Taboo Words in Social Media: An Analysis of Their Use and Normalization

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at how Filipino social media users use taboo language in online conversations. It focused on the communicative purposes, contextual meanings, and sociocultural mechanisms that make these words and phrases normal on sites like Facebook and TikTok. Employing a qualitative descriptive research design alongside document analysis, the study scrutinized a corpus of publicly accessible posts and comments featuring 15 frequently utilized Filipino taboo expressions, gathered via purposive sampling, and evaluated them through qualitative content and thematic analysis. The results showed that taboo words do more than just offend people; they can also be used for humor, criticism, emotional expression, and symbolic social commentary in digital interactions. The analysis revealed four primary functional categories: direct insults and negative evaluations directed at individuals; metaphorical terms like *buwaya* and *demonyo* employed to condemn perceived immoral conduct; mild curses utilized to articulate annoyance or emotional distress; and vehemently offensive expressions employed to express anger or frustration in online discourse.

The findings indicate that continuous exposure to taboo expressions via memes, comment threads, and viral content facilitates their gradual normalization in social media discourse, as users reinterpret these terms through peer interaction, cultural metaphors, and emotional expression. Overall, the study shows how Filipino netizens use taboo language on purpose to make social criticism, handle relationships, and share feelings online. This shows how language norms are changing because of online communication and suggests that more sociolinguistic research is needed on how language changes in digital spaces.

Keywords: Facebook, Vulgar Words, Tik-Tok, Expressions, Communicative Process, Multimodal

INTRODUCTION

Language is always changing, just like the social situations in which it is used. This change is especially clear in today's digital worlds, where language is shared, repeated, and reinterpreted at a faster rate than ever before. On social media sites like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok, the rules of language are always being talked about and changed. One notable change in digital discourse is that words and phrases that used to be considered rude or taboo are becoming more common. Scholars have observed that the immediacy, informality, and interactive nature of online communication can challenge traditional norms of politeness, as users may feel liberated to employ emotionally charged and previously prohibited language (Androutsopoulos, 2021; Tagg and Seargeant, 2022; Dynel, 2023; Seargeant and Tagg, 2024). While these studies have acknowledged the role of digital communication in expediting language change, a more concerning trend in the field of sociolinguistics is the pervasive use of taboo expressions on the Internet, which signifies a broader transformation in linguistic norms and societal attitudes towards profanity.

The role of taboo language in digital communication has also become the focus of international research. The research has shown that profanity in online communication has many practical uses and is not limited to the purpose of offense and the use of verbal aggression in the form of humor, emotional focus, and solidarity among the members (Jay and Jay, 2022; McEnery and Baker, 2023). Moreover, studies in digital discourse analysis also revealed that regular exposure to taboo discourses on the Internet could also lead to semantic bleaching, which

is a concept referring to the gradual reduction of offensiveness and the adoption of communicative value of words that used to be considered offensive. However, with these understandings, it is seen that there is a focus in the literature on Western society, and little is known about its role in other sociocultural contexts of online discourse, particularly in relation to the Southeast Asian context.

The Philippine online environment provides an important context for an understanding of these processes. The language of online communication among Filipinos is dynamic and emotive, and it employs various languages, including Filipino, English, and regional languages (Gonzales, 2022; Tupas, 2023). In this process of online communication among Filipinos, the present research has observed that there is an emerging tendency to employ slang, profanity, and emotive language in the various social media platforms. According to the research on the Philippine social media communication, the employment of profanity in social media communication among Filipinos fulfills the functions of emotive communication, humor, bonding, and the development of digital identity among the users (Laureta et al., 2024; Mejia and Ngo, 2024; Adarna et al., 2025). Meanwhile, other researchers also highlight the potentiality of the use of taboo words in the context of online conflict, criticism, or cyberbullying (Naga & Lavilles, 2024; Quimbo et al., 2024). The above results reveal that the profanity used by Filipino online discourse has multiple social and communicative functions. But the current study is limited to a specific context, i.e., it does not encompass the overall perspective of the role of taboo words used in the context of the Filipino online discourse.

Theoretically, the current research is based on the Impoliteness Theory, which explains the strategies of the speaker to use offensive or norm-violating utterances to achieve a specific social action in the given context of interaction (Culpeper, 2021). In the context of digital communication, the tableau may be used to promote the expression of emotion, identity, group cohesiveness, or violate social norms. Further analysis of the taboo phrases will help one understand the implications of language preferences in online communication, which may suggest a shift in the boundaries of politeness, identity, and beliefs in contemporary society.

Even though there is an increase in research on digital discourse and profanity, there is a serious gap in the study of the use of taboo language within the context of Filipino social media communication. The available literature on the topic is based on a small sample of datasets or situations of communication, without much knowledge of how the general patterns or functions of taboo phrases, including their normalizations within daily online communication, take place. The importance of filling this gap is more than merely documenting these practices of lingual needs that are changing, including the need to comprehend how digital communication has an impact on cultural attitudes. Thus, the present research aims to examine the use of the formerly taboo words by the social media users in the Philippines, as well as to discuss the significance of the application of the formerly taboo words in the social media discourse in the Philippines. More specifically, the following questions the present research aims to answer include: What are the formerly taboo words that the social media users in the Philippines tend to use? How do the former taboo words apply to other forms of communication, such as humor, criticism, and expression of emotion? What personal, social, cultural, and technological processes have contributed to the normalization of the formerly taboo words in the social media communication in the Philippines? In answering the questions posed above, the present research has a role to contribute to the sociolinguistic and the digital discourse studies, as it provides the empirical understanding of the evolution of the formerly taboo words in the contemporary Philippine online communication.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in the present study was a qualitative descriptive research design using a document analysis to examine the use of taboo language in naturally occurring discourses on social media sites in the Philippines. This research design was appropriate because it allows the examination of texts to identify the language pattern or meaning in the data.

Qualitative descriptive research is suitable when studying social phenomena in their natural environment and when seeking to develop an in-depth description of language use without seeking to manipulate variables

(Sandelowski, 2022). This type of research is consistent with the goals of the current research because it attempts to explore how Filipino social media users use taboo words to mean humor, criticism, and emotions.

Document analysis was used as a methodological approach because the study used available documents, which included social media posts and comments. Document analysis is a method used to study documents to identify patterns of language use, communicative roles, and cultural meanings embedded in discourse, as discussed by Morgan (2022).

Social media content was regarded as an appropriate source of naturally occurring linguistic data because it presents "genuine language in use in virtual spaces." Online discourse often involves language varieties such as code-switching, the use of slang, and other linguistic varieties that have been shaped by sociocultural factors (Androutsopoulos, 2021; Gonzales, 2022; Dynel, 2023). These varieties make social media an appropriate site for investigating the pragmatic value of taboo language in Filipino communication.

The research procedure followed a basic framework of four stages: (1) the identification of appropriate social media posts containing expressions of taboos, (2) the building of a corpus through the application of purposive sampling to the identified posts, (3) the coding and classification of the taboos based on their linguistic forms, and (4) the interpretive theme analysis of their communicative and pragmatic uses.

The study was able to explore how taboo language is used within Filipino social media interactions, as well as how it is used to facilitate humor, criticism, and emotional expressions.

Corpus and Sampling Procedure

The corpus of the study was composed of publicly available posts and comments obtained from two major social media platforms: Facebook and TikTok, which are two of the most used social media platforms by Filipinos. The corpus of the study was composed of about 30 publicly available posts and comments obtained from January to December 2025.

To guarantee representation on different platforms, there were around 15 posts and comments included from Facebook, as well as 15 from TikTok. These posts were used as naturally occurring text data that portray daily digital communication among Filipino users.

Posts were first identified through keyword searches of commonly recognized Filipino taboo words. These keywords were used as a starting point to identify the posts and comment threads that have the potential to carry taboo words. After identifying the posts, the relevant posts, together with the comments, were reviewed to ascertain if it meets the inclusion criteria of the study.

In addition, Purposive sampling was used to ensure that selected posts contained cases of taboo language that would be relevant to the study. Purposive sampling enabled researchers to focus particularly on discourse that would demonstrate cases of the use of taboo language.

The selection of posts and comments followed the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented below:

Indicator	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Public Accessibility	Posts or comments that were publicly accessible to anyone online.	Posts or comments that were private, restricted, or required special permission to view.
Language Used	Written primarily in Filipino.	Written primarily in other languages (e.g., Korean, Japanese, Spanish).
Presence of Taboo/Profane Words	Contains one or more taboo or profane expressions.	Contains no taboo or profane expressions.

User Identity	Created by users whose profiles explicitly indicated Filipino nationality, location in the Philippines, or consistent use of Filipino linguistic and cultural references.	Created by users whose profiles did not indicate Filipino identity or whose identity could not be reasonably determined.

Through these criteria and procedures, the study constructed a corpus of social media discourse that allowed for the examination of taboo language use within Filipino online interactions.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was carried out through a manual process of screenshotting publicly available posts and comments from Facebook and TikTok to ensure the original text context in which the taboo words were used was maintained. This allowed for the collection of screenshots of both the original post and the relevant comments to ensure the interactional context of the discourse was maintained.

Each post was given a unique identification code and entered a data spreadsheet along with relevant metadata. The metadata consisted of the site on which the post was published, the date of posting, the topic of the content, and contextual notes about the environment in which the taboo expressions were used.

The topic categories were established according to the main theme presented in the post. The main themes included categories such as personal experiences, social commentary, cultural discussions, and technology-related materials. This assisted in organizing the data and provided further information in understanding the usage of taboo language in various online discourses.

To ensure the ethical use of online data, personal identifying features such as username, profile picture, and direct profile links were not used in the transcription and documentation process. This ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of the social media users from whose posts the data was compiled.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the [name of institution] before the actual study took place. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines for internet-based research studies, particularly as outlined in the guidelines of the British Psychological Society (2021).

Although the posts were accessible to the public, the research was undertaken with a level of care to ensure the privacy of the users was respected. Only the posts and comments which were accessible to the public were included in the research corpus. The posts which were restricted to the users were not included in the research.

To maintain the anonymity of the users of social media, the username, images, and other identifiable features of the users were removed or blurred during the transcription of the data. Secondly, the posts were assigned coded identities rather than linking the posts to the users. This ensured that the investigation of the data was only concerned with the linguistic/communicative aspects of the taboo words rather than the users themselves.

Moreover, any potentially harmful, defamatory, and sensitive personal information encountered within the collected data was not included in the publication. This was done to ensure that the research was ethically sound and to investigate real language use within online discourse.

Data Analysis

The analysis used a combination of qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis to explore the use of taboo language in social media texts among Filipinos. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify the different types of taboo language used, and thematic analysis was used to explore the communicative functions of taboo language used among Filipinos on social media.

The process of analysis was divided into several stages. First, the process of identifying and classifying taboo language was carried out. This meant that each case of taboo language in the corpus was identified and classified according to the established classification in the literature on sociolinguistics. The framework was established based on the existing classification of taboo language, including sexual language, language referring to bodily functions, religious profanity, insults, and slurs, and euphemisms.

Second, a contextual analysis was conducted, where each taboo word was analyzed in the context of the sentence or the conversation it was used in, to ascertain the word's functional role, such as insult, humor, emotional expression, or emphasis.

Thirdly, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data. This stage was particularly concerned with identifying the larger discourse contexts in which the taboo language was deployed, such as language associated with personal experiences, social commentaries, cultural issues, and technology among others.

Fourth, the frequency and distribution analysis was carried out. The frequency counts were used as descriptive measures to see which of the categories of taboo words was most frequently represented in the data. The intention was to look at the general patterns of use.

To make the analysis more reliable, the data was coded by two researchers. Inconsistencies in the data coding were addressed through a consensus before proceeding with the analysis.

Lastly, the findings were interpreted in terms of sociolinguistic theories on taboo language and politeness, considering the implications of such language use on the cultural values and intentions of the social media users from the Philippines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents how Filipinos use specific taboo words in online discourse by analyzing the context of each term and the processes of normalization.

Taboo Words Commonly Used by the Filipino Citizens on Social Media Platforms

Table 1 shows the 15 common Taboo words used in social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. These words include *buwaya, putang ina, demonyo, buwisit, tarantado, ulol, lintik, fuck shit, kupal, gong gong, bobo, sira ulo, damn it, tanga, engot*.

Table 1: Categorization of the Selected Taboo Words

Category	Taboo Words	Use/ Meaning	Sentence
Offensive Language/Expressions	a. *putang ina* b. *fuck shit* c. *damn it* d. *demonyo*	Strong emotions or feelings such as anger and irritation emphasize.	a. #SaKalagayanNgAtinBansaMapapa***PUTANGINA*** kaTalagaSaMgaKurakotNaKapwaMoFilipino (*Facebook*) -Dalawa ang ibig sabihin ng *putang ina* ko, may *putang ina* ako na komportable ako sa iyo kaya nagmumura ako sa iyo, pero iyong isang mura ko na seryoso na *putang ina* mo, nababadtrip ako sa iyo. (*TikTok*) b. *Fuck this shit* I'm tired of feeling sorry for people. (*Facebook*) -I was treated like a *fucking shit* when my heart was fuckin pure, I'll never forget that. (*TikTok*)

			c. See? It wasn't easy but *damn*, it was worth it! *(Facebook)* -*Damn it* happened again. *(TikTok)* d. How come koma nga *demonyo* ni nanang ket mas nagrupa kapay nga *demonyo*, ta sarilim nga anak idumudom mo pay dita naglabaam anti, ken maysa paganano naka ni inang nga bagaan, kapkapin ano kayo ba? *(Facebook)* -Tigilan mo na kaka post ng bible verses mo kung ikaw naman talaga yung *demonyo. (TikTok)*
Insults or Negative Judgement	a. *bobo* b. *tanga* c. *engot* d. *gong gong* e. *tarantado* f. *ulol* g. *sira ulo* h. *kupal*	To offend someone by uttering negative words.	a. Hindi *bobo* ang hindi magaling sa akademiko. *(Facebook)* -Wala akong pasensya sa mga ano, number 1 'pag *bobo* tapos mayabang. *(TikTok)* b. Daming *tanga* sa comment section hahaha. *(Facebook)* -Magpopost ka ng parinig, tapos naka*block* ako? *tanga* ka? *(TikTok)* c. Dahil sayo kung ano ano na ang pinopost nagmumukha na akong *engot*. *(Facebook)* -Realtalk sa mga *engot*. *(TikTok)* d. Kahit biro lang 'wag gawing *gonggong* mga lalaki. *(Facebook)* -Oh *gonggong*! Keep your privacy shit! *(TikTok)* e. Resulta ng mga gawaing katarantaduhan,talagang *tarantado* itong si Abines isinisisi pa sa JR.administrasyon ang pagka kulong nya samantalang kaya sya nakulong sa kagaguhan na pag post sa paninira nya kay Gen. Torre. *(Facebook)* Parang nakakahiya na mag*share* ng sad post kapag -kilala kang *tarantado*. *(TikTok)* f. Ganitong level sana ng pagka *ulol*. *(Facebook)* Sabi mo noon, dika maghahabol bakit parang asong *ulol* kana ngayon. *(TikTok)* g. Pinatutunayang siya'y pusang *sira ulo*. *(Facebook)* -Maganda ka sana kaso para kang *sira ulo* eh! *(TikTok)* h. Pa public post ako sa *kupal* na ito, pinipilit kaming ipasakay sa iba eh puno na. *(Facebook)*

			Hindi lahat ng *kupal* ay pinapatulan. *(TikTok)*
Metaphorical or Symbolic Terms	a. *buwaya* b. *demonyo*	Used in comparison to describe their selfishness or evil deeds.	a. Di talaga nabubusog ang mga *buwaya. (Facebook)* -Sinasakop na tayo ng mga *buwaya*, Pilipinas gising! - *(TikTok)* b. How come koma nga *demonyo* ni nanang ket mas nagrupa kapay nga *demonyo,* ta sarilim nga anak idumudom mo pay dita naglabaam anti, ken maysa paganano naka ni inang nga bagaan, kapkapin ano kayo ba? *(Facebook)* -Tigilan mo na kaka post ng bible verses mo kung ikaw naman talaga yung *demonyo. (TikTok)*
Mild Curses or Expressions of Disgust	a. *buwisit* b. *lintik*	Convey irritation and express unforgettable emotional pain to someone	a. At nakuha na naman ng mga *demonyo* ang upper hand *buwisit. (Facebook)* -Balita ko, *buwisit* na *buwisit* ka raw sa akin? Hala, bakit naman ganoon? The feeling is mutual! *(Tiktok)* b. *Lintik* lang ang walang ganti. *(Facebook)* -*Lintik* na pag-ibig 'to, kung saan walang chance doon ka talaga maiinlove. *(Tiktok)*

Taboo words found in social media posts are categorized based on their meaning and communicative function in Table 1. Four main categories emerge from the analysis: insults or negative judgement, metaphorical or symbolic terms, mild curses or expressions of disgust, and offensive language and strong emotional expressions. These categories show how taboo language is used in online interactions for specific communicative purposes rather than at random.

The first category, Offensive Language and Expressions of Strong Emotion show how users use strong words to express their intense emotions which include anger and frustration and exhaustion. People use profanity in many posts so they can express their dissatisfaction with social issues and personal experiences and political situations. This shows that people use taboo language to express their emotions instead of using it to offend others.

The second category, Insults or Negative Judgment, shows the use of taboo words as direct attacks against individuals or groups. The language functions in this context to diminish the worth of others through mockery and critical assessment. The usage demonstrates how social media platforms enable users to engage in hostile communication through two methods of delivering insults which they treat as serious or humorous. This observation shows how anonymous and informal online environments lead to people using more hostile communication methods.

The third category, Metaphorical or Symbolic Terms shows how taboo expressions work as metaphors to depict immoral behavior and greedy behavior and socially unacceptable conduct. The words function as symbolic labels which show their disapproval of people whom they consider to be corrupt and unethical. The use of taboo language functions as a rhetorical tool which enables social criticism and moral evaluation.

Mild Curses Together with Expressions of Disgust constitute less severe forms of taboo language which people use to show their displeasure about situations through their emotions. People use these expressions in everyday online conversations to show their annoyance toward others without naming particular individuals.

The research findings demonstrate that social media platforms now use taboo language to express emotional content while delivering multiple comedic and critical and social commentary functions. The study shows that people use taboo language as their primary means to communicate when they interact with others in digital environments that provide them with informal social spaces and virtual anonymity.

This finding is consistent with the study of Rivera and Adriatico (2022), who reported that sexist and aggressive speech, such as insults, derogatory terms, and expressive linguistic features, often overlaps with taboo language in social media discourse. Their analysis explains how such language contributes to the construction of power dynamics among online influencers. Similarly, the corpus-based research of Mejia and Ngo (2024) identified several communicative functions of profanity in social media interactions, including cathartic, abusive, and social purposes. Their findings suggest that while profanity may violate traditional norms of politeness, it also enables users to release emotions and build interpersonal connections within online communities.

Use of Taboo Words in Different Social Media Contexts such as Humor, Criticism, and Expression of Emotion

Table 2 presents the categorization of taboo words according to their communicative context: humor, criticism, and emotional expression.

Table 2: Categorization of Taboo Words in Social Media Context

Taboo Word(s)	Context of Use	Sentence	Interpretation
a. *buwaya*	Criticism	a. Di talaga nabubusog ang mga *buwaya. (Facebook)* Sinasakop na tayo ng mga *buwaya*, Pilipinas gising! *(TikTok)*	Metaphorically comparing corrupt individuals to animals to symbolize their greed.
a. *putang ina* b. *fuck shit* c. *damn it*	Expression of emotion	a.#SaKalagayanNgAtinBansaMapapa***PUTANGINA*** kaTalagaSaMgaKurakotNaKapwaMoFilipino (*Facebook*) Dalawa ang ibig sabihin ng *putang ina* ko, may *putang ina* ako na komportable ako sa iyo kaya nagmumura ako sa iyo, pero iyong isang mura ko na seryoso na putang ina mo, nababadtrip ako sa iyo. (*TikTok*) b. *Fuck this shit* I'm tired of feeling sorry for people. (*Facebook*) I was treated like a fucking shit when my heart was fuckin pure, I'll never forget that. (*TikTok*) c. See? It wasn't easy but *damn*, it was worth it! *(Facebook)* Damn it happened again. *(TikTok)*	It used to express strong feelings like anger, frustration or agitation.
a. *buwisit*	Humor / Expression of Emotion	a. At nakuha na naman ng mga *demonyo* ang upper hand *buwisit*. (*Facebook*) Balita ko, *buwisit* na *buwisit* ka raw sa akin? Hala, bakit naman ganoon? The feeling is mutual! *(TikTok)*	Commonly indicate irritation to someone.

| a. *bobo*

b. *tanga*

c. *engot*

d.*gong gong*

e. *tarantado*

f. *ulol*

g. *sira ulo*

h. kupal | Criticism / Humor | a. Hindi *bobo* ang hindi magaling sa akademiko. *(Facebook)*

Wala akong pasensya sa mga ano, number 1 'pag *bobo* tapos mayabang. *(TikTok)*

b. Daming *tanga* sa comment section hahaha. *(Facebook)*

Magpopost ka ng parinig, tapos naka*block* ako? *Tanga* ka? *(TikTok)*

c. Dahil sayo kung ano ano na ang pinopost nagmumukha na akong *engot*. *(Facebook)*

Realtalk sa mga engot. *(TikTok)*

d. Kahit biro lang 'wag gawing gonggong mga lalaki. *(Facebook)*

Oh *gonggong*! Keep your privacy shit! *(TikTok)*

e. Resulta ng mga gawaing katarantaduhan,talagang *tarantado* itong si Abines isinisisi pa sa JR.administrasyon ang pagka kulong nya samantalang kaya sya nakulong sa kagaguhan na pag post sa paninira nya kay Gen. Torre. *(Facebook)*

Parang nakakahiya na mag*share* ng sad post kapag kilala kang *tarantado*. *(TikTok)*

f. Ganitong level sana ng pagka *ulol. (Facebook)*

Sabi mo noon, dika maghahabol bakit parang asong *ulol* kana ngayon. *(TikTok)*

g. Pinatutunayang siya'y pusang *sira ulo*. *(Facebook)*

Maganda ka sana kaso para kang *sira ulo* eh! *(TikTok)*

h. Pa public post ako sa *kupal* na ito, pinipilit kaming ipasakay sa iba eh puno na. *(Facebook)*

Hindi lahat ng *kupal* ay pinapatulan. *(TikTok)* | Exaggerated insults or negative judgement toward someone. |
| a. *demonyo*

b. *lintik* | Expression of Emotion / Criticism | a. How come koma nga *demonyo* ni nanang ket mas nagrupa kapay nga *demonyo*, ta sarilim nga anak idumudom mo pay dita naglabaam anti, ken maysa paganano naka ni inang nga bagaan, kapkapin ano kayo ba? *(Facebook)*

Tigilan mo na kaka post ng bible verses mo kung ikaw naman talaga yung *demonyo. (TikTok)*

b. *Lintik* lang ang walang ganti. *(Facebook)*

c. *Lintik* na pag-ibig 'to, kung saan walang chance doon ka talaga maiinlove. *(TikTok)* | Shows intense annoyance, terror, or incredulity. |

The analysis and categorization of taboo words on social media, exposing not only language usage but also cultural attitudes and online social interactions are shown in Table 2.

Buwaya is the first taboo word wherein in the sentence "*Di talaga nabubusog ang mga buwaya*," and "*Sinasakop na tayo ng mga buwaya, Pilipinas gising!*" metaphorically compares dishonest people to greedy animals. This shows how Filipinos use imagery to soften or hide harsh social criticism. Instead of directly criticizing someone, people use metaphors to make indirect but culturally rich statements.

Putang ina, fuck shit, and *damn it*, are the next set of prohibited words, are typically used to express strong emotions. The tiktok post "*Dalawa ang ibig sabihin ng putang ina ko, may putang ina ako na komportable ako sa iyo kaya nagmumura ako sa iyo, pero iyong isang mura ko na seryoso na putang ina mo, nababadtrip ako sa iyo*" for instance expresses a lot of irritation and anger. "*Fuck this shit I'm tired of feeling sorry for people*," and *"See? It wasn't easy but damn, it was worth it*!" show how these expressions are now commonly used to express anger, frustration, and emotional release; their frequent occurrence in online posts demonstrates how social media encourages unrestrained emotional expression that is typically restricted in formal or face-to-face contexts.

However, *buwisit* is a more subdued form of expression. The phrase "*At nakuha na naman ng mga demonyo ang upper hand, buwisit*" conveys frustration while allowing for humor or lightheartedness. Taboo words are frequently used in casual conversations, memes, and humorous exchanges, demonstrating how they can lessen frustration by turning annoyance into a shared joke or relatable emotion.

Bobo, tanga, engot, gonggong, tarantado, ulol, sira ulo, and *kupal* are some of the more potent types of taboo words. These include statements like "*Hindi bobo ang hindi magaling sa akademiko*," "*Daming tanga sa comment section hahaha*," and "*Pa public post ako sa kupal na ito, pinipilit kaming ipasakay sa iba eh puno na*." Despite their harshness, these insults often serve two purposes: they express social judgment and reinforce online camaraderie, humorous banter, or general annoyance. The humorous framing of such offensive terms blurs the line between humor and animosity, making their use socially acceptable.

Similar to this, words like *lintik* and *demonyo* evoke strong feelings. In the Ilocano sentence "*How come koma nga demonyo ni nanang ket mas nagrupa kapay nga demonyo…*," the speaker's anger and disbelief are highlighted. In contrast, "*Lintik lang ang walang ganti*," a culturally charged expression signifying retribution or grievance, is used. These words illustrate how Filipinos use cultural expressions in digital communication to elevate sentiment by highlighting emotional extremes and enhancing dramatic effect.

The table and its examples show how taboo language is used by Filipino social media users in a complex interplay of humor, criticism, emotion, and social bonding. In the digital age, many taboo words have changed from being strictly offensive to being flexible linguistic tools for storytelling, social interaction, and expression.

This pattern aligns with Indiola et al. (2024), who observed that profanity in Filipino media often functions as a device for expressing emotional intensity.

This also align to the study of Santos (2023), euphemistic substitution is typical of traditional Filipino communication and dysphemistic substitution is used when there is humor, anger, or among peers. Code-switching, particularly *Taglish,* enables the users to make it less offensive or bring some humor.

As time goes by, these words have become normalized in online interactions, losing some of their shock value and becoming integrated into everyday communication. This shift reflects changing language norms, where previously forbidden words are now repurposed, reinterpreted, and strategically used to express social realities and emotional experiences in the modern digital landscape. The process of taboo words becoming normalized and usage across different contexts including personal, social, cultural and technological has been tabulated in table 3.

Factors Contributed to the Normalization of Taboo Words among Filipino Citizens

Table 3 discussed the objective 3 about the factors contributed to the normalization of taboo words among Filipino Citizens such as personal, social, cultural, and technological.

Table 3: Factors Contributed to the Normalization of Taboo Words among Filipino Citizens

Factor	Examples of Taboo Words	How It Contributes to Normalization	Interpretation
Personal	*bobo, putang ina, tanga, engot, sira ulo*	Words that are used frequently become less offensive over time as users express their own emotions, such as annoyance, frustration, or anger.	Repeatedly using these words as emotional outlets habituates the user on a personal level, making them feel normal in day-to-day speech.
Social	*tarantado, ulol, kupal, gong gong*	Used to joke, tease, or connect with friends or online communities, the usage is strengthened by social acceptance.	Social contexts encourage informal use, and peer reinforcement makes taboo words appear socially acceptable in speech.
Cultural	*buwaya, demonyo, lintik*	Words can reflect societal frustrations or beliefs through their symbolic or metaphorical meanings.	Because they express common experiences, critiques, or cautions without being interpreted as outright offensive, culturally significant words become more common place.
Technological	*fuck, shit, damn it, buwisit*	Widespread usage is too much exposure from social media posts, comments, memes, and viral content.	Online platforms increase awareness and adoption; repeated exposure to these terms lessens their perceived taboo status and integrates them into commonplace online discourse.

Taboo words have become more common among Filipinos on social media platforms due to a combination of personal, social, cultural, and technological factors (Table 3). Personal terms like *bobo, putang ina, tanga,* and *engot* are frequently used by people to express their feelings. When someone posts, for instance, "*Hindi bobo ang hindi magaling sa akademiko,*" the phrase is used to convey an opinion or emotional response rather than to be offensive. These expressions eventually become less offensive and more commonplace in everyday communication because of being used frequently as vents for annoyance or frustration.

The informal use of taboo expressions is reinforced by peer interaction, which is another important social factor. As demonstrated by posts like "*Daming tanga sa comment section hahaha*" or "*Pa public post ako sa kupal na ito,*" terms like *tarantado, ulol, kupal,* and *gong gong* are frequently used playful or humorously among friends. Despite their harshness, these expressions are normalized through humor, teasing, and shared online experiences. These words seem appropriate in informal online conversations because friends frequently use them without causing serious offense, increasing their social acceptance.

Filipinos use taboo terms with symbolic or metaphorical meanings on a cultural level. Words such as *buwaya*, *demonyo*, and *lintik* express societal annoyances or viewpoints. The phrase "*Di talaga nabubusog ang mga buwaya,*" for example, criticizes corruption without resorting to direct conflict by using metaphorical language. In a similar vein, "*Lintik lang ang walang ganti*" demonstrates how culturally embedded expressions preserve cultural familiarity while expressing anger or caution. These terms are no longer strictly offensive because they convey common cultural experiences and criticisms, which makes them more acceptable and everyday.

Lastly, because of their continuous exposure to internet platforms, taboo words are becoming more commonplace due to technological factors. Words like *fuck, shit, damn it,* and *buwisit* are commonly found in memes, viral posts, and comment sections. For example, "*Fuck this shit I'm tired of feeling sorry for people*" or "*See? It wasn't easy but damn, it was worth it*!" Repetition of these terms, driven by algorithms, lessens their

shock value and incorporates them into regular online conversation. These terms' perceived taboo status erodes as users come across them frequently, and they eventually become a commonplace aspect of digital expression.

When taken as a whole, these factors: personal habits, social interactions, cultural symbolism, and technological exposure, transform expressions that were previously inappropriate into commonly used elements of Filipino online communication. This shift reflects both individual linguistic behavior and shifting cultural norms in the digital age.

This also proves that the fact of Filipino profanity is influenced by common schemas of Catholic morality and familial respect, as well as lower social norms, is demonstrated by Cultural Linguistics (Caparas, 2022), whereas reduced social cues, anonymity, and platform affords influence the freedom of language in online communication (Computer-Mediated Communication and the Online Disinhibition Effect, 2004).

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data collected, the research has identified several significant findings on the use of taboo language in the social media discourse of the Filipino population. In SOP 1, the research has identified fifteen taboo words that are frequently used in online interactions of the Filipino netizens on social media platforms such as Facebook and TikTok. These words are not only used as a form of profanity but are also a tool of language.

In terms of SOP 2, the usage of taboo words is applicable to various forms of communicative context, particularly when it comes to humor, criticism, and emotions. In most cases, these words are used to highlight opinions, frustrations, humor, and criticisms of people and society. It is also important to note that these words are used in informal forms of communication, particularly when it comes to online communication.

In SOP 3, it was established that the normalization of taboo words in social media is affected by various factors, which include personal, social, cultural, and technological factors. Personal emotional expression is a form of catharsis that allows individuals to express their feelings, such as anger and frustration. Social interaction and influence also play a role in accepting and using these forms of expression. In addition, cultural symbols play a role in how certain words are used to symbolize other things. Moreover, technological factors such as memes and exposure to various forms of media contribute to their usage.

Overall, the study revealed that taboo words have undergone a transformation from purely offensive words to dynamic words that reflect the changing communication practices of Filipino social media users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the conclusions that have been drawn from the study, several recommendations are proposed:

- Firstly, social media users are encouraged to be responsible and appropriate in their language usage. Although taboos have been shown to be used communicatively, it is important that netizens be mindful of their language usage and its effects on other people. They should be empathetic and polite in their social media usage, such as when using Facebook and TikTok.

- Second, educators and educational institutions must enhance the awareness of students, especially the youth who are active participants in the online world, about the importance of digital communication, linguistically speaking. This can be done by incorporating the discussion of the importance of the use of proper online language, the importance of being respectful, and the impact of taboo words on the social lives of the youth.

- Finally, it is hoped that future scholars will conduct additional sociolinguistic investigations on the use of taboo language in Filipino digital communication. Future studies may examine the role of other demographic variables such as age, gender, or geographic origin on the use, interpretation, and

acceptability of taboo words in social media communication. Future studies may reveal new insights into the dynamic nature of language and communication in contemporary Filipino society.

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