

Algerian Viewers' Attitudes toward Taboo Language: A Case Study of Mourad Oudia's Humorous YouTube Content

Amaa Naib¹ *

¹The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.

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*Corresponding author:
The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan.
Email: lee.asmaa.teuk@gmail.com.

Abstract

The present research aims to investigate taboo language within an online setting. The study has two main objectives: (1) to identify the taboo language themes frequently used by Algerian comedian Mourad Oudia to create humorous content, based on Ljung's (2011) and Qanbar's (2011) classifications, and (2) to examine the impact of age and gender on Algerians' attitudes toward these themes. It focuses on exploring perceptions of taboo language across different generations in Algeria. The study employs a mixed-methods approach for data collection and analysis. To address the first research question, the initial step involved collecting primary data through content analysis. This data was then used to develop two subsequent questionnaires. The first questionnaire consisted of multiple-choice questions to identify the most offensive expressions, which informed the second questionnaire. The second questionnaire included two sections: demographic questions and a 14-item, five-point Likert scale measuring Algerians' attitudes toward taboo language used by Mourad Oudia. The findings revealed that Mourad's most frequently used taboo themes are words related to the hearer's physical or social defects, references to the mother (family), and scatological expressions. Further results indicated that, regardless of age and gender, participants considered the religious (supernatural) theme to be the most offensive among the presented taboo expressions. While the study found that age does not significantly influence perceptions of taboo language, there was a significant gender difference, with males and females differing in their selection of the most offensive themes.

Keywords: Impoliteness, Humor, Taboo, Attitudes, Age, Gender, Algerians.

1. Introduction

Algerians use a variety of Arabic language, with a vocabulary derived from a mixture of languages such as, Turkish, Spanish, Italian and predominantly Berber and French. However, the semantic, phonetic, and phonological aspects of the dialect are mainly influenced by Modern Standard Arabic (Abd-el-Jawad 1991; Ziadna 2018; Sheppard 2022). Moreover, the Algerian dialect has its own varieties, which are restricted to specific areas across Algeria. The variety that is widely used in the country's western region is The Oranee dialect. This particular dialect is quite familiar to most Algerians due to its use in a popular genre of music, known as Rai.

In the Arab World, Conventional attitudes towards language use have given way to new trends, allowing for fresh and innovative expression methods among individuals from diverse backgrounds. These modes of communication are conveyed through various platforms such as Facebook pages, blogs, YouTube, and more. This shift has also resulted in the formation of unique communities. Social media offers a space for individuals to interact and share user created content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Mills (2011) stated that communication on social media allows users to share their ideas, perspectives and experiences on a wide spectrum. YouTube platform, for instance, enables users to view, create, and share videos that can be reached by people from all over the world. Through these videos, content creators are able to use language freely to tackle different topics including those which are considered taboos in certain societies.

Social media platforms have contributed to increasing the number of independent content creators who produce comedy skits adopted to suit different cultures and amuse a specific audience. The most famous Algerian comedy skit producers are active influencers on social media. They all have a respectable amount of followers on platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Over the last two years, EchoroukTV, a national television channel, has cast Mourad Oudia in a lead role in a comedy TV show. His appearance on the show during Ramadan has made his fan base even bigger. Ha and Yang (2022) argue that the more followers content creators have, the greater their influence. In other words, their followers' attitudes and perceptions are affected by the messages they embed in their content. Therefore, the researcher selected Mourad Oudia's channel as a source for primary data for three main reasons: (1) he is a native speaker of the Oranee dialect; (2) he discusses social and taboo topics in his videos; and (3) he has a wide base of fans due to his appearance on multiple shows on national television and his collaborations with other YouTubers.

With the advent of innovative technologies and social media platforms, the Arab world has undergone a notable shift revolutionizing the entertainment industry, particularly in comedy and humor. Consequently, there has been a rise in the creation of comedy programs that employ humor to serve social and political goals. While some of these shows aim to entertain, others take on sensitive and critical topics that were once curtailed by censorship. The absence of such limitations has rendered these satirical and comedic productions more alluring to viewers.

However, alongside these positive developments, the proliferation of offensive language, on social media in general and humor in particular, is a growing concern, as it has the potential to cause harm to individuals and communities alike. Fortunately, advancements in research have resulted in the creation of supervised methods and training sets that can effectively identify, assess, and if necessary, prevent such language. These invaluable tools are crucial to curbing unsavory monologues and dialogues and promoting a safe and respectful environment for all communication. Accordingly, the present study aims to explore the themes of taboo language in the Algerian community and within the context of social media. Using the comedic content, created by a famous Algerian YouTuber, the study examine Algerians' attitudes towards taboo language employed in YouTube skits, taking into consideration the variables of age and gender.

1.1 Theoretical Framework and previous studies

1.1.1 Theoretical Background

Taboo language refers to words, phrases, or expressions considered offensive, inappropriate, or culturally sensitive in a particular society or context. These words often carry strong emotional connotations and can be seen as disrespectful or vulgar. The use of taboo language is generally discouraged in formal settings, such as workplaces or educational institutions, as it can create an intimidating or uncomfortable environment. However, the boundaries of taboo language can vary significantly across different cultures and can be influenced by factors such as age, gender, and social status. In the same line, O'driscoll (2020: 16) states that words and statements are not inherently offensive. He argues that a particular society's values determine a language's offensiveness. Hence, he defines taboo language as "any string of words whose production is transgressive of polite social norms" (2020: 5).

Assessing attitudes towards taboo language usage in 25 languages, Magnus Ljung's (2011) found that that some areas of taboo language are specific to certain languages and their respective cultures. For instance, the diabolical themes observed in many languages completely absent in Muslim culture. Based on these results and through a review of previous typologies of taboo language, Ljung (2011) developed and classified taboo language into five major and five minor themes. However, it must be noted that that taboo language cannot be inserted under any clear theme. According to Ljung (2011):

Many of the other pejorative person-denoting nouns used in name-calling pose the same problem as where regarding their potential membership in the category of swear words, for instance, insulting terms within the semantic areas of ideology (commie), ethnic background (nigger), level of intelligence (dingbat), sexual orientation (pervert). (ibid, 2011, p. 43-44)

The five major and minor themes, as identified by Ljung (2011), are detailed in table (1 and 2) below.

Table (1): The five major themes of taboo language

Themes	Definition
The religious/supernatural theme	It is related to religion or the supernatural. It can be explained as using the name of God or other sacred entities improperly or in an improper situation. Although Ljung (2011) extends this theme to diabolic swearing in other languages, this cannot be applied to Muslim culture. The current study expanded the definition of the sex organ theme to encompass undergarments and items that are related to the organs.
The scatological theme	It includes bodily discharges and the body parts related to them, such as shit and arse. They are usually viewed as gross and disgusting (Jay, 2000).
The sex organ theme	involves sexual anatomies such as male and female genitals. They are usually used in a degrading manner. Ljung (2011) noted, "... languages use the taboo words for the female sex organ as epithets..." (p. 39)

The sexual activity theme	All that is sexual behaviour and act falls under this theme, such as the English words fuck and screw. Recently, more euphemistic alternatives have been used to refer to sexual activities, such as "baby dance" and "doing the deed".
The mother (family) theme	The scarcity of family has made it a soft spot that could be provocative when brought into the wrong conversation. Though Ljung (2011) discussed instances where the mother theme is used as an insult or for name-calling, it is essential to mention that in the Arab world, it is taboo to even mention a mother's sister's or a wife's name in some regular conversations which do not involve swearing at all.

Table (2): The five minor themes of taboo language

Themes	Definition
Ancestors	Reference to ancestors in swearing is usually connected with the death theme. (Ljung, 2011, p.42)
Animals	This theme is considered taboo when used for name-calling. In the Muslim culture, however, animals such as pigs, dogs, and donkeys are considered taboo when brought into any conversation because they are linked to bad connotations.
Death	The significant number of euphemistic words used to refer to death is enough reason to classify it under taboo topics. Besides swearing, conversations discussing natural death are less taboo than those about suicide or murder.
Disease	It includes all harm that might befall people. Like other cultures, this theme is mainly used for swearing and wishing sickness and harm to others.
Prostitution.	Prostitution is a central theme in name-calling because of the pejorative nature of its terminology.

In another study examining linguistic taboos, Qanbar (2011) investigated how taboos relate to the social context in which they are used and the socio-cultural factors that influence their use in Yemeni society. The study describes different categories of linguistic taboos in Yemeni society and the methods speakers use to avoid these words. These methods include jargon, euphemisms, antonyms, metaphors, circumlocution, and standard Arabic terms. The research argues that the cultural and religious norms of Yemeni society shape these processes. Using Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) 'politeness' approach is the theoretical framework for analysing linguistic taboos in Yemeni society, Qanbar (2011) categorizes the taboo words in Yemeni society into two groups: general and context-specific, with subcategories within each group.

Table (3): Classification of linguistic taboo in the Yemeni Society

Context specific	Non-taboo words	
	Words related to the hearer's physical or social defects	
General	Unmentionable	Words or terms referring to the private organs of the human body and their functions, and body effluvia (snot, faeces, menstrual fluid, etc.)
		Words or terms referring to religion (blasphemy) or words against religious figures and symbols.

mentionable with minimizers	The first names of one's female members of the family mentioned in public or before an outsider
	Words referring to things that you give away to the poor and needy, or friends on social occasions.
	Words or phrases referring to unclean places or objects (For example: sewages, bathrooms, footwear, etc.)
	Words or phrases referring to metaphysical things that go beyond the control of the human being (For example: supernatural creatures like jennies, ghosts; certain diseases, accidents resulting in deformation of human body like getting burned);
	Words or phrases referring to the expressions of admiration for things or objects we admire and like.

The appreciation of humour is subjective, leading to common disagreements on the funniness of a joke among individuals (Attardo, 1994: 196). Reyes et al. (2012) established that the response of individuals to humour is typically assessed based on indicators such as laughter or a sense of contentment. According to Vaetch's (1998) theory of humour, three fundamental and interconnected conditions must be present for a recipient to perceive humour. This conceptualization of humour is both straightforward and comprehensive.

- V (violation): The observer perceives the situation as a breach of their moral values. In other words, something in the situation goes against the receiver's emotional attachment to how things should be (ibid., 163).
- N (normal): The observer has a prevailing perception that the situation is normal.
- Simultaneity: The N and V understandings are present in the perceiver's mind at the same instant in time. Humour perception cannot occur unless both interpretations are present simultaneously. Merely experiencing one feeling after another will not result in humour; it only creates a sequence of feelings.

The perception of humour arises from the occurrence of something unexpected or incongruous that disrupts the normal flow of a situation. It is a form of emotional discomfort that cannot inflict actual harm (ibid., 164).

Even though more attention is dedicated to studying impoliteness, nowadays most of these studies tend to focus on face-to-face interaction while neglecting a setting where the stakes are higher for impoliteness to occur for interlocutors feel less restricted by the conversational norms when communicating within the virtual world. Culppeper (2019, 2) explains that people react negatively to both taboo language and impoliteness because they contradict their societal norms and expectations in certain situations. Therefore, he considers taboo language a subgroup of impoliteness.

Even though taboos are used in some impoliteness strategies, not all occurrences of taboo language can be labelled as impolite. Taboos are a form of language that may differ from one culture to another, for they are defined as "a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a

particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing" (Knowles, 2006, p. 22).

1.1.2 Previous studies

Al-Zoubi (2006) used Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humour and the Knowledge Resources to analyse jokes in Jordanian Arabic and British English languages. The Outcomes suggest that culture-specific, linguistic and pragmatic ambiguity has an impact on the variations between the jokes under study. Al-Zoubi (2006) also revealed that universal jokes share characteristic that makes them easier to explain and comprehend. This study highlights the importance of culture and pragmatics in apprehending the humour in the jokes.

In an attempt to enrich the literature in the field of sociolinguistics, Al-Khatib (2010) investigated taboos in Jordanian Arabic. His study aimed at identifying the processes involved in creating, developing, violating, and replacing taboo words. Results showed that the processes are related to cultural norms and social context. Furthermore, one important finding was that Jordanians use code-switching and code-mixing to euphemise taboo language. Al-Khatib (2010) was able to suggest three main categories of linguistic taboos in Jordanian Arabic: (1) Linguistic taboos connected with sex, sex organs and sexual behaviour, (2) Linguistic taboos connected with body functions, and (3) Linguistic taboos connected with unpleasant matters.

Ghounane (2014) has conducted a study on the effect of age, gender and educational background on the use of taboo language and euphemistic strategies. The study's focus were taboo topics related to sex and death. Ghounane adopted Huang and Tian's model (macro and micro-context theory) and Hymes' Theory of Speaking as frameworks for her work. The study revealed that despite the fact that religion restricts the open use of taboo language, there was no significant difference in the frequency of use of taboos and euphemisms. The results also showed that age, gender, and educational background affect the pattern of use of these two linguistic tools which is in line with Houssaini (2019).

Another study on taboo language and gender was conducted by El Abboubi et, al. (2021) who investigated how Moroccan women and men differ in using profanity. The data were collected using a questionnaire and recorded conversations. The study mainly focused on examining the cross-gender differences and similarities in the pattern of use of swear words and the functions of these patterns. The findings of the study revealed that Moroccan women tend to use euphemistic and polite strategies more than men do when dealing with sensitive language. The findings also showed that context and pragmatic variables influence the level of obscenity.

The literature review has revealed that taboo language has not been examined from the perspective of the audience when used in an entertaining content. Therefore, the aim of the study to explore the attitudes of Algerians towards different taboo language themes used in YouTube humorous skits.

2. Purpose and Questions of the Study

Taboo language has not received due attention in Algerian Arabic. The significance of this study lies within the issue of lack of research dedicated to taboo language perception in the

Algerian speech community. Unlike other works on taboo language, the current study tackles the issue from bystanders' perspective and not the speaker. Since this linguistic phenomenon is an indispensable element in communication, it is important to understand how different interlocutors perceive it when it occurs in a certain discourse. Through an examination of the perception of taboo language, the study seeks to highlight the shift in language perception between generations and genders.

2.1 Questions of the Study

Thus, the research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What taboo language does Mourad Oudia use in his skits?
2. What is the effect of Algerian viewers' age and gender on their attitudes towards taboo language?

3. Data and Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The present work investigates Algerians' perception of taboo language in YouTube skits obtained from the popular comedy channel "Mourad Oudia." According to *HyperAuditor*, Mourad Oudia ranks among the top five influencers in Algeria. With an impressive 2.2 million followers and a 10.66 percent engagement rate, this YouTuber has been selected because his videos include taboo terms and expression in the Oranee dialect, spoken in the city of Oran in the northwest of Algeria.

The researcher collected a body of taboo language from the selected channel. 48 videos were reviewed, with a combined duration of six hours and four minutes. The sketches varied in length from two to twelve minutes. As a native speaker of the dialect under investigation, the researcher collected 130 instances of taboo expressions by viewing forty-eight skits selected based on the number of views, which is related to the engagement rate. The videos spanned from 2014 to 2023. These expressions were subsequently categorised into 14 distinct categories based on the classifications outlined by Ljung (2011) and Qanbar (2011) and two additional themes added by the researcher: the drugs and alcohol theme and the homosexuality theme. Out of the 130 instances of taboo language, the researcher identified 100 unique expressions. The primary objective of this study is to compare language attitudes towards items within the same language. Consequently, the researcher excluded 15 instances of French taboo language found in the skits.

The data was collected using two methodological tools to investigate the factors affecting the perception of the offensiveness of taboo language. First, an online survey was conducted to identify the most tabooed expressions from the previously gathered and categorized list. The task required participants to carefully review each list and identify the expression they deemed most offensive based on their personal judgment and perspective. Then, the researcher used these results to develop another questionnaire, designed to investigate the participants' perception of taboo language.

3.2 Sample

The study consisted of two distinct samples. The first sample included 72 randomly selected male and female participants, ranging in age from 15 to 59 years. The second sample comprised 82 participants, categorized into two age groups: youth-aged 20-35 (comprising 30 females and 24 males) and middle-aged individuals aged 36-59 (comprising 15 females and 13 males). The participants included relatives, friends, acquaintances, university students, and club members who were strangers to the researcher.

Due to the sensitivity of the topic of the study, random sampling was more suitable for data collection. Random sampling allows most members of the speech community to have an equal chance to participate in the study (Alshangiti, 2022, p. 772). In this case, random sampling guaranteed the anonymity of the respondents, which gave them more freedom to answer the questionnaires.

3.3 Data Analysis

The present study adopts a mixed-method approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The researcher initially examined the data to identify and classify the taboo language used in the skits. For the quantitative analysis, frequencies were calculated and presented using the statistical two-tailed t-test to detect any statistically significant differences in attitudes towards taboo expressions based on age and gender.

The extracted taboo expressions were classified using a combination of Ljung's (2011) and Qanbar's (2011) classifications, with the researcher adding two additional themes to group lists not covered in previous studies. The researcher employed the following equation to assess the offensiveness levels of taboo statements devoid of context:

- Interval Width = (Maximum Point – Minimum Point) / Number of Levels Substituting the values, Interval Width = $(5-1) / 3 = 1.33$
- Offensiveness levels are categorized as follows:
 1. 1 to 2.33: Low level of offensiveness.
 2. 2.34 to 3.67: Medium level of offensiveness.
 3. 3.68 to 5: High level of offensiveness.

On the other hand, the qualitative analysis involved presenting instances of taboo utterances along with explanations for why they were considered taboo within the selected YouTube skits. This qualitative examination provides a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic nuances surrounding the use of taboo language in humorous contexts.

Validity and reliability measures

In order to increase the reliability of the researcher's selection and categorization of the taboo expressions, two university lecturers who work at the University of Mascara, two PhD students from the city of Oran, and the researcher's sister were asked to assess the accuracy and integrity of the researcher's selection and classification. They were first familiarised with Ljung's

(2011) and Qanbar's (2011) categories. According to their suggestions, all comments and feedback were taken into consideration.

4. Results

4.1 Taboo language Used by Mourad Oudia

Figure (1) presents the percentage of use of each theme in the skits. The graph indicates that the skits primarily incorporate the taboo language of the following themes: Words related to the hearer's physical or social defects, the mother (family), and scatological. It is noteworthy to mention that the prostitution theme is noticeably less prevalent. Furthermore, while watching the skits the researcher observed the YouTuber often addresses himself when using the physical defects.

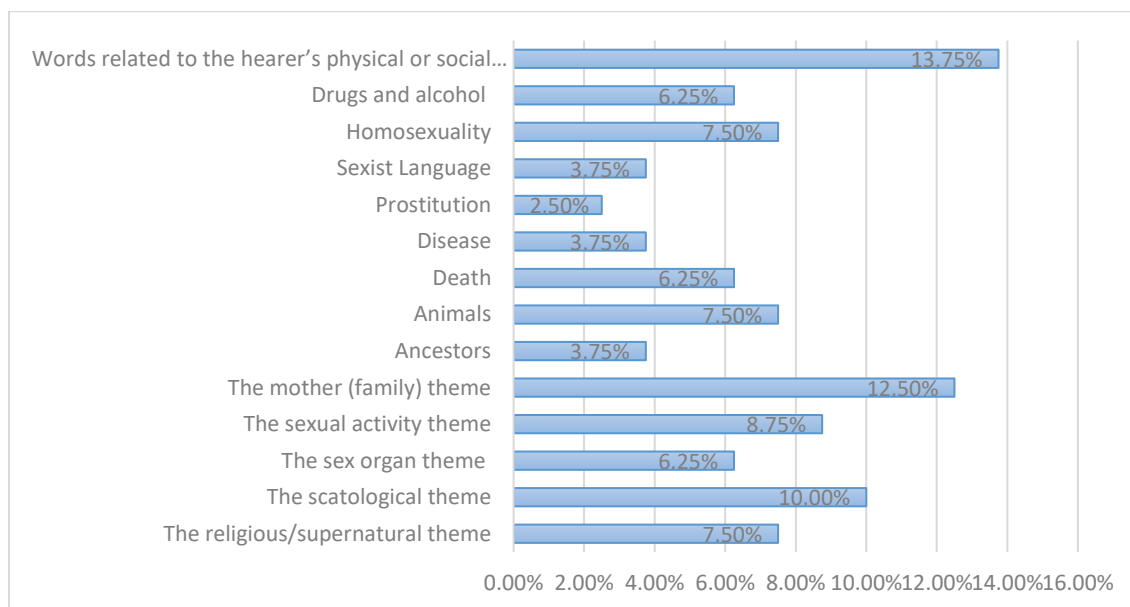


Figure (1): The Frequency of use of each taboo theme

The following examples display the use of taboo language themes in Oudia's skits:

(a) The religious/supernatural theme

Context: In the scene, Mourad portrays a father who receives his son's report card while engrossed in reading a book. Upon examining the report card, the father becomes enraged and begins to curse and verbally berate his son due to his poor grades.

مراد بدور الأب: *صفع الابن *نعددين بوك..نعددين بوك.. *بصق* *بصق*

Mourad as a father: *slaps the son* damn your father's religion...damn your father's religion.... *spit* *spit*

End of the scene

The statement is considered taboo because Mourad used profanity directed at the religion of the addressee's father. In Islam, it is prohibited to engage in cursing related to religion, regardless of whether it was intended humorously or not (Surah At-Tawbah, 65). Furthermore, the use of the expression by a father towards his son is inappropriate because it contradicts social norms, where a father is supposed to be a role model and a good example for his children.

(b) The scatological theme

Context:

Mourad and his friend Fouad are watching a series on a laptop when suddenly, a fart sound is heard.

مراد: طزنتها فؤاد؟

فؤاد: لا، نتا طزنتها

مراد: لا، لا

مراد: والله يلا ظلمتك. حسبتك طزنتها*...ضحك*

Mourad: Did you fart, Fouad?

Fouad: no, you farted.

mourad: no, no.

Fouad: no

Mourad: I swear I misjudged you. I thought you farted...*giggle*

End of the scene

In this exchange, Mourad and his friend delve into a sensitive subject concerning bodily functions, particularly farting. This topic falls within the scatological theme, which may be considered inappropriate or distasteful in certain settings. It might be acceptable to use expressions related to the scatological theme within friends groups; however, in this case, the expression might cause discomfort to the hearer if they were watching the skits with family or in a mixed-gender setting.

(c) The sex organ theme

Context: Mourad takes on the character of a sorceress, requesting specific items from a client in order to perform witchcraft.

مراد: عطيني الملابس الداخلية تاعه

الزبونة تسلمها الغرض

مراد: la prochaine fois: غسلهم. madame.

Mourad: Hand me his underwear.

Client hands in the item

Mourad: Next time, wash them, madam.

End of the scene

The excerpt is categorized under the sex organ theme because it indirectly references male genitalia. In Islam, modesty and privacy are important, hence, some topics, including discussions about undergarments, should be avoided in public or mixed-gender settings to maintain decency and respect for cultural norms. It seems like Mourad used the term underwear instead of another clothing item, knowing it is a taboo term. His purpose was to create an element of surprise and keep the viewers engaged.

(d) The sexual activity theme

Context: Mourad was reading comments and answering questions from his followers.

مراد يقرأ تعليق أحد المعجبين: هل مارست جنس الحيوانات *أصوات غير مفهومة*
مراد: أستغفر الله

Mourad reading a fan comment: Have you had sex with animals? *makes a sound*

Mourad: Forgiveness of God.

End of the scene

In Algerian culture and Islam in general, conversations about sexual activities are typically prohibited in public and mixed-gender settings, except for specific situations such as medical consultations between a patient and a doctor. The current excerpt not only touches upon sexual activity but also refers to a forbidden act. In Islam, it is considered haram (forbidden) to engage in sexual intercourse with animals. Mourad could have chosen any other comment to answer, but it seems like he purposefully selected the one with a taboo indication to add to his video.

(e) The mother (family) theme

Context: As Mourad walks down the street, he accidentally collides with two strangers. He offers an apology and proceeds on his way, but they misinterpret his gesture. They believe his excessive politeness indicates he may be concealing something.

يوسف: مافهمتش خويا, مافهمتش أنايا, راه خارجلك مع ختك وقيلا?
ميلود: لا, خارجلك مع ختك
يوسف: مع ختك نتا...

Youcef: I don't understand, bro, I don't understand, maybe he is dating your sister?

Miloud: Nooo, he is dating your sister.

Youcef: your sister...

End of the scene

In many cultures shaped by Islamic principles, like Algerian culture, discussing one's sister in public or in the presence of unrelated males is often viewed as inappropriate or disrespectful. This belief stems from the values of modesty, respect for women, and the preservation of family

honor. In this scenario, Youcef's allegation that Miloud's sister is romantically involved with Mourad categorizes the expression as taboo and falls under the theme of family.

(f) Ancestors

Context: As a father, Mourad becomes upset when his son expresses a desire to become a witch instead of pursuing a career as a doctor.

مراد بدور الأب: *بينما يحاول نزع حزام سرواله* الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب لي ماريكش

Mourad: *while trying to remove his belt* God damn your father's grandpa, the dog who did not raise you properly.

End of the scene

In Islam, honouring and respecting elders is strongly emphasized, with various hadiths underscoring the significance of treating them with compassion and reverence. For instance, a hadith states, "He is not one of us who does not have mercy upon our young ones and respect our elders" (Tirmidhi). This highlights the importance of showing kindness to the younger generation and demonstrating deference to the elderly. By cursing and insulting his son's grandfather, Mourad has violated both social and religious norms and values. This categorizes his actions as taboo. Similar to the example of the religious/supernatural theme example, Mourad's use of the expression is inappropriate because the interaction is between father and son. Moreover, displaying it publicly might cause discomfort to the viewers and portray a false image about the communicative relationship between fathers and sons.

(g) Animals

Context: Mourad instructs his friend to approach a girl and ask for her phone number, and he provides him with a pick-up line from a dictionary to use. However, the friend mispronounces the pick-up line. Consequently, Mourad uses the term "أالبغل" to insult him as a form of scolding.

مراد: jett'aime à la folie, أالبغل

Mourad: je t'aime à la folie, oh mule

End of the scene

Humans are deemed superior creatures in Islam, blessed with intellect and common sense. Consequently, Islam instructs believers to refrain from insulting one another and using offensive nicknames. It discourages all forms of disrespect, including the use of hurtful language and derogatory terms. Using animal names to insult one another is considered inappropriate and is deemed taboo in Islamic teachings.

(h) Death

Context: Due to a toothache, Mourad's friend suggests they visit a dentist. However, Mourad declines the idea due to his fear of dentists. He uses suicide as a threat to stop his friend from talking about seeing a dentist.

مراد: شوف, شوف, شوف.. والله تزيد تجبد سيرة dentiste ماتعرفني ما نعرفك, والله نقطع عروقي, والله نشرب حبوب منع الحمل

Mourad: Look, look, look. I swear if you bring up the topic of the dentist again, I will sever my veins. I swear I will take birth control pills.

End of the scene

Suicide is a sorrowful and delicate subject, commonly enveloped in feelings of shame, guilt, and perplexity. Making jokes about suicide can be seen as lacking respect and empathy. Within Algerian society, which is predominantly Muslim, suicide is considered haram, or religiously prohibited. Hence, conversations about suicide should be handled with seriousness and empathy.

(i) Disease

Context: Mourad is at the doctor's office examining an x-ray sheet.

مراد: راه فيا البواسر؟ قلتلهم ما تكثروش الحار في السفرة * بكاء درامي *

Mourad: Do I have hemroids? I told them not to put too much chilli in the couscous.
Dramatically sobbing

End of the scene

Mentioning haemorrhoids is considered offensive and inappropriate, as it is a medical condition that can cause pain and embarrassment. In Algerian culture, it is common to use minimizers such as "afana Allah" (May God cure us all) or "hashakom" (God bless you) when discussing haemorrhoids or other diseases. This indicates that such topics are considered taboo. The conversation would have been deemed normal if it had remained confined to the doctor's office rather than being publicly disclosed.

(j) Prostitution

Context: In one episode of his web series "*Houwa w Bass*," "*only him*", Mourad gives relationship advice to women.

مراد: معليش غير تستمتعي بالمنظر تاعه مالبعيد . تشوفيه هكا تقولي . اه الفرخ راه شباب اليوم اه الفرخ... راه شباب...

Mourad: It is okay. Just enjoy his looks from a distance. You see him, and you say....ah the bastard looks handsome today...the bastard...looks handsome.

End of the scene

In Algerian Arabic, the term "فرخ" holds multiple connotations. One of them is non-taboo, denoting the offspring of a chicken, while the other is taboo, referring to a child born out of wedlock. In this particular scene, the term "فرخ" is employed affectionately, serving more as a term of endearment. The speaker expresses admiration for the other person rather than intending any insult. However, even when used affectionately, it is still taboo and unmentionable publicly. .

(k) Sexist Language

Context: Jarir and farazdak, Mourad and Youcef are having a poetic duel.

مراد: استدعيت للحرب فتخلفت, وما هذا من شيم الرجال. و لو نوديت لخمير التهاني, رأيناك كالنساء تتجاري

.....

Mourad: You were summoned to war, but you stayed behind. This is not typical behaviour of men. If you were invited to celebrate with drinks, we would see you come running like a woman.

End of the scene

Islam prohibits discrimination based on gender, as many Quranic verses emphasize the equality of men and women in terms of their religious duties, rewards, and responsibilities (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:35). However, Mourad's use of derogatory sexist language implies that men who do not respond to war calls are comparable to women who prioritize celebratory events over important matters.

(l) Homosexuality

Context: Mourad was sleep-talking, and his friend overheard him mentioning the name of a male character from the show "Game of Thrones". Later, his friend asked him about it.

حفيظ لمراد: تبغي الرجال اه؟

Hafid to Mourad: You like men, don't you?

End of the scene

Homosexuality is indeed a highly stigmatized and taboo subject in Algerian society, where societal attitudes typically express disapproval towards same-sex relationships. Hafid's comment, suggesting doubt about Mourad's sexual orientation, could be interpreted as subtly insinuating homosexuality due to the prevailing societal norms and attitudes.

(m) Words related to the hearer's physical or social defects

Context: Mourad and his friends are venting about their everyday issues to a reporter. Suddenly, a stranger grabs the microphone and voices his frustration about rising Netflix subscription fees, prompting the entire group to criticize him.

قادة: هادا شكون ؟ هادا شكون؟

مراد: هادا ولد الهجالة تسكن في premier étage.

*المجموعة تقوم بضرب الشاب *

ميلود: راك عايش غاية نتايا. راك عايش غاية نتايا.

Kadda: Who is this? Who is this?

Mourad: This is the son of the single (divorced) woman who lives on the first floor.

the whole group beats and chases away the guy

Miloud: You are living the best life. You are living the best life.

End of the scene

In Algerian society, being the son of a divorced woman who lives alone is looked down upon and considered derogatory. In Algerian dialect, the expression “ولد الهجالة” is often used as an insult. Rather than referring to the stranger as a neighbour, Mourad emphasizes that they are the child of a divorced woman.

(n) Drugs and alcohol

Context: Mourad is discussing the spread of a weird dance in Oran.

مراد il faut savoir: هاد الرقصة يرقصوها في الكاباريات , الناس يكونو قاع زاطلين و شاربين تا واحد ما ينتبه لآخر. Alors c'est pas logique. ترقصها في الصالة تا داركم. و لقيت بزاف les videos في YouTube تا عباد يرقصو هاد الرقصة في دارهم.

Mourad: You must know that this dance is performed in nightclubs. People are drunk and high; no one notices what the other person is doing. So, it is not logical to dance this way in your living room. I have found many YouTube videos of people performing this dance at their houses.

End of the scene

In Algerian society, drugs and alcohol are considered taboo due to cultural and religious reasons. Being in a state of intoxication or addiction is frowned upon, and these are generally avoided. People typically refrain from discussing these topics openly and often use minimizers like "Afana Allah" when referring to them, as they are viewed as forms of psychological and mental illness. In his skit, Mourad addresses expressions related to drugs and alcohol directly, without employing any minimizers or euphemisms.

4.2 Selection of Taboo Language Used in the Questionnaire

The taboo language extracted from the YouTube skits was categorized into themes following the classifications of taboo language proposed by Ljung (2011) and Qanbar (2011), with two additional themes identified by the researcher. Subsequently, a total of 14 expressions were chosen to be included in the two questionnaires. These expressions were selected through an 18-item online survey involving a sample of 72 random participants.

Table (4) offers insights into the demographic distribution by age and gender. Notably, the 20-35 age range exhibits the most significant presence overall, with females (19.44% and 31.94%) slightly surpassing males in both the 15-19 and 20-35 age categories, respectively. Moreover, the data indicates a complete absence of females in the 36-59 age group.

Table (4): Frequencies and percentages of participants' age and gender.

Age	15-19		20-35		36-59	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Frequencies	10	14	19	23	6	0
Percentages	13.89%	19.44%	26.39%	31.94%	8.33%	0.00%

Table (5) represents the percentages of the most and the least offensive expressions of each category. The study presented the participants with 14 separate lists, each comprising expressions associated with various themes of taboo language.

Table (5): Percentages of the most and least offensive expressions

Themes	Expressions	Percentages
The religious/supernatural theme	نعدين بوك	79.2%
	يا دينك راح تقتلني أنا	2.8%
The scatological theme	روح تخرا	18.1%
	تفو	8.3%
The sex organ theme	مؤخرات	38.9%
	الملايس الداخلية	2.8%
The sexual activity theme	اغتصبك	43.1%
	البوس حرام	1.4%
The mother (family) theme	خارجلك مع أختك	54.2%
	الدار تاع مك هادي؟ تدخل بلاما	
	تطبطب	2.8%
	رسائل حب أخت هذا الأحمق	
Ancestors	الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب	83.3%
	تحيا ناناك	8.3%
Animals	مال جدك	
	أ البغل	37.5%
Death	يا وجه الخنفساء	1.4%
	و الله نقطع عروقي	33.3%
Disease	يموت معايا رضا	5.6%
	نجيبو واحد فيه كونسار و سيدا	59.7%
Prostitution	الولد يجي فيه ثلالة	8.3%
	فرخ	59.7%
Sexist language	ولد الحرام	40.3%
	مادامة	45.8%
Drugs and alcohol	رأيناك كالنساء تتجاري	22.2%
	راني سكرانة	43.1%
Homosexuality	شوية بيرات	6.9%
	تبغي الرجال؟	30.6%
Words related to the hearer's physical or social defects	مثالي أنت بنزع ألف التمدد	1.4%
	ولد الهجالة	47.2%
	حميد رخيس	2.8%
	عباد مدعلجين	

The survey results indicated the expressions participants most commonly identified as most offensive for each theme were classified in table (6) below.

Table (6): The most offensive expressions as rated by the participants

Themes	Most offensive Expressions
The religious/supernatural theme	نعددين بوك
The scatological theme	روح تخرا
The sex organ theme	مؤخرات
The sexual activity theme	اغتصبك
The mother (family) theme	خارجلك مع ختك
Ancestors	الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب
Animals	أ البغل
Death	والله نقطع عروقي
Disease	نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسار والسيدا
Prostitution	فرخ
Sexist language	مادامة
Drugs and alcohol	راني سكرانة
Homosexuality	تبغي الرجال؟
Words related to the hearer's physical or social defects	ولد الهجالة

4.3 Algerians Attitudes Towards the Selected Taboo Language

A sample of 82 male and female Algerians from the west of Algeria namely, Oran, Telemcen, Mascara, Sidi belabas, Relizane, and Saida responded to a likert-scale type questionnaire that aimed at eliciting the level of offensiveness of taboo expressions used in YouTube skits. Table (7) provides information on the distribution of the population by age and gender.

Table (7): Frequencies and percentage of participants' age and gender

Groups	السن		الجنس	
	20-35	36-59	ذكر	أنثى
Frequencies	54	28	37	45
Percentage	65.9%	34.1%	45.1%	54.9%

The effect of age and gender on the perception of taboo language

Table (8) shows the results of the offensiveness level of taboo expressions in the Oranee dialect. It reveals that the expression "نعدين بوك" has the highest mean of 4.65, which indicates that it scores the highest percentage of offensiveness. Whereas the expression "والله نقطع عروقي" registered a medium level of offensiveness with the lowest mean of 2.80.

Table (8): The level of offensiveness of each expression (the whole sample)

Taboo expressions	N	Mean	Ecart type	Level of offensiveness
مادامة	82	3.49	1.476	Medium
أ البغل	82	3.48	1.425	Medium
الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب	82	4.54	0.958	High
ولد الهجالة	82	4.48	0.972	High
خارجلك مع ختك	82	4.60	0.829	High
نعدين بوك	82	4.65**	0.791	High
والله نقطع عروقي	82	2.80*	1.452	Medium
نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسار و السيدا	82	4.02	1.305	High
فرخ	82	3.98	1.314	High
تبغي الرجال	82	3.80	1.469	High
اغتصبك	82	4.60	0.914	High
روح تخرا	82	3.34	1.433	Medium
راني سكرانة	82	3.68	1.506	High
مؤخرات	82	3.83	1.413	High

Male participants

Table (9) indicates that the expression "تبغي الرجال؟" has the highest mean of 4.29, while the expression "مؤخرات" has the lowest mean of 1.96 within the younger male age group (20-35). Conversely, the expression "نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسار و السيدا" attains the highest mean of 4.29, while the expression "فرخ" records the lowest mean of 2.31 within the older male age group (36-59).

Table (9): The level of offensiveness according to age groups (male sample)

Taboo expressions	Age	N	Mean	Ecart type	Level of offensiveness
مادامة	20-35	24	2,42	1,530	Medium
	36-59	13	2,69	,947	Medium
أ البغل	20-35	24	3,33	1,465	Medium
	36-59	13	3,62	1,387	Medium
الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب	20-35	24	2,42	1,349	Medium
	36-59	13	2,62	1,044	Medium
ولد الهجالة	20-35	24	3,08	1,501	Medium
	36-59	13	3,08	1,498	Medium
خارجلك مع ختك	20-35	24	2,13	1,227	Low
	36-59	13	2,46	1,330	Medium
نعدين بوك	20-35	24	4,25	,847	High
	36-59	13	4,15	1,068	High
	20-35	24	2,38	1,439	Medium

والله نقطع عروقي	36-59	13	2,77	1,301	Medium
نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسار و السيدا	20-35	24	4,21	1,141	High
	36-59	13	4,46**	1,127	High
فرخ	20-35	24	2,33	1,435	Low
	36-59	13	2,31*	1,251	Low
تبغي الرجال؟	20-35	24	4,29**	1,197	High
	36-59	13	4,15	1,281	High
اغتصبك	20-35	24	2,08	1,213	Low
	36-59	13	2,38	1,044	Medium
روح تخرا	20-35	24	3,88	1,329	Medium
	36-59	13	3,85	1,345	Medium
راني سكرانة	20-35	24	2,29	1,160	Low
	36-59	13	3,00	1,354	Medium
مؤخرات	20-35	24	1,96*	1,268	Low
	36-59	13	2,85	1,519	Medium

Table (10) indicates that age does not have a significant impact on the perceived offensiveness of taboo language among male participants. Both age groups demonstrate similar attitudes toward the taboo language under examination. Most significance values are higher than 0.05, indicating non-significant differences. However, the expression 'مؤخرات' stands out with a significance value close to 0.05, suggesting a potential significant difference in attitudes towards this taboo expression between the older and younger male age groups.

Table (10): Means, Std. Deviation, two-tailed significance and T-Test for age effect on taboo language perception (male sample)

Taboo expressions	T	Two-tailed Sig	Standard deviation	Mean difference
مادامة	-,589	,560	,468	-,276
أ البغل	-,569	,573	,495	-,282
الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب	-,461	,648	,431	-,199
ولد الهجالة	,012	,990	,517	,006
خارجلك مع ختك	-,774	,444	,435	-,337
نعددين بوك	,301	,765	,320	,096
والله نقطع عروقي	-,822	,417	,480	-,394
نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسار و السيدا	-,647	,522	,391	-,253
فرخ	,054	,957	,473	,026
تبغي الرجال	,326	,746	,422	,138
اغتصبك	-,756	,455	,399	-,301
روح تخرا	,063	,950	,460	,029
راني سكرانة	-1,672	,103	,424	-,708
مؤخرات	-1,897	,066	,468	-,888

Female participants

In Table (11), it is evident that the expression "نعددين بوك" has the highest mean score of 4.73 within the younger female age group (20-35). Conversely, the expression "فرخ" attains the highest

mean score of 4.29 within the older female age group (36-59). The expression "و الله نقطع عروقي" has the lowest means (2.73 and 2.80) within both age groups.

Table (11): The level of offensiveness according to age groups (female sample)

Taboo Expressions	Age	N	Mean	Ecart type	Level of offensiveness
مادامة	20-35	30	3,23	1,569	Medium
	36-59	15	3,60	1,404	Medium
أ البغل	20-35	30	2,97	1,450	Medium
	36-59	15	4,07	1,486	High
الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب	20-35	30	4,43	1,165	High
	36-59	15	4,80	,414	High
ولد الهجالة	20-35	30	4,53	,860	High
	36-59	15	4,47	1,407	High
خارجلك مع ختك	20-35	30	4,53	,776	High
	36-59	15	4,53	1,125	High
نعدين بوك	20-35	30	4,73**	,691	High
	36-59	15	4,73	,799	High
و الله نقطع عروقي	20-35	30	2,73*	1,437	Medium
	36-59	15	2,80*	1,699	Medium
نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسار و السيدا	20-35	30	4,13	1,196	High
	36-59	15	4,53	1,125	High
فرخ	20-35	30	3,57	1,478	Medium
	36-59	15	4,93**	,258	High
تبغي الرجال	20-35	30	3,57	1,591	Medium
	36-59	15	4,47	1,246	High
اغتصبك	20-35	30	4,43	1,165	High
	36-59	15	4,67	1,047	High
روح تخرا	20-35	30	2,97	1,377	Medium
	36-59	15	4,00	1,309	High
راني سكرانة	20-35	30	3,37	1,629	Medium
	36-59	15	4,13	1,457	Medium
مؤخرات	20-35	30	3,70	1,622	High
	36-59	15	4,20	1,207	High

Table (12) below indicates that the expressions “أ البغل”، “فرخ” and “روح تخرا” have significance values lower than 0.05. This suggests that age significantly influences the perceived offensiveness of animal, prostitution, and scatological themes among female participants. Specifically, female participants aged 36-59 displayed more negative attitudes towards the offensiveness of the taboo expressions.

Table (12): Means, Std. Deviation, two-tailed significance and T-Test for age effect on taboo language perception (female sample)

Taboo Expressions	T	Two-tailed Sig	Standard deviation	Mean difference
مادامة	-,764	,449	,468	-,367
أ البغل	-2,379	,022*	,495	-1,100

الله يلعن جد باباك الكلب	-1,176	,246	,431	-,367
ولد الهجالة	,197	,845	,517	,067
خارجلك مع ختك	,000	1,000	,435	,000
نعددين بوك	,000	1,000	,320	,000
و الله نقطع عروقي	-,138	,891	,480	-,067
نجيبو واحد فيه الكونسارو السيدا	-1,078	,287	,391	-,400
فرخ	-3,534	,001*	,473	-1,367
تبغى الرجال	-1,914	,062	,422	-,900
اغتصبك	-,654	,516	,399	-,233
روح تخرا	-2,411	,020*	,460	-1,033
راني سكرانة	-1,539	,131	,424	-,767
مؤخرات	-1,054	,298	,468	-,500

5. Discussion

The findings related to the taboo language employed in the videos indicate that Mourad Oudia, the Algerian comedy content creator, frequently incorporates taboo language in his skits, with a focus on themes related to physical and social defects, family, and scatology. However, it seems that Mourad rarely uses any references to political or racial issues in his content. Overall, the frequency of use of the taboo themes in Oudia's content can be viewed as a deliberate move to create an element of surprise that might create humor. Thus, his choice of themes can be attributed to audience preferences and cultural sensitivities. Furthermore, it could be assumed that his use of taboo language is an attempt to lighten the tone of some controversial subjects addressed in his skits.

However, the YouTuber does not use any minimizers to mitigate the illocutionary force of taboo language used in his skits. This decision goes against societal expectations, yet it aligns with Vaetch's (1998) concept of humor through violation, as it challenges norms. Furthermore, the examples presented in the previous section reveal that Mourad employs taboo language in various settings, including interactions between father and son, two friends, two strangers (this setting being more frequent), customer and business owner, and patient and doctor. The use of such language in these relatable scenarios fulfills the second condition, 'N' (normal), as outlined in Vaetch's (1998) theory of humor. He suggested that the perception of humour arises from the occurrence of something unexpected or incongruous that disrupts the normal flow of a situation. This observation conforms to the findings of a number of studies on impoliteness strategies as a vehicle for humour. (e.g. Beers Fägersten, 2017; Cao, 2019; Zaytoon, 2021).

In the literature, it has been found that comedians use taboo language and impoliteness strategies as intensifiers to strengthen the messages they attempt to deliver about a certain topic and to attract the audience's attention. (McEwen and Greenberg 1970: 340 cited in Culpeper 2018). Additionally, according to the superiority and incongruity theories of humor, aggressive humor necessitates the use of taboo language and swearing in addition to other impoliteness strategies in order to create an element of surprise, which may induce humor (Morreall, 1989:1).

The findings regarding participants' ratings of taboo expressions found in YouTube skits indicate that Algerians exhibit the highest levels of offensiveness towards expressions related to

the religious/supernatural theme. This reaction can be attributed to Algeria's status as a conservative Islamic society. Additionally, it may stem from the cultural practice of instilling in children, from a young age, the notion that the use of profanity is strictly prohibited under any circumstances. Interestingly, the study revealed that participants deemed expressions pertaining to the theme of death as the least taboo. This perception could be partially explained by the religious underpinnings of the topic, as death is regarded as an inherent part of the human life cycle and a manifestation of divine fate within Islamic belief systems. Notably, these results diverge from findings on taboo language use in Muslim communities, where discussions surrounding death are often mitigated through the employment of euphemisms or minimizing language devices. (Qanbar, 2011; Alqahtani et al, 2022; AlSabbagh, 2023).

Results also revealed that age does not have a significant impact on the perceived offensiveness of taboo language among male participants. The only theme that had a slight significance value was the sex organ theme. This suggests that the factors affecting the difference in rating might be the mastery of standard Arabic since the expression was not presented in the dialectal form but rather in the standard form, it was also used as a pun rather than a direct insult. However, the findings revealed that there was slightly higher significance value among female age groups on three themes, animal, prostitution, and scatological. The older female age group had more negatives towards the expressions presented in the questionnaire.

When comparing the ratings between males and females, the results indicate differences in the themes perceived as the most and least offensive. For males, the most offensive themes were *homosexuality* for younger males and *disease* for older males, while the least offensive themes were *sex organ* for younger males and *prostitution* for older males. Conversely, females found the *religious/supernatural theme* to be the most offensive for younger participants and *prostitution* for older participants, with death being the least offensive theme for both younger and older females. Although no context was provided with the expression associated with *homosexuality*, it appears that most young male participants assumed that the interlocutors were both male and rated the expression accordingly. Consequently, they rated it as the most offensive theme. Moreover, the results may be attributed to the concept of Aar. Since in Algerian societies it is shameful to be in a non-halal relationship and it is even more shameful to have children out of haram relationship. Unfortunately, even the victims of these relationships are misjudged and discriminated against because of cultural mindsets.

6. Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate gender and age differences and similarities in Algerians' perception of taboo language as represented in YouTube skits. Additionally, it aimed to identify themes perceived as the most taboo by each gender and age group. The findings revealed that, for males, homosexuality was the most offensive theme among younger participants, while disease was deemed most offensive among older males. Conversely, females identified the religious/supernatural theme as most offensive among younger participants, and prostitution among older participants.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that future studies replicate these findings on a larger scale to explore dialectal differences in the perception of taboo language. This endeavor could contribute to building a corpus to aid Algerian authorities in enforcing censorship rules on content shared via social media platforms, potentially limiting the spread of taboo language and cyberbullying. Moreover, it is suggested to include educational background as a variable and utilize primary data from YouTube skits for Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to delve deeper into responses to taboo language. Such an approach would offer valuable insights into family dynamics and decision-making processes regarding entertainment choices.

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Ethics Declarations

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki (1964) and was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the University of Jordan, Jordan. The following ethical standards were strictly observed:

- Voluntary Participation: Informed consent was obtained from relevant authorities and participants prior to their involvement.
- Minimization of Risk: All necessary precautions were taken to reduce any potential risks to participants.
- Confidentiality: Participant identities and responses were kept strictly confidential.
- Transparency: Participants were clearly informed of the study's objectives and procedures.
- Documentation: All stages of the research process were accurately recorded.
- Reliability: The study's methodology and instruments were developed to ensure consistency and dependability.
- Validity: Data collection and analysis procedures were designed to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the findings.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets collected and analyzed during this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

- **Amaa Naib:** Conceptualized and designed the study, collected and analyzed the data, wrote the first draft of the manuscript.
- **Author:** Reviewed and edited the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

Consent for Publication

The author consents to the submission of this paper for publication and, pending the editorial board's decision following the peer-review process, agrees to its publication. This work has not been previously published nor submitted to any other journal for consideration.

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