

OTT or Over-the-Top Profanity ? A Study on Language and Young Adult Perceptions

Preeti Dash & Suhasini Dash

¹Assistant Professor (ad-hoc), Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Institute of Technology, Rourkela – 769008, Odisha

²Assistant Professor, Department of English, Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation Hyderabad – 500075, Telangana

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Abstract

Streaming services, often referred to as Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms, have revolutionized the landscape of media engagement, particularly for younger demographics. This research scrutinizes the pervasive incorporation of expletives in such platforms and assesses their repercussions on the younger population. Utilizing an interdisciplinary framework, this inquiry amalgamates insights from sociolinguistics, geolinguistics, and theories of both Politeness and Impoliteness, addressing two central questions: To what degree do these shifts in language on OTT platforms affect the language of young adults, and is the standardization of foul language on OTT services justified? Data was collated through questionnaires disseminated among emerging adult students nearing graduation to gauge their perceptions, beliefs, and actions in relation to the profanity prevalent in OTT content. Initial findings suggest that the routinization of such language is considerably influenced by sociocultural and context-dependent variables and prompts intricate ramifications on the linguistic practices and societal viewpoints of young individuals. Contributing novel insights into the role and implications of vulgar language in the digital epoch, this investigation enriches the extant corpus of academic work on language dynamics within media ecosystems.

Keyword: vulgar language, OTT platforms, young adults, sociolinguistics, geolinguistics, theories of Politeness and Impoliteness

Introduction

The ubiquity of swear words and vulgar expressions has long captured societal attention and generated scholarly discourse. Yet, the emergence of Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming services adds new layers of complexity to this enduring topic, meriting renewed academic exploration. In the contemporary era marked by the ubiquity of such digital platforms, transformations occur not merely in media consumption patterns but also in linguistic norms and usage. The present research delves into the nuanced interplay of expletives, their mainstreaming within OTT environments, and the ensuing repercussions on the younger demographic.

Aim:

The principal objective of this research is to scrutinize the standardization of vulgar language and expletives within Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming services, while also evaluating its ramifications on the linguistic choices and societal viewpoints of emerging adults.

Objectives:

- To investigate the ubiquity of expletives, present in Over-the-Top (OTT) media.
- To dissect the sociocultural and context-dependent elements that affect the permissibility and repercussions of using vulgar language.

¹ Both authors 1 and 2 are co-authors and have each made significant contributions to this research paper.

- To appraise the function of expletives within contexts considered both courteous and discourteous.
- To measure the viewpoints, impressions, and conducts of emerging adults with respect to the usage of foul language in OTT offerings.

Rationale:

Rapid changes in media consumption habits, especially among young individuals, highlight the necessity for this study. Although cursing is not a new phenomenon, the prevalence of it on OTT platforms—which are popular with young viewers—makes it an urgent research topic. To provide a thorough knowledge of the topic, the research takes a multi-disciplinary approach, including theories from sociolinguistics, geolinguistics, and Politeness / Impoliteness.

With the integration of neurological, psychological, and sociocultural variables, theories like Timothy Jay's Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory of Cursing (2000) offer a fundamental understanding of why people curse. Especially in the context of readily available OTT platforms, this multi-dimensional approach is essential for comprehending the complicated phenomenon of cursing. Preliminary findings from questionnaires distributed to young adults suggest that the normalization of swearing in OTT platforms is a nuanced issue, influenced by various sociocultural and pragmatic factors.

This study intends to add to the increasing body of knowledge on language and media by exploring the function and effects of swearing in the digital era, particularly through OTT platforms. It aims to determine if and to what degree such language should be normalised as young adults are impacted by it. With this study, we hope to provide nuances into this omnipresent yet poorly understood feature of language and society.

Research Questions:

1. Is the normalization of the use of profanity in OTT platforms appropriate?
2. What is the magnitude of its effect on young adults?
3. How should we categorize swearing- is it polite or impolite?

Theoretical Literature Review:

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is an area of study that investigates the relationship between language and society. It aims to examine how language is used in different communities, and contexts. Sociolinguistics explores how language is used socially including the way people use language to convey meaning and establish social identities in a particular domain.

Key areas of study in sociolinguistics include:

1. Language Variation: Sociolinguistic inquiry delves into the heterogeneity of language, examining how dialect diverges based on cultural, ethnic, geographic, and social dimensions.
2. Language Attitudes and Prestige: This subfield within sociolinguistics probes the way linguistic attitudes modulate social exchanges.
3. Language Contact and Multilingualism: Sociolinguistics explores the mechanics of linguistic interaction in environments where multiple languages converge.
4. Language and Identity: Linguistic forms operate as indices of social identity and affiliative groupings.
5. Language and Power: This avenue of investigation unravels how linguistic practices can either fortify or subvert established social hierarchies.

To facilitate data collection, sociolinguistics employs an array of methodological approaches including questionnaires, conversational interviews, and ethnographic observation. The field synthesizes theoretical constructs and paradigms from affiliated disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, among others, to elucidate the intricate interplay between language and societal structures.

Politeness Theory vs. Impoliteness Theory:

1. *Politeness Theory:*

Pioneered by sociolinguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1987, Politeness Theory offers an analytical framework for understanding how individuals navigate face-saving and face-threatening actions in communicative acts. 'Face' pertains to one's social persona and self-concept, bifurcating into positive and negative aspects. The theory explicates how linguistic choices serve to uphold face while satisfying prospective infringements upon it.

Key points of politeness theory include:

- Positive Politeness: Tactical linguistic manoeuvres aimed at amplifying positive face by fostering amicability, reverence, and communal solidarity.
- Negative Politeness: Approaches that cater to preserving negative face by acknowledging the autonomy of others and limiting intrusive acts, typically manifested through obliqueness or linguistic hedging.
- Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs): Discursive elements or utterances that have the potential to compromise face.

Overall, politeness theory focuses on how individuals balance the competing needs for politeness and assertiveness in communication, considering social norms, cultural practices, and power dynamics.

2. *Impoliteness Theory:*

Impoliteness theory, developed by linguist Jonathan Culpeper (1996) examines the use of language that violates social norms and expectations, resulting in face-threatening behaviour. Unlike politeness theory, impoliteness theory emphasizes the intentional and strategic use of impolite language and behaviour to challenge, offend, or threaten the face of others.

Culpeper (1996:356-7, and slightly revised in 2005) stated the strategies of impoliteness. They are as follows.

1. Bald on record impoliteness: This is a face-threatening act that is done in a direct and unambiguous manner.
2. Positive impoliteness: These are strategies designed to harm the listener's positive face. E.g., Swearing, ignoring, to dissociate in a group.
3. Negative impoliteness: These are strategies designed to harm the listener's negative face. E.g., Condescend, ridicule and interrupt.
4. Off record impoliteness: This is a face threatening act that is done in an indirect manner through implication.
5. Withhold politeness: As the name suggests, it is withholding polite behaviour where it would be expected.
6. Mock politeness: Politeness is used but it is only surface level and hence insincere in nature.

Impoliteness theory focuses on the ways in which individuals employ impolite language and behaviour strategically to achieve specific communicative goals, often in situations involving conflict, power imbalances, or social disruptions. In summary, politeness theory primarily explores how individuals maintain face and manage politeness in communication, while impoliteness theory examines the deliberate use of impolite language and behaviour to challenge or threaten face.

Geolinguistics

An interdisciplinary area of study called "geolinguistics," also called "geographical linguistics", studies the connection between language and geography. It looks at how languages and dialects vary across geographical areas and provides insightful information on dialectology, language mapping, language contact, isoglosses, and language change across time.

In his 1965 book, *Invitation to Linguistics*, Professor Mario Pei defined the term "Geolinguistics" for the first time. He established a separation between descriptive linguistics, which deals with synchronic analysis, and

geolinguistics, which examines the relationship between language and its speakers as they are dispersed over the globe.

In his article *The Geolinguistics of Verbal Taboo* (2004), Allen Walker Read—another pioneer in the field—examined the idea in more detail and discussed the connection between linguistic taboos and their geographic distribution.

We now know a lot more about how language, geography, and culture interact because to these pioneers. While Read focused on the intricacies of how verbal taboos, including profanity, are influenced by geographical variables, Pei's work established the conceptual framework for analysing languages in their geographical contexts.

The perceptions of these pioneers in geolinguistics can be extremely useful for examining the OTT platform cursing culture. Given the nation's vast and diverse linguistic landscape, profanity's geographical distribution and level of acceptance can be understood to provide a more nuanced perspective on its normalisation in digital media. This is very important for creators of content who must negotiate the complex web of linguistic and cultural diversity in India. They can decide whether to use profanity in their content with more knowledge of its potential effects on various Indian demographic segments by using geolinguistic theories.

It is critical to investigate if the normalisation of swearing in India indicates a wider cultural shift or is restricted to particular social or regional groups given the wide variety of content available on OTT platforms. For instance, there may be differences between how profanity in OTT content is perceived in urban and rural areas as well as among viewers who have different amounts of exposure to international media.

The diverse languages and dialects spoken in India each have their own cultural customs, taboos, and social levels. Because of this, studying profanity is a complex enterprise that greatly benefits from a geolinguistic perspective.

Geolinguistics in the Indian Context:

Dialectology and Language Mapping: Geolinguistics can assist in identifying regional differences in the use and acceptance of profanity in India. This is especially helpful for OTT platforms that want to serve users from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Content producers can make more educated decisions about the use of profanity in their shows by recognising these variations.

Language contact: Geolinguistics can investigate how profanity changes or is assimilated when languages come in contact in cosmopolitan cities or border regions where numerous languages coexist. This is essential to comprehending how India, a varied nation, is changing its attitudes on swearing.

Introduction to Swearing

Locher and Bousfield (2008) state that Impoliteness is often called as the “poor cousin of politeness” owing to the fact that there is a dearth of publication and research on Impoliteness as compared to Politeness.

Swear words or expletives are considered impolite and have been stated as such by Brown and Levinson (1987) but swearing is not considered offensive or face threatening in every situation (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008). On one hand swearing can portray intentional impoliteness, verbal abuse, display aggression and reinforce power hierarchy whereas on the other hand cursing can also demonstrate solidarity, playful banter, praise and on some occasions as a medium to vent (Dyner, 2012). Linguistic structures are inherently not polite or impolite and it can be assumed that cursing may be a form of politeness in a particular *community of practice* (Lave and Wenger 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992).

In certain scenarios, the deployment of expletives serves as a tool for sustaining group cohesion, yet such usage rarely aligns with the principles of positive face as outlined in Politeness Theory. The act of swearing often correlates with breaches of societal decorum. Yet, within the boundaries of close friendships or specific subcultures, swearing may operate as a relational glue, signifying shared experiences or commonality. Nonetheless, it is crucial to underscore that such application is highly contingent on the situational backdrop and cannot be generalized.

While swearing may serve different purposes in different contexts, it is generally associated with impoliteness rather than politeness.

Empirical Literature Review

The following are some of the works that are relevant to our current study. In the paper *Swearing Methodically: The (im) Politeness of Expletives in Anonymous Commentaries on YouTube*, Dynel (2012) states that swearing is a multifaceted phenomenon which is used in real life conversations and hence should be studied in a theoretical manner. She also states that though swearing is considered impolite and threatens the positive face of the listener in situations of first order politeness, the intention of the speaker and the recognition of this intention by the listener should also be considered. The researcher concluded that swearing was not inherently impolite in all contexts and in certain situations could also be considered a hallmark of friendliness especially with regard to the YouTube e-community.

In the context of YouTube, she stated that though swearing may be used to display aggression, abuse, or enforce power hierarchy in anonymous internet users, it is also this comfort of anonymity that gives them a sense of equality and fosters bonds of friendship. This develops a sense of solidarity and group membership among members of that community of practice.

In *The Pragmatics of Swearing* (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008) aimed to develop a cognitive psychological framework to understand how swearing varies according to the context of communication. It examined how contextual variables such as social setting and speaker-listener relationship is important during the process of swearing by using the Likert scale. The researchers presented data to support the idea that perception of inappropriateness of swearing is context dependent both in terms of situational variables and the qualities of the participants (speaker-listener relationship and native or non-native speaker). The result of the study was that speakers are aware of the variables which effect swearing but it takes time for speakers to learn where, when and with whom swearing is appropriate especially in case of non-native speakers.

A Critical Analysis of Vulgar language on OTT Platforms: A Systematic Review (Dhiman, 2023) discusses the rampant use of profanity and vulgar language on OTT platforms due to multiple reasons such as creative freedom, specific audience, reflection of a particular strata of society, competition from other platforms and finally lack of regulation. He also discusses the laws or lack thereof that exist in different countries in the world regarding OTT regulation. He concludes by stating that regulation of OTT content is a complex issue where there must be a fine balance between responsible content distribution and creative liberty.

A fundamental explanation of how language taboos, such as cursing, are profoundly anchored in cultural and psychological circumstances is provided by *The Geolinguistics of Verbal Taboo* (Read, 2004). According to the article, speech taboos are not just made up at random but rather are influenced by many sociocultural elements that are frequently formed throughout early childhood. This is consistent with the sociolinguistic theory referred to in the research aim, which holds that language is a social construct impacted by numerous cultural norms and values. The inquiry additionally traverses the chronological evolution of linguistic prohibitions, illustrating a noteworthy shift in collective attitudes towards profanity over time. This diachronic lens proves particularly relevant to the question of the appropriateness of OTT platforms in mainstreaming the use of swear words. The second focal point of the study, which evaluates the breadth of the ramifications of such normalization among youth, can also be enriched through the paper's focus on the geolinguistic dynamics of linguistic taboos. In divergent cultural and geographic milieus, the act of swearing may assume disparate connotations and levels of acceptability.

Furthermore, the research is poised to integrate the paper's scrutiny of the psychological underpinnings of taboos to understand the foundational drivers behind the (im)politeness of profanity on OTT platforms. Such an approach may prove instrumental in ascertaining whether the mainstreaming of swear words on OTT platforms simply mirrors evolving social ethics or possesses a more profound influence, specifically on younger demographics.

Methodology

The methodology of this inquiry is meticulously crafted to furnish an exhaustive comprehension of the ramifications of profanity utilization in Over-the-Top (OTT) streaming platforms, particularly focusing on the young adult demographic.

Data Collection

The cornerstone of this research is primary data amassed through a Google Form. This digital questionnaire was strategically disseminated among young adults who are currently enrolled in undergraduate programs. The distribution channels were carefully selected to ensure a representative sample, thereby enhancing the validity of the study.

Research Objectives

The Google Form was engineered to probe into specific research queries pertinent to the ubiquity of expletives in OTT content. These interrogatives were formulated to elicit public sentiment concerning the standardization of vulgar lexicon, its significance in quotidian linguistic practices, and its influence on societal norms governing acceptable discourse.

Qualitative Insights

To imbue the research with a layer of depth and nuance, the survey incorporated open-ended questions. These allowed respondents to articulate their personal experiences and viewpoints, thereby enriching the qualitative dimension of the study. These narrative responses offer invaluable insights into the contextual appropriateness or inappropriateness of profanity across diverse settings, such as familial congregations and professional environments.

Data Analysis

Subsequent to data collection, a multifaceted analytical approach was employed. Quantitative data were subjected to rigorous statistical scrutiny, while the qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis. This dual-method analytical framework was designed to unearth patterns, trends, and correlations that could elucidate the complexities of the subject matter.

Ethical Considerations

Anonymity was assured to all survey participants to foster an environment conducive to candid and unreserved responses. Data integrity was maintained through secure storage protocols, with access restricted solely to the research team.

By leveraging this eclectic, mixed-method approach, the study aspires to provide a balanced and comprehensive elucidation of the pervasive employment of profanity in OTT platforms and its consequential impact on the young adult populace.

OTT and its popularization

OTT (Over the top) platforms have risen significantly in India in the past few years with certain platforms offering content in regional languages too along with English and Hindi. OTT essentially means going 'over' the set top box and accessing content using internet rather than using satellites or cable cords which are provided by regular broadcast service providers. At present, India is a critical market for OTT providers, with revenue estimated to double from 1.8 billion dollars in 2022 to 3.5 billion dollars by 2027.

This is due to the rise in consumers not only from cities but also from rural areas. Cheap internet data packs and the accessibility to smart phones has given impetus to the explosive boom in the use of OTT platforms throughout the country. The variety provided by these platforms to suit the sensibilities of various types of consumers and the lack of regulation and control over the type of content produced is also one of the key factors contributing to the growing popularity of OTT platforms. Most platforms also use data analytics to understand consumer behaviour and use this information to create a personalized viewing experience for their users of each demographic. This in turn creates a sort of "addiction" on the part of the user where once s/he views a particular series or movie, the app keeps recommending them similar type of content to keep them hooked.

There are around 46 OTT platforms in India currently. If market analysis is believed at present India has an estimated number of 45 million subscribers who stream OTT content on their phones or laptops.

According to *Selectra*, the most watched OTT platform in India is Disney+Hostar with 29% of OTT platform users viewing it. This is followed by Jio TV in the second place with Amazon Prime trailing in the third place. The *Indian Brand Equity Foundation* claims that 46% of the total OTT platform subscribers are from the top five metro cities and around 90% of the subscribers watch regional content as compared to the mere 7% who access the English content available.

In order to attract the youth who are their largest demographic, OTT platforms tend to create content that reflects society as is. Gone are the days where Indian women were portrayed as damsels in distress, stuck in the kitchens, decked up as brides and serving their husbands and in-laws. These platforms produce content filled with abusive language, sexually explicit scenes, violence, opinions against the government and other taboos in society.

The swearing and use of expletives in web series is no longer confined only to series depicting rural India, shows based in metro cities and towns also use excessive swearing to seem “cool” and “modern”. Swearing is no longer only used to express anger and resentment but also to express surprise, as a greeting, to fit in with a group of people and to depict a close bond between friends.

Indian shows such as *Mirzapur*, *Sacred Games*, *Kohrra* which depict characters that would traditionally not be called modern and come from small towns or villages swearing in Hindi and shows such as *Four More Shots*, *College Romance*, *Hostel Daze* and *Jeet Karda* which portray the modern youth of India swearing in English. The use of profanity in Indian web series is no longer restricted to a particular class of society, it transcends the boundary of social strata, location(urban/rural), modernity and gender. We see all characters swearing in all settings i.e., personal, or professional, in college and in the workplace and the youth imbibes the knowledge that it is acceptable to swear at all times, in every situation without being able to discern the difference of where it is appropriate and where it is frowned upon.

Following the norms of Impoliteness theory we can state that swearing is no longer viewed only as a medium to show anger and aggression but can also be applied in polite contexts yet there is no study stating that the use of profanity in all contexts at all times is considered appropriate especially when young adults who do not have the mental capacity to differentiate its usage in various circumstances are constantly exposed to them.

Content Regulation in India and the World

Countries around the world decide which content they deem harmful for society and regulate it accordingly. While US falls on one end of the spectrum with lax rules regarding content regulation, China is on the other end with extremely strict laws regarding content regulation.

The list of things which are considered inappropriate in China is wide ranging with something as minor as insulting national heroes to bigger offences such as threatening the Chinese Communist Party's hold over the country.

The United States on the other hand has very liberal laws regarding the regulation of content which reflects its most important ideal which is absolute freedom of speech. Under CDA 230 (Communications Decency Act, 1996) and other related laws, most speech is legal in the U.S. The only exception to this law is child pornography, sex trafficking and copyright violations. This approach is known as the **broad immunity approach**.

India is moving towards a **conditional immunity approach**. India still has laws against slander and sedition but a state can only outlaw speech if it can show a direct correlation between violence and speech. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which interprets the Information Technology Act, 2000, now control the regulation of online material in India. Online service providers are prohibited from hosting a range of content under Section 3(1)(b) of the 2021 regulations, including content that violates India's national security or causes public disorder. Although firms are ostensibly allowed to regulate themselves under the 2021 laws, they also need to register with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. This ministry is under the supervision of other government ministries, all of which offer "guidance" to online platforms. To enforce the laws, the Indian government teams up with several service providers but in dire circumstances the government may censor content without waiting for the providers to act. As a result, the Indian government's new strategy for

regulating online content is known as conditional immunity since it grants internet platforms exemption if they abide by the laws (Pillalamarri and Stanley, 2021).

Data Analysis

The majority of students who filled the questionnaire were adults between the ages of 18-19 and male. They claimed to watch web series on OTT platforms occasionally but even then, at least 39% of them think that the excessive use of expletives in web series has influenced their use of language in the real world too. This is sufficient to understand the far-reaching impact of swearing on young adults. The use of swearing has become so normalized on OTT platforms that 43% of them are unaffected by its usage on web series. The percentage of viewers who are uncomfortable by it is minuscule as compared to the ones who are unaffected.

They believe that web series use this strategy for ‘shock value’ and to amuse their audience in such a way that the viewers get the impression that swearing is acceptable socially. The audience being young is not able to differentiate between domains where it is appropriate and where it may be frowned upon. A lot of participants also described events where they used vulgar language in front of family or in a social gathering assuming that it would be acceptable only to later realize that it was grossly inappropriate. They have seen characters in web series swearing in front of their children and family and innocently assumed that if they could do it with zero repercussions, they could do it too.

The common belief that we came across while meticulously analysing the data is that the socio- cultural context also comes into play while deciding the appropriateness of swearing. Most participants commented that they would not mind watching a show with excessive expletives if it serves the plot well, but they would choose to not watch it in front of family or relatives. The Indian socio-cultural environment is such that majority of the parents would not be comfortable with their children (young adults in this case) watching a show that depicts a lot of vulgar or abusive language. They try to control what their children watch to a much larger extent as compared to countries in the West. The participants also felt that it would be awkward, embarrassing and even disrespectful if their parents heard these expletives.

This clearly shows that swearing cannot be boxed as black or white, as polite, or impolite; it largely depends on the context in which it is used, how it is used, when and with whom is it used. It must be analysed from a socio-cultural perspective and in today’s world heavily contributes to how language is examined in a particular society.

The data in figure 1 suggests that OTT content with swearing has a nuanced impact on audience language use. A majority report "No Change" (146 respondents), indicating resilience in existing language norms. However, a significant subset reports a "Slightly Increased" influence (112 respondents), hinting at the media's role in shaping colloquial language.

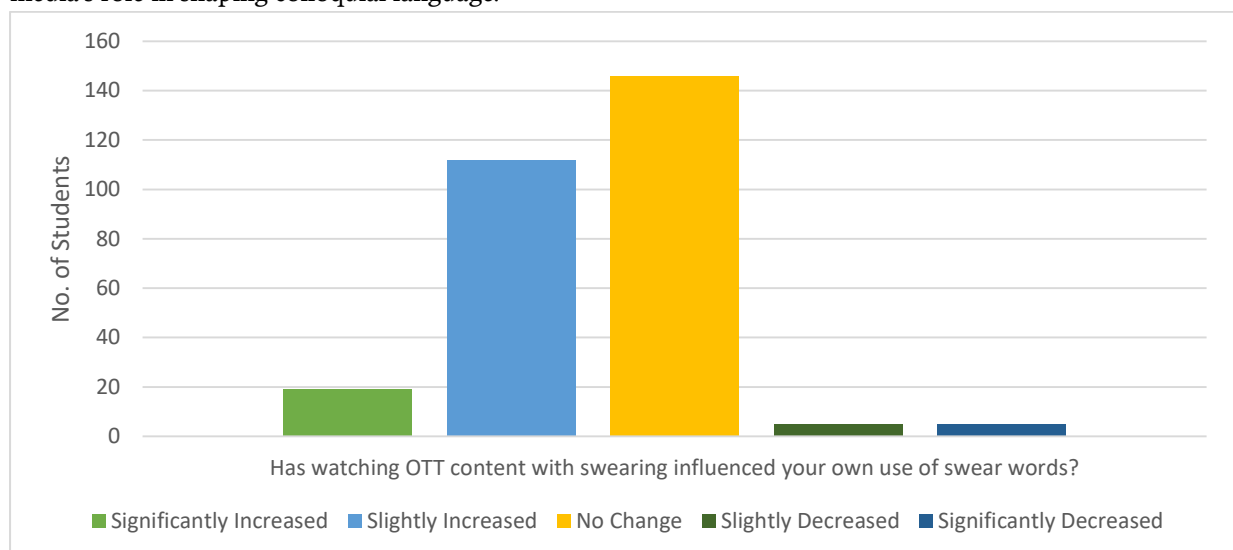


Figure 1

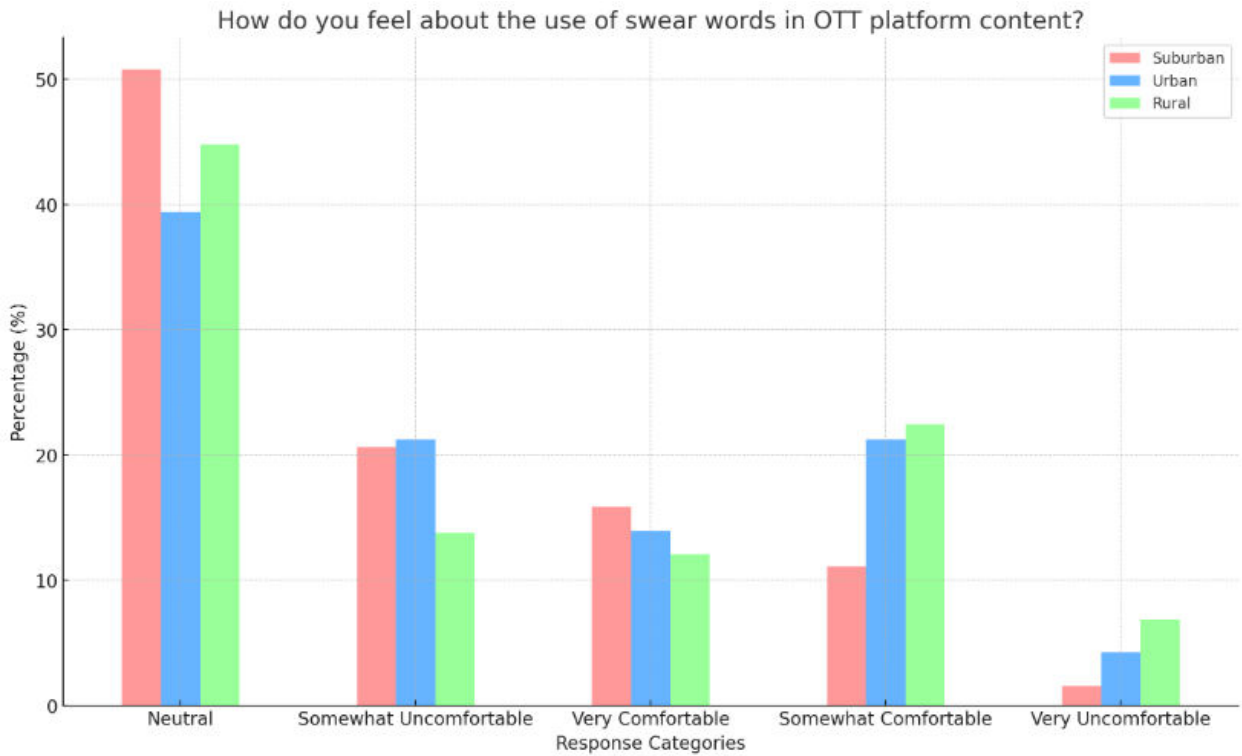


Figure 2

This data suggests that urbanization correlates with a more relaxed view of swearing, potentially influenced by diverse linguistic and cultural norms.

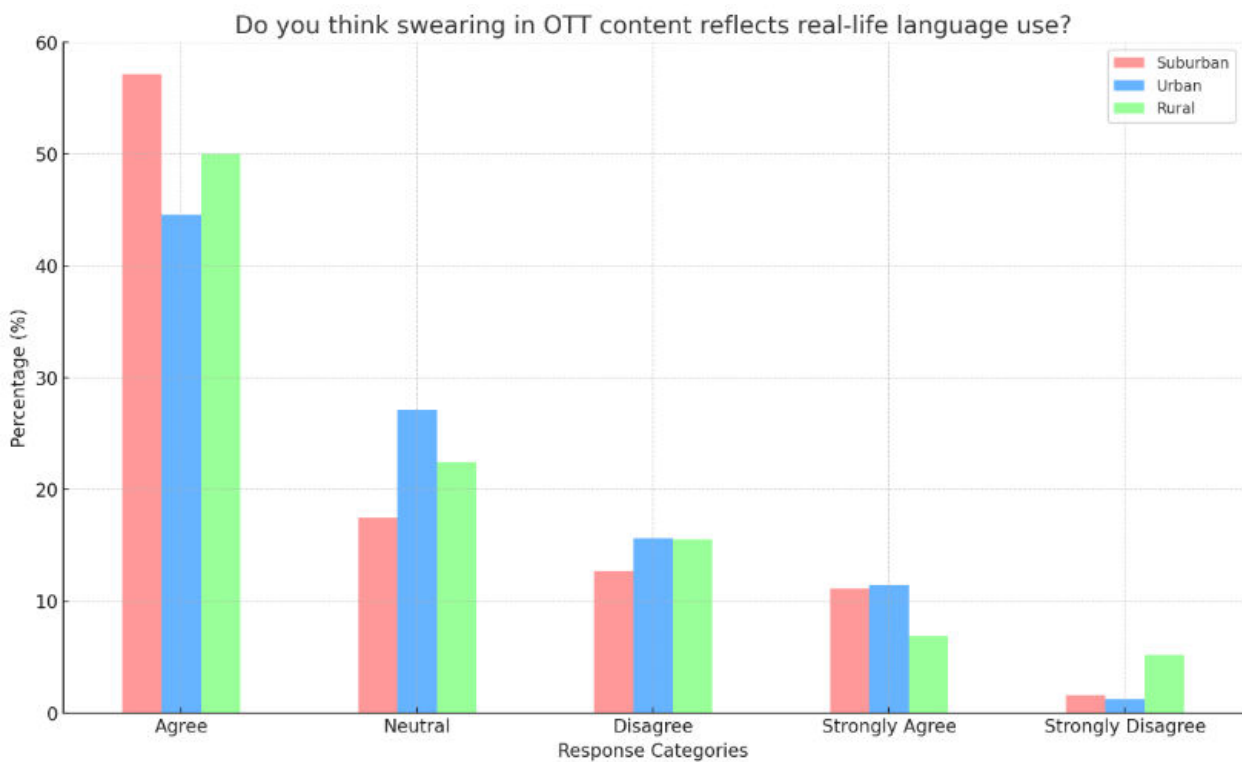


Figure 3

This suggests that urban dwellers are more ambivalent, perhaps reflecting diverse experiences and exposure.

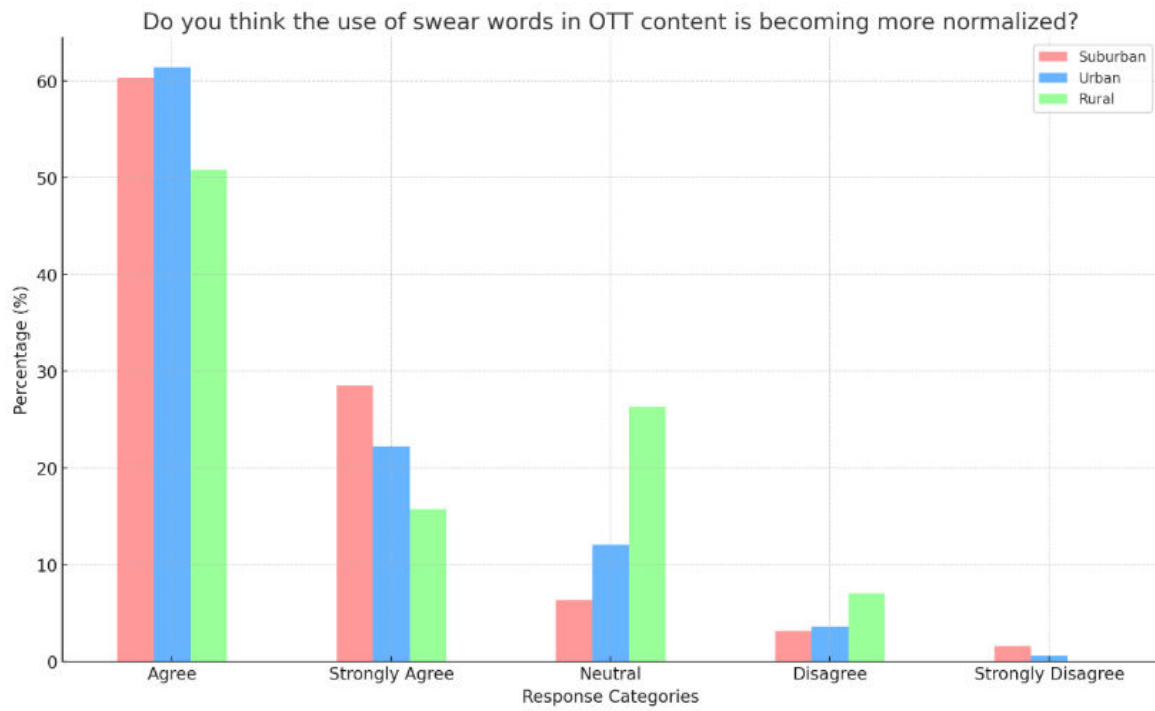


Figure 4

These patterns suggest that urbanization levels influence the social acceptance of swear words, possibly reflecting broader cultural and linguistic norms.

The dataset of figure 2 showcases differing comfort levels with swearing in OTT content across urban, suburban, and rural areas. In urban settings, 39.4% are neutral, but a combined 35.2% feel comfortable to some extent. In suburban areas, while 50.8% are neutral, only 27% express some level of comfort. Rural areas display a more conservative stance: 44.8% are neutral, and merely 22.4% are somewhat or very comfortable. The data subtly mirrors geolinguistic theories that language acceptance varies by location and cultural background.

The dataset of figure 3 reflects varying opinions on whether swearing in OTT content mirrors real-life language use, segmented by urban, suburban, and rural locales. In urban areas, 44.6% agree, whereas 57.1% of suburban and 50% of rural respondents agree. Interestingly, urban areas have the highest neutral responses at 27.1%, compared to 22.4% in rural and 17.5% in suburban areas. The data aligns with geolinguistic theories, indicating that one's geographical and cultural context can influence perceptions about the realism of language use in media.

The dataset of figure 4 reveals intriguing geolinguistic trends in young adults' attitudes toward swearing in OTT content. Urban and suburban respondents show higher acceptance, with over 60% agreeing that swearing is becoming normalized. In contrast, rural areas exhibit more conservative views, with only 50.9% agreeing and a higher percentage of neutral and disagreeing responses.

The data in figures 2,3and 4 hints at how geolinguistic factors, such as location and cultural context, can shape young adults' perceptions of what language is deemed socially acceptable.

Conclusion

The purpose of the paper is to comprehend the contextual subtleties of profanity. Because OTT platforms are so widely available and mostly unregulated, it is not surprising that young adults use profanity. Although it is often necessary to use profanity in web series because it may be relevant to the narrative development or to reflect actual life, using it excessively has become an issue.

Characters constantly use foul language, disregarding their social setting and the people in it. These young adults acquire and internalise these behaviours in their daily lives. When people begin using profanity freely in both personal and professional settings, the boundaries between decency and decorum become blurred. The data collected from these individuals also reflected what we had already assumed: The overuse of expletives in web series has resulted in young adults using them more comfortably and freely in their daily life.

While swearing is not a problem from the point of view of Impoliteness theory, the situation and domain in which it is done is pertinent. There are multiple reasons for swearing and our demographic understands that, but when it is done to only shock the audience and adds no value to the plot or storyline, it becomes a problem. We also see how this pervasive culture of using excessive expletives has affected the language used by young adults today and has changed it drastically. From the perspective of geolinguistics also, the data collected reflects that the participants geographical location (urban, suburban, or rural) influences their perception of appropriateness of profanity. The participants from urban areas felt more comfortable with swearing than their rural counterparts. This is due to their diverse experiences and exposure.

Regulating the use of profanity in web series is necessary in India since it has a direct impact on impressionable young adults. While swearing is not always seen as rude, the misuse and over-exploitation of these words to seem "cool" is erasing boundaries between what is appropriate and what is inappropriate. This has resulted in a dramatic shift in the vocabulary used by our nation's youth.

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