

ABUSIVE LANGUAGE: REASONS AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the current research is to explore the phenomenological experiences related to reasons of abusive language. Moreover, it also explored the related consequences resulted due to excessive use of abusive language. It was also focus of research to explore the factor contributing in the use of abusive language as part of normal conversation in university students. For this purpose five in-depth interviews were conducted along with one focus group consisted of 8 university students. The sample of the research was selected through purposive sampling aged 19-25 years. The data was analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) an analysis technique. The IPA Revealed five super ordinate themes such as Abusive language is normal language, Family/friends/society prevailing abusive language, Abusive language: A trend, Inner peace/satisfaction and profound happiness, and Islamic societal structure are being affected. It was concluded that abusive language had become the part of normal language and it is due to family and society from which children learn such kind of language and start believing that there is nothing bad in it. This needs to be seriously watched before it ruins all the Islamic traditional values. The further results are discussed in the light of cultural context of Pakistan.

Keywords: *Abusive Language, IPA & University Students*

INTRODUCTION

A Chinese saying goes, “The language tone is just like sharp knife. It slaughters without drawing blood.” The effect of verbal abuse is horrible because it leaves no visible scars, but the emotion and feeling damage and the inner core of the victim’s self can be distressing (Campbell, 1989; Teicher, Samson, Polcari, & McGreenery, 2006). In contemporary era, the young generation has an excessive behavior towards use of abusive words, fouls and swears in common conversation on daily basis. Abuses are often used to control, exploit, or maltreat a recessive person without respecting its integrity and feelings. Foul language; swear words, the abusive language during conversation is a common practice in these days. Most of the people specially youth are busy to use such kind of language in their daily routine life. Abuse occurs when people maltreat or exploit other people, without knowing their emotions, feelings, integrity and respect as individual. Abusers frequently are interested in controlling their victims. They use abusive behaviors to manipulate their victims into submission or compliance with their will (Salud, 2016).

Foul and abusive language has become society issue because use of swearing words is indulging in human behavior day by day. Its right to say that abusive language has become habit otherwise

it was just used on shocking news, self-esteem, on bad experiences etc. but now it has become the part of life (Jansen, 1984). The use of foul words is a major societal problem in these days. On the one hand, swear words are flourishing day by day, and even most of people admit to indulging in a swearword or two from time to time. There are numerous reasons behind such bad words, such as any bad experience aversive emotions, trying to support one's argument, disgusting attitude for someone in front of audience, and last but not least, simply become a habit which cannot be controlled now. Abusive words are of all times and cultures and even has becomes tradition as well. In ancient times the Greeks used the word "barbaroi" for non-Greeks, meaning which is like to 'babblers' (Jansen, 1984). Language tone plays a vital role to express anything like the tone is aggressive, sharp, hard/funny. It is stated that use of swearing words are same in everywhere like India, South America etc. It can be said it is a cross-cultural phenomenon which is now universal (Kuiper, 1992).

Relationship issues, including domestic violence, community and societal issues are main factor of foul language. Scientist and researchers are finding the main causes of abusive behavior and they made some questions like, is violent behavior learned? And it's transferred one generation to other or not? There are different types of abusive behavior like Physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse, occurring in many different context, including relationship factor, community and societal issues, individual issues, domestic violence and in institutional factors as well. Abuse is a serious social, cultural problem affecting a majority of the people. Scientists are struggling to find out the main reasons for these aggressive behaviors. Some of the questions arise like: Are these children born with an inherent tendency to behave in brutal ways? Is violent behavior transferred from one generation to the next? Is it can be learned? (Grieco, 2000). Abusive language has become a cultural issue and it's difficult to be resolved now. Its use is now common in public places, shops, streets, public transport and even many person do not feel ashamed while using it in home, garden and in front of neighbors/ family members as well. This behavior is now entering in life of young people; they are using swearing words frequently especially when they are among their fellow being/friends (Oldham, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of the common use of foul language is particularly difficult to control in the perspective of modern age. Swearing is now very common and this type of behavior, once deemed socially unacceptable, has become the norm for wide range of people. Despondently, it is now impossible to avoid hearing such unethical words which have become the part of each language all over the globe even without it the sentences seem to incomplete. Many people use expletives openly and frequently in public place such as shops and public, when using public transport and generally in the street. A lot of people will also swear freely within the boundary of their own homes including their garden, and this often means that it is within the hearing of their neighbors. Mostly youth are indulging for using foul language frequently, particularly when they are in friends and about in a

group, they feel comfort among fellow beings, as a means of feeling good in with their peers and it may be a form of 'kicking back' against restrictions about foul language at home (Oldham, 2001).

Swear language has become a fashion of today, interestedly; the person is enjoying his abusive behavior and profound language after passing such kind of unethical words, and recipient also enjoying that foul language that is so ridiculous among the society. Swear words (taboo words, as he calls them) can include sexual references (*fuck*), those that are irreverent/irreligious (*goddamn*), scatological or disgusting objects (*shit*), animal names (*pig, ass*), ethnic/racial/gender slurs (*fag*), ancestral allusions (*bastard*), substandard vulgar terms and offensive slang. Taboo words can be mildly offensive to extremely offensive, and people will often use a more mild euphemism to replace a swear word when in mixed (or unknown) company (Jay, (2009). Different question arises why people are using foul language and they feel better in it? Why this kind of unethical act has become the part of society? Why people are turning more acceptable towards it? Why youth is enjoying his profound language and don't feel any embarrassment on it. This is a serious question that this research is trying to answer. "Why do people abuse other people?" has multiple answers. May be they inherited this habit from their parents or May the society is main reason behind such kind of behaviors (Patricelli, 2015).

All reasons and consequences are needed to be evaluated over present research. Mostly researches are based on parental abuse towards teenagers but studies have discussed that adolescents are in high risk for abuse. (Johnson et al., 2001; Olsen & Holmes, 1986; Williamson, Borduin, & Howe, 1991). More instance, research have found that the parental verbal abuse towards their teenagers were common as that of younger children (Fisher & Berdie, 1978; Schaefer, 1997; Solomon & Serres, 1999; Vissing et al., 1991). While studies on parental abuse to adolescent are insufficient, researchers have argued that teenagers are at high risk for abuse (Johnson et al., 2001; Olsen & Holmes, 1986; Williamson, Borduin, & Howe, 1991). For example, researchers have found that incidents of parental verbal abuse toward adolescents were just as prevalent as that of younger children (Fisher & Berdie, 1978; Schaefer, 1997; Solomon & Serres, 1999; Vissing et al., 1991). A nationwide survey conducted by the American Sociological Association (2000) found that why foul language used in homes with children of all ages and most severe words are used to teenagers who lived at home. In adolescence, abusive behavior is related to outcomes such as nervousness, abandonment, low self-esteem, violence and poor school grades (Ferguson, 2009; Rich, Gidycz, Loh, & Weiland, 2005; Solomon & Serres, 1999; Vissing et al., 1991).

Current experimental studies have shown that childhood emotional/ abusive behavior is surely related to young person and adult psychopathology (Loh, Calleja, & Restubog, 2011). The Arabs, the Chinese, Indians, South America, Dutch, all are familiar with foul words and terms of abuse. The phenomenon may be called an etic, a cross-cultural, universal phenomenon. The researchers

found that the way foul language is used is almost universal. The tone of expression is disgusting and discourteous; it is an expression of hostility (Kuiper, 1992). Mostly abusive behavior caused mental health or chaos like somebody facing management issues, irregularity, explosive disorder, drinking and drugs problems as it is something wrong with their aptitude to restrain themselves at the brain level (Patricelli, 2015). Disgusting language can also result from mental health issues or disorder. For example, someone with anger management issues, a diagnosis of intermittent explosive disorder, or a drinking or drug problem may easily get out of control during arguments (e.g., because there is something wrong with their ability to inhibit themselves at the brain level) and verbally or physically strike out at their partners and dependents (Patricelli, 2015).

Universities depict different behavior of students which are based on culture, race and class. Cultural plays vital role in student life as it is vibrant and influential. It teaches characteristics, set of behavior that makes a student's more dynamic in his class and in university as well. Campbell (2004) narrated that group are the main need of student life because groups are the source of learning and motivation. Universities describe the diverse meanings of culture, and describe the ways in which such variable as race, class, gender and exceptionality influence student behaviour. Various aspects and definitions of culture are prevalent. Culture is conceptualized as a dynamic and complex process of constructions: its invisible and implicit characteristics are emphasized. Student conies to the classroom with a set of behaviors and characteristics that makes him or her unique and that will affect his/her academic achievement. Banks and Banks (2005) noted, Behavior is shaped by group norms, the group equips individuals with the behavior patterns they need in order to adapt. Furthermore, students identify with certain groups to experience a feeling of belonging. Campbell (2004) stated that students of all ages have a strong need to belong to groups, because groups provide a source of motivation.

University is responsible to teach you skill and give you chance to enhance yourself, but it can't teach you wisdom, nor give you proper understanding. Wisdom and understanding are shaped within one's soul. Keeping this in mind that culture shapes the behaviors and every culture has its own impact in the development of use of any language. So, the need is to explore the phenomena in depth in university students.

Research Question

- What are the psychological reasons of using abusive language in university students?
- What are the psychological consequences of using abusive language in university students?

Objectives of Study

- To identify the psychological reasons that are responsible in our society in prevailing use of abusive language in university students

- To find out the consequences of using abusive language in the society

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative method was used for the current research. Data was collected through using one focus group and five extensive unstructured interviews. For data analysis, the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) was used.

Participants

In this research total 13 participants were used to collect data. All were students of B. Sc (Hons), three were from year 1, three from year 2, three and four in year 3 and 4 respectively. Students were taken from COMSATS University. The age range of the participants was 19-25 years. All the participants were frequent user of abusive language. Through unstructured interviews maximum information was collected. In focus group participants were allowed to discuss the topic freely with each other.

Demographic information

Gender, age, class, family system, monthly income was collected from the participants.

Procedure

The data on the topic under study was collected from the thirteen students of COMSATS, Lahore. Participants were selected on the basis of their own choice to participate in the research and their frequent use of abusive language. Participants were requested to come to research lab where interviews and focus group were conducted. All ethical considerations were taken into account. And participants were ensured about their confidentiality and their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Participants were thanked at the end of the interviews and focus group. Data was then subjected to analysis using IPA. Themes were extracted, hypothesis were formulated to draw a conclusion from the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the collection of the data Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) was used for coding, extracting themes and data analysis to draw conclusion. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is qualitative approach with idiographic and psychological focus, which describe person's experience in a context and describe how a person explains any phenomena. Usually such phenomena are related to experience of personal significance, such as a major life event, or building of vital relationship. IPA has its origin, rooted in hermeneutics and phenomenology (Smith, 2007). IPA is one of the several approaches to qualitative, phenomenological psychology approach. IPA is different from other approaches because of its combination of psychological, interpretative, and idiographic components (Gill, 2014).

RESULTS OF STUDY

Initial Themes of Speaking Interviews

Interview 1	Interview 2
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foul language 2. Humiliating mother and sister 3. Showing weakness of other 4. To feel good in front of friends 5. Use of foul language happiness and grief 6. Kids learn from parents 7. Parents use at home 8. Start form home to stop this trend 9. No care 10. Societal acceptance 11. Parents do not stop 12. Feel satisfaction 13. For peace and calmness 14. This is a tradition 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. words hurts you 2. words don't look good 3. It has become a joke 4. Receiver doesn't feel 5. It a trend 6. Now it's language part 7. Don't feel any shame while using in front of girls 8. There is no proper reason 9. Becoming more normal 10. Don't feel bad using it in-front of parents, family 11. No bad reaction 12. Foul words don't be control by society and family 13. Parents don't bother 14. Friends don't stop it 15. No benefit 16. Company matter 17. Small foul words become big 18. Respect vanished 19. Moral value lost 20. Not feel bad in family 21. The person who doesn't use it feel good person 22. Today everyone use 23. The person who doesn't use feel strange 24. Must be stopped 25. Now it is common 26. Movie, society, media main source to communicate these words.
Interview 3	Interview 4
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those words when listen them not feeling good 2. People may hurt 3. No care 4. Now has become the part of routine 5. Consciousness died 6. Foul words inverse foul words 7. Now its fashion 8. Every time use 9. People are habitual now 10. Parents don't use 11. Kids use it in streets 12. Common in University 13. Don't use in front of father 14. In friends it is common 15. Friends don't stop 16. Tension not feel 17. Islam dislikes 18. Never think it is wrong 19. On sms and fb its common 20. Foul during happiness and joy 21. Person who does not use it look strange 22. Unethical use 23. Movie are the responsible 24. Friends are responsible 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bad language 2. Has become a habit 3. Trend 4. Common 5. Not feeling bad 6. Common ins social media 7. Double meaning talk 8. Company matter 9. Every one use 10. Satisfaction 11. Feeling good while using it 12. Don't feel shame 13. Foul words belong to person behavior 14. In reverse us it 15. Trend 16. Loose is more than 17. Islam dislikes 18. Unable to control 19. 95% population use it 20. Must be stopped 21. Determination can stop it 15. Unintentionally using it 16. Feeling light while using it 17. People don't bother
Interview 5	Focus group
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People hurts 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using foul language

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Common now a days 3. words are used during anger 4. Media is responsible 5. Upbringing matter 6. No care 7. In friends common 8. There is no difference between good and bad 9. Now it is a joke 10. Feeling happy 11. Society, uni, colleges are reasons 12. Social media 13. Male use more than female 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Bad language 3. Insult is common 4. Feeling normal 5. Due to elders 6. Culture 7. Habit 8. Feeling happy while using abusive language 9. Part of language 10. After using it people forget it 11. Limit Among friends 12. In power use more 13. Part of life 14. Insensitivities 15. Words don't effect 16. That is not good 17. Relation are going to disturb 18. It's a status now 19. People think negative about you 20. Company matter 21. Family are resoinsible 22. Standard has fallen 23. Value lost 24. Respect vanished
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Central themes

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Words that hurts/shameful words 2. Humiliating mother and respect of women 3. Showing weakness of other 4. To feel good in front of friends 5. Use of foul language during happiness and grief 6. Kids learn from parents 7. Parents use at home 8. Start form home to stop this trend 9. No care 10. Societal acceptance 11. Parents do not stop 12. Feel satisfaction 13. For peace and calmness 14. This is a tradition/culture/fashion 15. Language part 16. Now it's normal 17. No benefit 18. Company matter 19. Respect vanished 20. Everyone uses 21. Must be stopped 22. Consciousness died 23. Habitual 24. Islam dislike 25. Fb and sms 26. Media responsible/movies 27. Unintentionally using it 28. has become a joke 29. People ignore 30. Part of life 31. Insensitivities 32. Values and norms vanished 33. Friends, family, society, area is reason 34. Getting common in females as well 35. To enhance power of sentence
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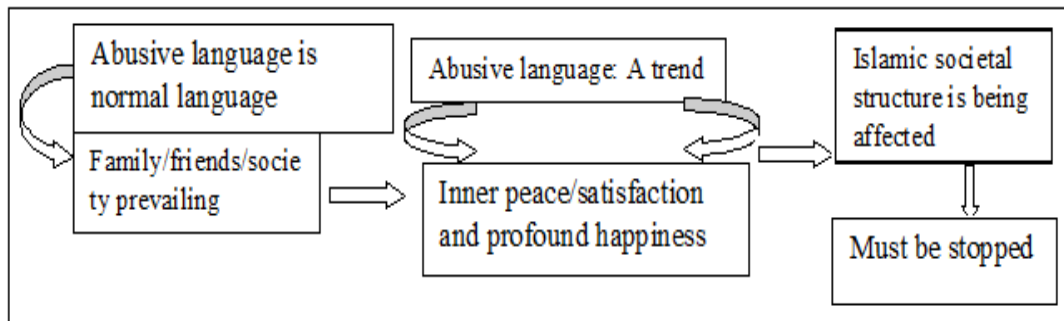
Master theme

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In front of family • During happiness and grief • In front of parents • Company • Everyone uses • Media/ movie • Un intentionally using • Parents use at home • Company matter • Societal acceptance • Parents don not stop ➤ Reasons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing weakness • Feel good • Feel satisfaction • For peace and calmness • Language part • Insensitivity • To enhance power of sentence • Normal • People ignore • Part of life • Friends, society, area is reason ➤ Consequences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values and norms vanished • Respect vanished • Islam dislike • It has become habit • No benefit • No care ➤ Future direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be stopped • Start from home to stop it

Super Ordinate Themes

- Abusive language is normal language
- Family/friends/society prevailing abusive language
- Abusive language: A trend
- Inner peace/satisfaction and profound happiness
- Islamic societal structure is being effected
- Future direction

Figure: Tabular Representation of Super Ordinate Themes



DISCUSSION

The present study is based on qualitative research approach. This research is direct attention to the main causes, behaviors and related consequences which are resulted for abusive language. The data which was collected from the students highlight the main issue/reasons such as parents, family, friends; media are responsible for the use of foul language. Initially students use such language for sake of fun after that it becomes a habit. In this research interviews were conducted and after that initial theme were made. These initial themes helped to extract central themes of the research. After that the central themes were collected and gathered into master themes and master themes bring into light super ordinal themes. The first super ordinal theme is “Abusive language is normal language” this theme has different sub themes as well such as everyone uses, societal acceptance, its common now, it has become trend. According to one of the interviewee: “Doston ki mehfil main gali dena acha samjha jata hae”.

This statement shows that abusive language has become a trend. People don't bother they are using unethical language rather they feel comfortable in front of friends. Another interviewee said that: “gali dena se baat main jaan aa jati hae” In fact we can say that foul language makes sentences more powerful and attractive and without it conversation can't be delightful. Another interviewee said: “Har koi gali deta hae kisi ko bura nai lagta” This means the person who is using unethical language is more powerful now because people like it most and appreciates while using such bad words. Environment plays vital role in a person life, because when a kid observes the society he learns many things out of language is most importance. If he will observe good

language he will use it but if he will listen bad words and foul words he will use it and without knowing whether it is right or wrong. So, abusive language has become the part of everyone life these days. Studies have revealed that victim of abusive language not only effect language of the students and it is because what they observe in nearby environment but also their mental health and normal life patterns (Robins, 1978).

The second super ordinal theme is Family/friends/society prevailing abusive language. No doubt family, friends, society are the most important feature of a human life. A person learns a lot from his surroundings in which friends, society and family play important role. Like one interviewee said: “mery ghr main sub log (Baap, Bhai) gali dety hain” This was second theme and it was very prompt as every interviewee reported uses such bad words we learn from parents. The research indicated that family must be a role model for the children because children observe behavior and language which their parents use frequently and unintentionally children starting using bad words as product of their learning. A review of the literature reveals that intergenerational transmission of use of abusive language and violent behaviors is widely accepted theory (Egeland, 1993) and that empirical evidence demonstrating that abuse leads to abuse is fairly sparse (Widom, 1989). Another interviewee said: “Movie, face book, social media pee ye zuban aam ho gae he jis ki wajja se bachy be use krty hain”.

This statement is giving the impression that social media is also a main source which promoting such language among the students. Student use to watch movies dramas for sake of fun but the language which is going to accentuate in these movies are so vulgar. When student listen and watch frequently such movies. With such valueless language they become habitual and start using it as normal language. Another main part is face book another social network, people not only use such bad language in form of words but also use some kind of gesture which make their sentences more powerful and they do not feel hesitation while using it. Another interviewee said: “Baat main wazan peda kerny k lie use krty hain” This statement shows that without foul words the sentences are incomplete or weightless. So, if a person wants to convince somebody he must be expert in abusive language otherwise people may not be convinced. But this may be again highly a shameful thing because a sinful act is going to be normal and no one bother to stop it even society, media are making these words more normal. There was time when any person used such words he was given punishment, people were used to hating such people because he is using unethical words.

The third super ordinate theme is “Abusive language: A trend”, this is impressive and thoughtful theme that this activity has become a trend, not only trend rather a custom and tradition as well. Who is responsible for this trend? It is hard to tell, but it has certainly taken most people into its grasp. What is hilarious and incredulous at the same time is that people have become so used to the abusive words that they no longer seem to mind being abused! You curse someone; they will

repay that courtesy with a few abuses of their own. The fourth super ordinate theme is “Inner peace/satisfaction and profound happiness”. This statement shows that foul words are the source of happiness and satisfaction. One interviewee said: “Khushi milti hae, maza ata hae” Which kind of happiness they are talking about means abusive language has become the source of inner peace. So, people consider they feel joy while using such language in fact they are hiding their anger and frustration. The fifth super ordinate theme is Islamic societal structure is being affected.

Islam always teaches best manners and biggest example is our prophet Muhammad (S.A.W). Islam gives respect of everyone. Due to such words the basic structure of Islam is going to be effected. Muslim children are also the victim of this activity which is totally against the teaching of Islam. And the Prophet Muhammad (Sal Allaahu Alaiyhi wa Sallam) said: “The believer is not a slanderer, one who curses a great deal, one who indulges in obscenity or who in engages in foul talk.” (Tirmidhi– saheeh by al-Albaani). The last super ordinate theme is “It must be stopped” This is the last but not the least theme is that abusive trend must be stopped. Each interviewee said though everyone uses foul language as normal language or it has become part of life still all believes, it must be stopped because it is affecting our lives and above all our Islamic traditional values and structure. Some said that it become our language part which is not good because the realization of wrong act is also going to be dead.

CONCLUSION

It is true that abusive, foul language has become the part of life and its normal in these days, still everyone believes it must be stopped because it is effecting our lives and it is destroying Islamic values, tradition and structure. Moreover, it not only affect the social life of the individual in the society but is also influential upon the personality and the personal image of the individuals as a while.

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