, it is recommended to explore further the role of digital media and social platforms in shaping language use

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among children, as well as the long-term impact of exposure to inappropriate language on emotional and social development. Additionally, interventions in schools and homes could focus on teaching children the social and emotional consequences of their language choices.

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