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VULGARITY ON GHANAIAN ENTERTAINMENT BLOGS: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

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DECLARATION

Student's Declaration

I, Lydia Adu-Fokuo declare that this dissertation, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature: …………………………

Date: ………………………………

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of Dissertation as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.
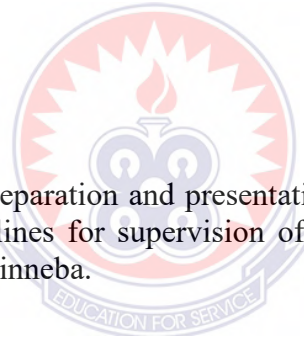
Name of Supervisor: Prof. Andy Ofori-Birikorang

Signature: ………………………

Date: …………………………….

DEDICATION

To my Bernard Yaw Sekyi Acquah who keeps pushing me up the academic ladder

and to my girls; Nana Aba Sekyiwa, Baaba Amissah and Naana Oforiwaa.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of vulgar words and expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and the rationale behind the use of such language by Ghanaian bloggers. Through the online disinhibition effect as the theory underpinning this study, the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs is explored with sampled vulgar blog posts, and insights from some Ghanaian bloggers interviewed for the study. The study revealed that vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs mainly borders on obscenity, profanity and insults, which are mostly targeted at prominent personalities and institutions in the Ghanaian society. Additionally, Ghanaian bloggers who were interviewed noted their audience's obsession with vulgarity, and economic benefits as the main reasons why vulgar language finds its way on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. The study concludes that Ghanaian entertainment blogs mostly employ words and expressions that are insulting, abusive and derogatory and have the tendency to incite violence. Again, vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs mostly deals with famous, recognized and prominent personalities in the Ghanaian society which can put the dignities of these people at stake. The study further recommends that the Ghanaian media policy makers including the Ghana National Media Commission and the Ghana Journalist Association come up with a code of ethics for bloggers in Ghana to help serve as a check on them.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of introduction to the study, the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, and research questions. The chapter also presents the significance of the study, the delimitation, and the organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

The Ghanaian society is one that is noted for its rich cultural heritage and the many values it cherishes and strives to preserve. Among the many things Ghanaians try to hold dear is the use of temperate language, especially in the public domain. Thus the use of offensive language is one thing the Ghanaian society frowns upon. This view is supported by Fordjour (2016), who asserted that offensive language use, including foul, profane, vulgar and intemperate language is culturally unaccepted among Ghanaians. For instance, Abeka et al. (2014) state that the Akans, being the largest ethnic group in Ghana, prohibit intemperate language usage and perpetrators are often considered uncivilised, barbaric, and immature. Other ethnic groups in Ghana equally frown on offensive language usage. Thompson and Agyekum (2015) state that "every ethnic group in Ghana has its own established norms, concerning the utterances and actions of their members" (pg. 2). In this regard, social discourses in Ghana are mostly characterised by euphemisms to censor socially unacceptable words and expressions.

The media, also referred to as the "fourth estate of the realm", are among institutions tasked to uphold acceptable cultural values as they are at the forefront of information dissemination (Amodu, Ige & Usaini, 2016). Amodu, Ige and Usaini (2016) state that

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the media, as the fourth estate of the realm, perform conventional functions which are collectively aimed at promoting cultural heritage and building an ideal society. This emphasises the media's significant role in national discourse; thus, the media is expected to show leadership by guarding against offensive language use.

The Ghana National Media Commission's policy guidelines state that "the freedom of the media shall be exercised responsibly and ethically; in particular, the media shall exert with care its influence in shaping the sensibilities of children and minors." (Ghana National Media Commission, 2000) Moreover, article 5 (3) of the Code of Ethics of the Ghana Journalist Association states that "a journalist should guard against defamation, libel, slander and obscenity'' (Ghana Journalist Association Code of Ethics, 1994). Thus inasmuch as there is freedom of speech to a significant extent in Ghana, certain words and expressions are frowned upon, especially when expressed publicly. This notwithstanding, offensive language abounds in the Ghanaian media landscape (Fordjour 2016) and can be considered a threat to the cultural values a greater part of the Ghanaian population holds dear.

1.1.1 Vulgarity and the Ghanaian Culture

 Offensive language, also called vulgar language, vulgarity, or profanity, is the use of offensive words, including swear or curse words, Cachola et al. (2018). Thus vulgarity refers to using offensive or profane language characterised by swearing or cursing. It is the absence of etiquette in language use with evidence of obscene and offensive words and expressions. According to Akande et al. (2018), vulgar words are not restricted to words related to sex jokes, body parts and sexual acts or functions. Seizer (2011) noted that vulgar words equally cover derogatory words that are capable of causing discomfort and anger when used.

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Obscene and offensive expressions that characterise vulgarity are vices that are abhorred by the Ghanaian culture, and culprits are often considered uncultured (Abeka et al. 2014). The use of obscene expressions having to do with sexual body parts and sexual acts in public discourses are prohibited in Ghana (Fordjour, 2016). For instance, the Akans call the vagina "ɛtwɛ" and the penis, "kɔteɛ" but you hardly hear these words mentioned in public and offenders are rebuked for indecency (Fordjour, 2016).

According to Olumuyiwa (2016), insult is a category of taboo which exists in many forms across cultures. Thompson and Agyekum (2015) also state that using insults deviates from society's physical, mental, religious, political, or social norms, destroying social equilibrium. Offensive expressions characterized by insults and derogatory remarks are equally abhorred in Ghana, and offenders are considered impolite (Ofori,2015).

Culture refers to the shared values, beliefs and practices of a particular social group. Culture entails the totality of traits and characters that are peculiar to a people, including language, dressing, music, work, arts, religion, dancing and so on (Idang, 2015). According to Ayibadeinyefa (2011), the Ghanaian people emphasise cultural values such as family, respect for the elderly, honouring traditional rulers, and proper social conduct, where everyone is expected to be dignified in public settings.

At the core of respect for the elderly, honouring traditional rulers and proper social conduct as part of Ghanaian cultural values is using civilised or polite language devoid of vulgarity. According to Thompson and Agyekum (2015), the elders and people in authority are deemed more respectable than other subordinate peers. As such, speakers who express impoliteness towards the former in any way rarely go

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unchastised. Thus impolite language characterised by obscene and offensive expressions could lead to a deviation from the acceptable values of respect and honour for one's self and others as well as proper public or social behaviour. As Thompson and Agyekum, (2015) perfectly put it, impoliteness is not just the opposite of politeness but the manifestation of non-cooperation, disapproval, and mutual antipathy through certain communicative behaviours that signal disrespect.

The foregoing evidently points to the fact that vulgarity is abhorred in Ghana based on cultural considerations. According to Idang (2015), some forms of behaviour, actions and conduct are approved while others are widely disapproved based on culture; and while positive dimensions of culture ought to be practised and passed on to succeeding generations, negative dimensions of culture have to be dropped in order to promote a more progressive and dynamic society. This means preserving Ghana's rich cultural heritage for posterity's sake cannot be overemphasized. Similarly, the need to eliminate social vices, such as vulgar language capable of marring the richness of the Ghanaian culture, cannot be denied.

1.1.2 Proper language as a means of proper communication

Language is an important factor in the communication process. According to Ashwindren et.al (2018), language is fundamental to social interaction in all societies. Alisi (2020) also adds that language is a crucial mediator in communicating and constructing our ideas about society. Thus communication, the process of creating, exchanging, and sharing ideas, information, opinions, facts, feelings, and experiences between a sender and a receiver (Buarqoub, 2019), significantly dwell on language, which can also be considered the gateway for effective communication. When we use language, we communicate our thoughts, as well as the cultural beliefs and practices

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of our communities, including our families and other social groups (Alisi, 2020), which can imply that any language that is not culturally acceptable should not be used to communicate our thoughts and ideas.

The importance of communication in the process of development cannot be overemphasized. Alisi (2020) reiterates this notion, which identifies the communication aspect of development as a "conscious effort of sharing information using appropriate techniques between stakeholders to reach a common understanding that supports and sustains the goals of socio-economic, political and cultural development". Thus for communication to foster development, it has to be characterized by appropriate techniques with a common economic, political and cultural aim or understanding. However, vulgar language does not foster any of these elements and Fordjour (2016) sums it up when he says, "foul languages should be avoided if we are to sustain our cherished culture and to inculcate moral virtues which are panacea for accelerated development in the country".

Alisi (2020) concludes that proper language communication develops the individual and the society politically, culturally and educationally. In a nutshell, the fact that proper communication is necessary for national development cannot be denied. In the same manner, language, characterized by appropriate and acceptable cultural techniques as a determinant of proper communication for accelerated development, cannot be overlooked.

1.1.3 Proper language equals proper culture

Language is undoubtedly an important aspect of culture as it expresses cultural values, beliefs and practices. According to Olúmúyìwá, (2016), it is a product of a particular culture, and it reflects the culture of the people and their view of the world.

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Thus rich cultures are, above all, noted for the advocate of proper social conduct, including the use of language devoid of vulgarity by their members. For instance, Fordjour (2016) posits that foul language should be avoided if we are to sustain our cherished culture as Ghanaians. It can thus be implied that guarding against the use of vulgar language in the Ghanaian context, to a large extent, can ensure that the richness of the Ghanaian culture, devoid of foul language, is preserved. The same desired outcome can be expected for all other cultures that seek to uphold good morals and frown on the use of vulgar or foul language.

1.1.4 The media as an institution to uphold culture

According to Singh and Nity (2017), media is the reflection of our society, and it depicts what and how society works. Singh and Nity (2017) add that media can be in print forms, such as newspapers and magazines, and also in electronic form, which is the most used media in spreading information in mass communication. Apuke (2016) also groups media into traditional and social media, where traditional media refers to the media that communicate uniform messages in a one-way process to very large homogenous audiences, including television, radio and newspaper. On the other hand, social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, pictures and videos in implicit communities and networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Apuke, 2016). Thus the media, whether traditional media or social media, can be referred to as the means or tools of communication.

Amodu, Ige and Usaini (2016) state that the media, as the fourth estate of the realm, perform conventional functions which are collectively aimed at promoting cultural heritage and building an ideal society. Showkat (2015) also emphasizes that the

"media has a great effect on our social behaviour, which is a part of our culture", and has proven influential in reinforcing cultural values and norms that have already achieved a wide consensual foundation. The Ghanaian media is no exception to these propositions as it is equally tasked by media policymakers, including the National Media Commission (NMC) and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), to be ethical in their delivery.

The foregoing indicates that the media has achieved the status of being an essential tool to uphold acceptable cultural norms and values, and that is why there is evidence of foul language in the Ghanaian media (Fordjour 2016), which is rather tasked with the responsibility of guarding against it raises concerns and sparks research interests. Further justification lies in the fact that the available minimal literature addresses the problem as evident in the electronic media such as radio and TV, whereas the digital media space, specifically, with regard to blogs where the problem equally exists, remains a grey area.
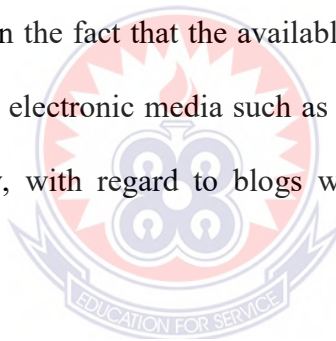
1.1.5 Blogs

According to Elega and Ozad (2017), blogs are shared on-line journals where authors post daily entries and commentaries about their experiences and opinions on issues. Blogs form part of the social media platforms designed to reach a wider audience. They are a genre of computer-mediated communication which identifies individuals engaged in the field as bloggers and the practice as blogging. Eleza and Ogad (2018) establish that the practice of blogging has become a major form of citizen journalism where ordinary people share their personal opinions on topical issues, just like the standardized media. Thus blogs have become prominent in influencing individuals,

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industries, academia and other communities through informative public exchanges (Eleza & Ogad, 2018).

Kobayashi (2011) also asserts that blogs are one of the instruments making online social networking popular. This increasing popularity of blogs has not only opened up a flexible communication platform for the public (Dutta et al. 2018); but has also created an alternative source of news that is here to stay, especially as the internet grows ever more central in disseminating thoughts and opinions (Fricker, 2015).

Stavrositu and Sunder (2012) group blogs into two major types: filter blogs which explores social, political and economic issues that are not personal or directly related to the blogger, and personal journal blogs, which explore the blogger's personal life issues relating to life, work and family. According to Stavrositu and Sunder (2012), filter blogs have wider and non-intimate audiences, whereas personal journal blogs have smaller and more intimate audiences.

1.1.6 Ghanaian entertainment blogs and blogging in Ghana

The phenomenon of blogging is noted to have started in the Western world around 1997 and has since transcended to other parts of the world (Kobayashi, 2012). Ghana is no exception to this new media phenomenon. Ranging from blogs owned by mainstream media to those owned by individual bloggers, blogs and the practice of blogging have also gained popularity in Ghana. In 2020, a ranking of blogs in Ghana by Ghanaian PR and Rating Agency, Avance Media, featured 58 outstanding bloggers associated with 50 different blogs out of over 250 nominated Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

Figure 1 shows the top 50 Ghanaian bloggers and their respective blogs as indicated by Avance Media:

Figure 1: Top 50 Ghanaian bloggers and their respective blogs

Image source: ghanaweb.com

With the recognition of blogs as alternative source of news and the dissemination of thoughts and opinions (Fricker, 2015), studies on blogs, especially, those bordering on ethics of the practice are undeniably justified.

1.2 Problem Statement

The use of vulgar language or offensive utterances, as established by the legal argument, harm people the same way physical blows do (Matsuda et.al, 1993). The issue of vulgarity has been explored to a significant extent both in the traditional and social media. In the traditional media perspective, a recent study by Darwish and Ain (2020) focused on "Foul Language on Arabic Television: A Case Study of the First Jordanian Arabic Netflix Series". The study explored the use of taboo words in "Jinn", the first original Jordanian Arabic Netflix series. The results from the study could be categorized under major themes such as scatological, religious/supernatural, sexual activity, sex organ and mother. The study concluded that the Jordanian society is conservative when it comes to the use of taboo words in cinema and television (Darwish & Ain, 2020).

Moreover, Olúmúyìwá (2016) studied "The Linguistic Appraisal of Foul Language in Selected Yorùbá Video Films". The study gave a linguistic appraisal of the two types of foul language used in Yoruba video films; insults and curses. The study also examined the socio-semantic implications of foul language as used in the video films and showed that insults are more frequently used than curses and concluded that both are forms of expression used to express hatred, aggression and anger (Olúmúyìwá, 2016).

In the Ghanaian context, Fordjour (2016) studied foul language in Ghanaian Electronic Media with a case study of some selected radio stations in Kumasi. The study concluded that foul language abounds in the Ghanaian media landscape and should be avoided if we are to sustain our cherished culture and inculcate moral virtues, which are the panacea for accelerated development in the country (Fordjour, 2016).

From the social media perspective, numerous studies include that of Pamungkas, Basile and Patti (2020), who studied predicting abusive swearing in social media. The study explored the phenomenon of swearing in Twitter conversations by differentiating between abusive swearing and non-abusive swearing. The study recommended that abusive swearing should be regulated and countered in online communications, and non-abusive swearing should be allowed as part of freedom of speech.

Cachola et al. (2018) also studied expressively vulgar andt he socio-dynamics of vulgarity and its effects on sentiment analysis in social media; which analysed vulgarity's sociocultural and pragmatic aspects using tweets from Twitter users with known demographics. The study revealed that vulgarity is attributed to many key demographics including age, gender, education, income, religiosity and political ideology.

Moreover, particularly related to this current study is a study by Lutzky and Kehoe (2016) on a corpus linguistic approach to the identification of swearing in computer-mediated communication. This study focused on the use of "bad language" in WordPress and Blogger blogs, including blog posts and user comments on them. The study revealed that there is a group of "core" swearwords which are often used in

close proximity to each other (e.g. fuck, shit, crap), together with a small set of peripheral swearwords which appear to be rarely used (homo, tart, swine). Also, there are many other words between these two extremes relating to religious themes (Jesus, Christ, God).

However, there is little to no evidence in the Ghanaian context of studies on vulgarity in the social media perspective, specifically regarding blogs, which form the basis of this study. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to the existing literature on blogs in the Ghanaian context, specifically focusing on the issue of vulgarity (vulgar expressions) as used on some Ghanaian entertainment blogs and the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The focus of this study is to explore the prevalence of vulgarity in Ghanaian entertainment blogs and the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Explore the themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs
2. Identify the targets of the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs
3. Examine the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers

1.4 Research Questions

In exploring the prevalence of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and the rationale behind it, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

2. Who are the targets of the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

3. What is the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers?

1.5 Significance of Study

The findings of this study provides helpful information to Ghanaian media policymakers, including the National Media Commission, the National Communication Authority, and the Ghana Journalists Association, to provide them with information on vulgarity on digital platforms to inform regulatory policies.

The study also contributes significantly to the literature on vulgarity in the media landscape by bringing to bare the themes of vulgarity used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and as well as Ghanaian bloggers' rationale behind the use of vulgar language which call for attention and necessary action by appropriate institutions.

1.6 Delimitation

This study is limited to three top entertainment blogs in Ghana. In the 2020 rating of blogs in Ghana by Ghanaian PR and advertising agency Avance Media, Celebrities Buzz emerged as the most followed Ghanaian blog on Facebook. Zionfelix Entertainment NewsEntertainment News also emerged as the most followed Ghanaian blog on Instagram, whiles GhSplash Entertainmenttook the lead as the top Ghanaian female blog in the ranking.

In this regard, Celebrities Buzz , Zionfelix Entertainment NewsEntertainment News, and GhSplash Entertainmentare the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs being used in this research. The focus is only on blog posts with vulgar content on their Facebook pages from January to June 2021.

The blog posts are selected from the year 2021 because, having followed the three blogs involved in the study and other Ghanaian entertainment blogs since 2020, it was noted that more blog posts with vulgar content were posted on the three blogs used in the study in the year 2021 compared to the previous year.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised in five chapters: chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, chapter four and chapter five. Chapter one consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations, and the study's general outlook. Chapter two makes up the review of existing and relevant literature on vulgarity and blogs. It also consists of a theoretical framework which presents the underlining theories of the study. Chapter three constitutes the study's research methodology, including the research approach, research design, sample size, sampling technique, research instruments and data collection methods. Chapter four also deals with the analysis and discussion of findings presented by the study from the data collected. Finally, chapter five summarises the study and presents a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations including recommendations for further studies.

1.8 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presents the introduction to the study, the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, and research questions. The chapter also presents the significance of the study, the delimitation, and the organization of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews, evaluates and analyses relevant literature related to the study and discusses the theory underpinning the study and its relevance to the study.

2.1 The concept of Vulgarity

Vulgarity is a category of the broad perspective of foul language. Shek and Lin (2016) refer to foul language as curses, swear words, taboo words, or profanity. According to them, the utterance of offensive and emotionally harmful expressions is considered insult regardless of the speaker's intention. Farquharson (2019) states foul language includes swearing, obscenity, profanity, blasphemy, name-calling, insulting, verbal aggression, taboo speech, ethnic-racial slurs, vulgarity, slang, and scatology. This implies that vulgarity is basically considered foul and above all, it is undesired.

Schnurer (1941) primarily establishes the concept of vulgarity as a negative one. According to him, vulgarity is negative by nature and comprehensible only against a background of well-defined positive attitudes. This means the concept of vulgarity rides on what is known and accepted as right. Thus vulgarity is considered to be negative and wrong and, above all, unacceptable only because it is measured by what is considered to be positive and right and therefore acceptable. Simply put, "a person, an action, an occupation, a beverage, a location, is vulgar with reference to a positive code, to a pronounced attitude, to a contrasting standard" (Schnurer, 1941).

Habasque (2019) also posits that what is deemed vulgar necessarily involves perception and that what constitutes vulgarity may be indexed to norms that were

taught to and fully integrated by individuals. Thus vulgarity comes about as a result of established norms and perceptions and something can only be considered vulgar when it goes against these already existing norms and perceptions. Habasque (2019) sums this up when he defines vulgarity to refer to features that are perceived as vulgar because they deal with taboos. According to Idang (2015), taboos arise out of social constraints on people's behaviour, especially where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury. This implies that vulgarity arises from social restrictions and prohibitions in the form of taboos and clearly indicates it as unacceptable because it is against social standards and especially because it is considered a negative concept, as noted by Schnurer (1941).

2.2 Vulgarity and the concept of Culture

2.2.1 What is culture?

Culture is known to be the way of life of a group of people. It includes a people's social norms, taboos, values and practices. According to Idang (2015), culture entails the totality of traits and characters peculiar to a people, including language, dressing, music, work, arts and religion. Culture is a universal concept but uniquely manifested by groups and societies across the globe. For instance, Western culture refers to the knowledge, belief, morals and way of life of the western world (Sibani, 2018). In the same manner, African culture can be used to refer to the culture of Africans, which according to Idang (2015), has a moral code that forbids harming a relative, a relative, an in-law, a foreigner or a stranger, and above all, it is a heritage that is passed down to generations. Consequently, Ayibadeinyefa (2011) notes that the Ghanaian people emphasise cultural values such as family, respect for the elderly, honouring traditional rulers, and proper social conduct, where everyone is expected to be dignified in public settings.

Culture can be classified into material and non-material concepts (Idang, 2015). The material concept of culture refers to the physical manufactured artifacts and crafts such as clothing and jewellery that distinguish a particular group of people. For instance, an African man dressed in a wrapped "kente" cloth and "ahenema" sandals may easily be identified as a Ghanaian because "kente" and "ahenema" are cultural artifacts that are common among the people of Ghana. Idang (2015) refers to the non-material concept of culture as the norms and morals of a people.

Non-material concept of culture can be considered as that which sets the social and moral conduct where certain actions and conducts in the society are approved and others, like the use of foul language, are frowned upon. Thus when Ayibadeinyefa (2011) states that the Ghanaian people emphasise cultural values such as respect for the elderly, and Idang (2015) also notes that the Ibibio people in Akwa Ibom State in Nigeria have zero tolerance for theft, they are stating classic examples of the non-material concept of a culture where the good social conduct of respect is approved, and the bad social conduct of theft is disapproved. This also sets the tone for vulgarity as a cultural concept as vulgarity is culturally frowned upon.

2.2.2 Culture and language

Language is an important aspect of culture, as it is through language that cultural values, beliefs and practices are expressed. Verderber (1999) defines language as the body of words and the systems for their use that are common to the people of the same language community, and according to Olúmúyìwá, (2016), language is a product of a particular culture, and it reflects the culture of the people and their view of the world. This implies that language and culture go hand in hand, and one cannot be independent of the other. Thus, just as cultural artifacts like clothing help to

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identify people as part of a particular culture, language helps to culturally identify people. For instance, one of the common local languages in Ghana, "Asante Twi", is associated with the Asante ethnic group in Ghana just as Igbo language is associated with the Igbo people of Nigeria. Culture is communicated through language, and like culture, language is universal and at the same time a unique concept.

When Fordjour (2016) states that the Ghanaian culture is against the use of foul language, and considering the role language plays in culture, it can be concluded that vulgarity has no place especially in the Ghanaian culture and other cultures. Having established that the non-material concept of culture sets the social and moral conduct where certain actions and conducts in the society are approved are frowned upon, it can be said that culture advocates the use of language devoid of vulgarity. For instance, Ayibadeinyefa (2011) states respect for the elderly, honouring traditional rulers and proper social conduct as part of Ghanaian cultural values, and it is clear that none of these values can be expressed through vulgar language. Thus, when it comes to language use under the concept of culture, it is acceptable to use civilised or polite language devoid of vulgarity.

2.2.3 Vulgarity versus culture

The non-material concept of culture clearly establishes vulgarity as a cultural concept, especially as Farquharson (2019) states that literature points to the fact that foul language is culture-specific and connected to cultural conceptualizations. Showkat (2015) also adds that culture affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour, and Fordjour (2016) concludes that the Ghanaian culture frowns upon the use of foul language. These statements clearly indicate that vulgarity exists because

of culture. In other words, vulgarity is measured by culture; or simply put, something is considered vulgar only because a particular culture says so and portrays it as such.

When people are rebuked for indecency and considered to be uncultured when they use foul language in the Ghanaian context (Fordjour, 2016), it is only because the Ghanaian culture establishes foul language as offensive and thus unacceptable. In a more profound manner, studies like the current study are considered valid and justified only because vulgarity undoubtedly has no place in culture, especially in the Ghanaian cultural setting (Fordjour, 2016), and there exists scholarly evidence to this effect (Farquharson, 2019).

2.2.4 What constitutes Vulgarity?

According to Schnurer (1941), "the growth of taboos brought with it a vast flood of euphemisms and hence the struggle to expel from the mind bodily parts and functions, and in particular those which are associated with digestion and sex". He terms this situation as the moral concept of vulgarity, focusing on obscenity and profanity. This suggests that, among other things, what constitutes vulgarity or what is considered to be vulgar includes obscene and profane expressions.

2.2.5 Obscenity and profanity

According to Wene and Ena (2020), obscenity refers to words and phrases that characterise sexual function and expression crudely; and profanity involves the rough use of what is considered sacred. Thus both obscenity and profanity suit the concept of vulgarity as they both have to do with careless and unacceptable expressions, especially of body parts. Akande et al. (2018) buttress this by defining vulgar words as words related to sex jokes, body parts and sexual acts or functions. Thus the moral

concept of vulgarity implies that vulgarity refers to expressions of sexual body parts and functions which are considered as taboo.

2.2.6 Invectives

Seizer (2011) also notes that vulgar words cover derogatory words that are capable of causing discomfort and anger when used. This means that the concept of vulgarity goes beyond obscenity and profanity to include expressions that are unacceptable by social standards and can disorganise society. Thompson and Agyekum (2015) refer to such derogatory words as invectives, that is, abusive or insulting words or expressions with a "violent censure or reproach on the addressee". Thompson and Agyekum (2015) add that invective is "a face-threatening communicative behaviour" which has the potential to humiliate, offend or provoke and is used by people to show displeasure or disapproval of others.

The foregoing clearly establishes the concept of vulgarity as one which encompasses rough or rude expressions, especially of sexual body parts and functions (obscenity or profanity), and also offensive or derogatory remarks (invectives). Moreover, what is noteworthy here is the fact that both the obscenity or profanity and offensiveness that characterise the concept of vulgarity are abhorred by Ghanaian society. The use of obscene or profane expressions having to do with sexual body parts and sexual acts, including the Akan name for the vagina (ɛtwɛ) and that of the penis (k)teɛ) In Ghana, public discourses are prohibited, and culprits are considered uncultured and often rebuked for indecency (Fordjour, 2016).

More so, the use of invectives, according to Thompson and Agyekum (2015), indicates a characteristic that deviates from the physical, mental, religious, political, or social norms of society and a person who uses invectives is seen as impolite

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because such behaviour can lead to a breakdown of close relationships and destroy the social equilibrium. Olumuyiwa (2016) concludes that insult is a category of taboo which exists in many forms across cultures.

2.3 Vulgarity and the Media

2.3.1 What is Media?

According to Singh and Nity (2017), media is the reflection of our society and it depicts what and how society works. From this, the media can be defined as a means used to spread information about society. Singh and Nity (2017) also indicate that media can be in print forms, such as newspapers and magazines, and also in electronic form, which is the most used media in spreading information in mass communication.

Apuke (2016) further groups media into traditional and social media. Traditional media are those that communicate uniform messages in a one-way process to very large homogenous audiences, including television, radio and newspaper. Guinibert (2021) concludes that traditional media's communication is predominantly one-way, from producer to consumer.

Social media are computer-mediated tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, pictures and videos in implicit communities and online networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Apuke, 2016). Blogs as a form of media are part of the social media platforms as Elega and Ozad (2017) refer to blogs as shared on-line journals.

2.3.2 The concept of blogs

The term blog is derived from the term weblog, which essentially refers to a web page or a website (Tan and Ho (2014)). According to Elega and Ozad (2018), the concept

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of blogs emerged in the early 2000s and has since become popular and one of the most influential tools of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) used around the world. Elega and Ozad (2018) define blogs as shared on-line journals where authors post daily entries and commentaries about their experiences and opinions on issues. Kuhn (2007) adds that blogs may be conceptualised as tools designed to promote immediate interaction between blog visitors as they offer readers an opportunity to post time-stamped comments to each entry. In simple terms, blogs are a genre of computer-mediated communication that provides a two-way communication or interaction between the sender (blog author) and his audience (blog visitors).

Blogs have become a popular form of online presentation and expression (Guadagno et. al., 2007) and has also made online social networking very popular not only in the Western world where it started but in other parts of the world as well (Kobayashi, 2011). Stavrositu and Sunder (2012) categorise blogs into two: filter blogs and personal journal blogs. Filter blogs deal with social, political and eceonmic issues whereas personak journal blogs deal with issues that are directly or personally related to the blogger. (Stavrositu &Sunder, 2012) Thus the categorization of blogs is basically based on content.

This genre of computer-mediated communication identifies individuals engaged in the field as bloggers and the practice as blogging. According to Khun (2007), blogging constitutes frequent updating or posting on blogs. Schmidt (2007) also defines bloggers as those communicating via the virtual space in which blogs exist, the blogosphere. Fricker (2015) concludes that the practice of blogging is driven by passion, and the absence of formal constraints allows bloggers to write with personal preferences and biases. According to Fricker (2015), blogs have gained recognition

as an alternative source of news and the dissemination of thoughts and opinions, which is here to stay, especially as the internet keeps growing.

Blogs are created and used for various purposes, and according to Khun (2007) it is the many different functions of blogs that define a particular blog. Eleza and Ogad (2018) group blogs into the following:

Edu blogs: blogs used as supplementary teaching aid in the educational sector

Fashion blogs: blogs used to share information on fashion and set fashion trends

Political blogs: blogs used to address political issues

Health blogs: blogs used to share information related to health

Food blogs: blogs used to share information related to foods

Travel blogs: blogs used to share information about places around the world

Business blogs: blogs used to share information related to business.

Entertainment blogs in this regard can also be used to refer to blogs that share information meant to entertain or information related to the entertainment industry including music and film.

The increasing popularity and recognition of blogs as alternative news sources have led to several studies on blogs in general, including earlier studies like that of Blood (2002) and Dube (2004) who both proposed a code of ethics that would make bloggers more credible in the journalistic fraternity. Blood (2002) in her book "The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog" saw a future where blogs would be considered an alternative source of information and advocated integrity and consistency on the part of bloggers in the process of information gathering and dissemination. Dube (2003) also adopted the Society of

Professional Journalists code for bloggers, arguing that, like journalists, bloggers should equally have ethical obligations. He concluded that a code of ethics for bloggers would make them more responsible and trustworthy to their audience.

Khun (2007) further proposed a blogging code of ethics that goes beyond practising journalistically to advocate interactivity, free expression, strive for factual truth, transparency, and the promotion of the "human element" in blogging. To achieve this, Khun (2007) combines traditional values of new communication technology ethics such as truth, transparency, accountability, identity, human relationships, community building, and equal access to media; and an exploratory survey of five bloggers. The survey saw bloggers advocate posting on blogs on a regular basis and promoting interactivity on blogs.

Pedersen and Macafee (2007) also did a study to find out gender differences and inequalities in the blogging behaviour of the British people. A sample of forty-eight (48) female and male British bloggers' answers to a questionnaire about their blogging practices and attitudes revealed that both men and women derived satisfaction from blogging. It was also discovered that women's blogs contain more personal contents (personal journal blogs) while men's blogs contain informative issues specifically on social, political, and economic (filter blogs).

Further studies on blogs include that of Yakut and Aydin (2017), who experimented on the effects of blogs on reading comprehension, innovation in language learning and teaching. The quantitative "experimental study on the effects of the use of blogs on EFL reading comprehension" sampled 42 students of the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Balikesir University. While students in the experimental group practised the reading tasks on a blog created by the teacher, the

ones in the control group practised the reading tasks in traditional classroom environment for four weeks. It was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in terms of the effects of the use of blogs on learners' reading and teaching (Yakut & Aydin 2016).

Zafar and Sarwar (2021) did a study to investigate the influence of fashion blogs on millennial consumer purchasing behaviour with a survey of 300 millennial fashion blog users. With the help of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study indicated that perceived usefulness, perceived social influence and perceived influencer credibility were significant forces of purchasing behaviour of millennials. Again, the study indicates that influential fashion blogs play a role in shaping the purchasing behaviour of millennials. Thus a fashion blog with a large social media following can easily compel people to purchase items advertised on the blog compared to an unpopular one with a small following. Zafar and Sarwar (2021) concluded that fashion blogs have the power to shape purchasing behaviour of millennials through perceived social influence, perceived influencer credibility, and fashion innovativeness.

Paterson and Doctors (2013) in their on participatory journalism in Mozambique found out that blogs have the ability to give a quick and possibly true account of issues thereby making blogs an alternative or part of mainstream media. The only difference here is that blogs may be created by inexperienced writers or journalists as the act of blogging does not necessarily require perculiar skills as it is with journalism (Somolu, 2007).

Hollenbaugh (2009) also studied bloggers motives for maintaining personal journal blogs with a cross-sectional survey of two hundred and ninety-nine (299) active

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English speaking bloggers. From the survey, it was concluded that the common motive for maintaining personal journal blogs is to archive or organize one's experiences. This was followed by the purpose of informing others; to create social connection; and also to get feedback.

Li and Lin (2012) did a survey of Hong Kong university students to understand young generations blogging behaviour based on two general motivations based on extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Li and Lin (2012) define extrinsic motivation as the social-oriented motivations in search of satisfaction from exterior social environments; and intrinsic motivation as bloggers inherent satisfaction rather than external rewards. Li and Lin (2012) sampled one hundred and eighty-six (186) students in the City University of Hong Kong who had their personal blogs. After the survey, it was discovered that the reasons for initiating blogs were motivated intrinsically among students. Moreover, gender had significant influence on behavior as the female students tended to update their blogs more frequently than the male students.

In the Ghanaian context, a recent study by Nartey (2020) focused on feminist critical discourse analysis of Ghanaian feminist blogs to highlight how Ghanaian feminists use online media to project their voices and construct a positive identity. The analytical procedure followed a three-stage process of identifying resistance strategies, interpreting these strategies with available background information, and explaining the impact of these strategies on readers. It was concluded from the studies that the blog posts serve an emancipatory and transformative agenda aimed at championing the cause of Ghanaian/African women and giving them a voice and a positive identity (Nartey, 2020).

Thus the media, whether traditional media or social media (including blogs), is simply a means or a tool of communicating for diverse purposes.

2.3.3 Vulgarity and the traditional media

In his article, "Guttural Phrases and Vulgar Directives: The Evolution of Press Standards on Profanity", Pressman (2020) posits that prior to the 1960s, no mainstream newspaper would consider printing vulgar words such as "fuck" or "shit" and expletives like "bitch" and "bastard" were almost unheard of. He adds that the increase acceptance of profanity began in the 1960's with many changes in American journalism in the area of politics, popular culture and many other changes which made profane language in the media common. Pressman (2020) continues that "all of this challenged the press's traditional unwillingness to print expletives, especially because the profane words that politicians spoke, protesters shouted, and judges debated as part of obscenity lawsuits were clearly newsworthy". Shafer and Kaye (2015) also conclude that "cursing on television and in movies has long been subject to public wrath as it is feared that viewers, especially young ones, would repeat what they hear on the screen", thereby clearly establishing the fact that vulgarity in the traditional media is undoubtedly evident and more importantly, it is unaccepted.

In the Ghanaian context, vulgar language relating to prohibitive sexual parts is frowned upon by society. However, using insults in the traditional media has gradually gained ascendancy through local and foreign movies. The younger generation appears to consider it a fad to use words like "fuck", "shit", "bullshit", etc. because such obscene language is often used in movies aired on traditional media in Ghana. Again, the recent practice of using insulting words in some Ghanaian movies and comedy skits seems to have caught on with the youth.

2.3.4 Vulgarity and social media

Although vulgarity evidently exists in both the traditional and social forms of media, scholars in the area attribute the rise of vulgarity in the media particularly to the advent of social media. For instance, Pressman (2020) establishes that vulgarity "stems from the move to digital delivery of the news" as "most online-only news outlets publish expletives freely". Cachola et al. (2018) also add that social media is an ideal medium to observe and study the expression of vulgar words.

Moreover, Pamungkas, Basile and Patti (2020) note that abusive language frequently occurs in social media texts across different languages. They conclude that the situation demands urgent development of robust approaches for abusive language detection for most popular social media, including Twitter and Facebook. These scholarly projections on vulgarity in the social media space not only justify the current study but also provide further justifications for more studies on the issue of vulgarity to develop a vast literature on the subject.

The issue of vulgarity in the media has been researched to a significant extent, and referencing them not only creates a solid background to the current research but also establishes the research gap. Specifically, regarding the use of vulgarity on blogs, however, there is little evidence of literature on the subject elsewhere and in Ghana, with the latter being almost inexistent. In this regard, reference to the already existing literature as the chapter demands, will show both the known and the unknown about the particular topic and further justify the foregoing research.

Particularly related to the current study, Lutzy and Kehoe (2016) studied the use of swearwords in blog data and illustrated ways of identifying swearing by taking into account the context in which they appear. Their study on corpus linguistic approach to

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the identification of swearing in computer-mediated communication examined eighty (80) swear words in written text formats with a linguistic methodology and pragmatic analysis approach. The study goes beyond basic sentiment analysis and offers new insights into the use of collocation for refining profanity filters, providing innovative perspectives on issues of growing importance as online interaction becomes more widespread. The study examined the use of "bad language" in two blogs, WordPress and Blogger, including both blog posts and reader comments on the posts.

The study revealed that there is a group of "core" swearwords which are often used in close proximity to each other (fuck, shit, crap), together with a small set of peripheral swearwords which appear to be rarely used (homo, tart, swine). Also, there are many other words between these two extremes relating to religious themes (Jesus, Christ, God). The analysis was based on a broad definition of swearing, indicating that swearwords could potentially have positive, negative or neutral connotations. The study concluded that swearing or bad language use is a speaker's attempt to express their diverse emotions, and in order to gain further understanding of a particular use of a swearword, it is important to consider the context in which it appears (Lutzy & Kehoe, 2016).

According to Sarkar (2021), there has been a significant increase in the usage of social media platforms. These platforms serve as a means for people to connect with friends and family, share information, news, and express their opinions. Unfortunately, platforms like Facebook and Twitter are frequently utilized for the dissemination of offensive and hateful content online. The open nature of the internet, coupled with the anonymity it provides, contributes to aggressive and inflammatory conversations. Both companies and governmental institutions are actively working

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towards creating a cleaner, more inclusive, and unbiased social media environment. In this particular study, the researchers focus on exploring the underlying topics within popular offensive language datasets, utilizing statistical and neural topic modeling techniques. It is worth noting that current state-of-the-art aggression detection models only provide a toxicity score based on the entire post, leaving content moderators to tackle lengthy texts without any word-level indicators (Sarkar, 2021).

Cachola et al. (2018) also studied the socio-dynamics of vulgarity and its effects on sentiment analysis in social media. The study sought to develop a quantitative understanding of how social demographics interact with how vulgarity is actively and intentionally employed with a corpus of tweets containing vulgar words. The study revealed that vulgarity interacts with many key demographics, including gender, age, education, income, religiosity and political ideology. The study also established that vulgarity conveys different sentiments by users of different ages and religions (Cachola et al., 2018).

Holgate, Cachola, Preoţiuc-Pietro and Li (2018) conducted a study on analysing and inferring the intentions of vulgar expressions. They introduced a novel data set of 7,800 tweets from users with known demographic traits where all instances of vulgar words are annotated with one of the six categories of vulgar word use. Using this data set, they presented the first analysis of the pragmatic aspects of vulgarity and how they relate to social factors. They built a model able to predict the category of a vulgar word based on the immediate context it appears in with 67.4 macro F1 across six classes. The results showed that several vulgar word functions are specific of age. Younger users of Twitter are more likely to use vulgar words to signal group identity and to express emotion. Older age is more likely to be related to use of words that are

vulgar with non-vulgar functions. These correlations showed that there are differences in how younger generations are using vulgar words, even if tweets were posted in the same time interval, signaling a diachronic change in usage.

It is apparent that, while social media empowers freedom of expression and individual voices, it also enables anti-social behaviour, online harassment, cyberbullying, and hate speech through the use of foul language. In their paper, ElSherief, Kulkarni, Nguyen, Wang and Belding (2018) deepen our understanding of online hate speech by focusing on a largely neglected but crucial aspect of hate speech – its target: either directed towards a specific person or entity, or generalized towards a group of people sharing a common protected characteristic. They performed the first linguistic and psycholinguistic analysis of these two forms of hate speech and reveal the presence of interesting markers that distinguish these types of hate speech. The analysis revealed that Directed hate speech, in addition to being more personal and directed, is more informal, angrier, and often explicitly attacks the target (via name calling) with fewer analytic words and more words suggesting authority and influence. Generalized hate speech, on the other hand, is dominated by religious hate, is characterized by the use of lethal words such as murder, exterminate, and kill; and quantity words such as million and many.

In India, Kawate and Patil (2017) analysed foul language usage in social media text conversation. They utilised a foul language classification system that employed an enhanced version of a decision tree to identify offensive language usage in conversations. It was discovered that teenage users' conversations are not always appropriate. The authors trained the system using 3651 observations across six different context categories using a Naïve Bayes algorithm to detect the context.

Subsequently, the system categorizes the use of foul language within the trained context during a text conversation. In their testbed, it was observed that 38% of participants incorporated foul language in their text conversations.

Malmasi and Zampieri (2017) approached the problem of distinguishing general profanity from hate speech in social media. They aimed to establish lexical baselines for this task by applying supervised classification methods using a recently released dataset annotated for this purpose. As features, they employed character n-grams, word n-grams and word skip-grams and obtained results of 78% accuracy in identifying posts across three classes. Results demonstrated that the main challenge lies in discriminating profanity and hate speech from each other. Analysis of the results revealed that discriminating hate speech and profanity is not a simple task, which may require features that capture a deeper understanding of the text.

Moreover, Holgate (2018) conducted a study on the socio-dynamics and intentionality of vulgarity and its effects on sentiment analysis in social media by presenting a new data set of 6.8K vulgar tweets labeled for sentiment on a five-point scale by nine annotators. Analysis of the ratings revealed that the expressiveness of vulgarity interacts with a number of demographic features, including age, gender, education, income, religion, and political ideology. Users who differ in age and frequency of religious service attendance also employ vulgarity to different ends. An examination of the impact of vulgarity on tweet sentiment perception showed that vulgarity is most often used to intensify existing sentiment.

Gauthier and Guille (2017) conducted a study on gender and age differences in swearing: a corpus study of Twitter. They aimed at confirming or refuting the hypothesis by Telwall (2008) that women from younger age groups would gradually

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start using strong swearwords more than men on social media, and especially in the UK. Through the analysis of a corpus of one million tweets emitted from the UK, and from users of different age groups, statistical tests revealed that no matter the age of the users, the two swearwords that accounted for strong swearing in Telwall's study (cunt and variations of fuck) were highly associated with men, bitch being the swearword that was the most statistically significant for women. A more detailed examination of the collocates of those three words revealed that not only did men use cunt and fuck more often than women, they also used it in a greater range of contexts.

Moreover, DeFrank and Kahlbaugh(2018) in their study of language choice matters: when profanity affects how people are judged, investigated the effects of the use of profanity on the judgment of the speaker. The study evaluated various reactions to profanity to better understand people's views and impressions about profane words and their users, that is, how word choices influence perceptions. The study was conducted with 142 college students who responded to a Likert-scale questionnaire created to evaluate the offensiveness of several words, including participants' demographic information. The results revealed that using profanity creates poorer impressions regardless of the user's gender; that is, profanity can influence impressions of character. DeFrank and Kahlbaugh (2018) concluded that profanity generally affects impressions about the user, including intelligence, trustworthiness, deviancy, politeness, offensiveness, and aggressiveness, among others.

More so, Coats (2021) studied bad language in the Nordics: profanity and gender in a social media corpus to look at the relative frequency of words perceived as offensive, derogatory or vulgar according to gender in Nordic languages and in English. Data for the study was collected from Twitter by targeting users based in Nordic countries

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(Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland) that tweet in both English and Nordic languages. The study concluded that gender differences in profanity usage tend to be greater for Nordic languages than the English language. Again, words that are potentially more offensive to males are used more by males, and those that stigmatize females are used more by females in Nordic and English (Coats, 2021).

Su et al. (2017) also studied rephrasing profanity in Chinese text to help curb profanity in Chinese text by developing a system that detects profanity and provides a rephrased text that is less offensive. Thus after a user writes or enters a profane word in a system, including social media, the system offers a more decent way to express the same thing before the message is submitted. The study involved almost ten thousand sentences containing profane Chinese words collected from social media websites which were used to invent 29 groups of detection and rephrasing rules. The system developed has an overall accuracy of 85.56% when evaluating on a test set of 2, 389 sentences (Su et al., 2017).

Wang, Chen and Sheth (2014) explored the utilisation of curse words on Twitter was examined by analyzing a random sample of 51 million tweets and approximately 14 million users. The researchers focused on four key questions that had been identified as significant in previous studies related to swearing within the fields of psychology, sociology, and linguistics. To address the question of how common cursing is on Twitter, they investigated the frequency of cursing and individuals' preferences for specific curse words. The findings indicated that curse words appeared at a rate of 1.15% on Twitter, with approximately 7.73% of all tweets in the dataset containing curse words. Moreover, the study revealed that seven specific curse words were responsible for over 90% of all instances of cursing.

The researchers also explored the purpose of cursing, particularly its role in expressing emotions. They developed a classifier to identify five different emotions (anger, joy, sadness, love, and thankfulness) from tweets. The classification results demonstrated that cursing on Twitter was strongly associated with two negative emotions: sadness and anger. However, curse words could also be used to emphasize positive emotions such as joy or love. Additionally, the study discovered that users tend to employ curse words when they are in relaxed environments.

Moreso, regarding how different genders use profanity on Twitter, Wong, Teh and Cheng (2020) investigated the impact of anonymity on social media and how it influences the expression of profanity. The study showed that the ability to remain anonymous on social media platforms has led users to express themselves more openly, which in turn has increased the frequency of swearing. The researchers specifically focused on the usage of profanity among different gender groups. Their findings indicated that individuals of different genders tend to employ swear words from distinct hate categories. For instance, males were found to utilize a higher number of terms associated with the "disability" hate group.

 Furthermore, Shafer and Kaye (2015) did a study on attitudes toward offensive language in media: investigating enjoyment of cursing-laced television and films, to investigate personal characteristics that influence attitudes toward offensive language in television and film. The method for the study involved sixty-four undergraduates recruited to complete a survey to provide insight into some of the determining factors of attitudes toward offensive language, including religious service attendance and political ideology; that is, whether individual differences such as religion or faith and political affiliation and the presence of curse words account for decreased viewing

pleasure or enjoyment. The results showed that those who reported a more conservative political ideology and a higher devotion to their faith enjoyed the profanity-laced films less than those with liberal political ideologies and less devoted to faith or religion.

The study further examined the impacts of the attitudes and of cursing in films on viewing enjoyment of those films and further revealed that viewers with high tolerance to offensive language in the media were less offended at the language in the films and enjoyed the movies more than those with low tolerance and that being more offended at cursing resulted in lesser enjoyment. The study thus concludes that negative attitudes toward offensive language decrease the satisfaction experience of films that contain offensive language (Shafer & Kaye 2015).

Examining attitudes and tolerance towards hate speech, Lambe (2004) observed an age-related pattern. The study revealed that as individuals grew older, they appeared to display a slightly lower willingness to support the censorship of hate speech, although the difference was not statistically significant. In terms of gender, Waseem and Hovy (2016) identified that the majority of authors, whose gender could be determined, in their dataset of hateful tweets were male. Similarly, De Smedt et al. (2018) found that the majority of perpetrators in their dataset of jihadist tweets were men, constituting 95% of the sample. Regarding people's attitudes towards offensive language, Lambe (2004) found that women were more likely than men to express approval of censorship for hate speech.

Sun, Wojcieszak, and Davidson (2021) conducted a study that analyzed the dynamics of incivility in various categories of social media interactions, namely political, mixed, and non-political. Their research encompassed an extensive 11-year period

and utilized longitudinal data from Reddit, which accounted for 95% of the entire Reddit community during that timeframe. By combining supervised machine learning models with traditional statistical inference, the study revealed that approximately 10% of total Reddit comments consistently exhibited incivility. Furthermore, the study uncovered that political groups tended to display higher levels of incivility compared to other categories. Interestingly, discussions in mixed groups, which addressed political topics without being explicitly political, were found to be less uncivil than those in purely political groups. The fluctuations in incivility were also observed to correspond with offline events and platform-specific policies.

Theocharis, Barberá, Fazekas, and Popa (2020) examined longitudinal data from Twitter following the 2016 presidential election. Their findings indicate that the prevalence of uncivil tweets mentioning Members of the US Congress remained relatively stable, with spikes in incivility aligning with political events such as a white nationalist rally or policy debates like healthcare. However, in a separate investigation focusing on Reddit (2021), it was discovered that political subreddits experienced a significant surge in incivility during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Moreover, Mathew, Saha, Yimam, Biemann, Goyal and Mukherjee (2021) released a first benchmark dataset for explainable hate speech detection covering three primary areas – classification, targeted community, and the spans that make the text hateful or offensive. Likewise, Davidson, Warmsley, Macy and Weber (2017) presented a fine-grained English tweets dataset containing hate speech, offensive, and neither labels.

Malmasi and Zampieri (2017) introduced a task involving the identification of hate speech and profane non-hate speech within social media. To address this challenge, they employed character and word n-grams, as well as word skip-grams, as features in

a linear SVM classifier. N-grams have demonstrated their effectiveness as reliable linguistic features in automatically detecting hate speech and offensive posts.

Zampieri, Malmasi, Nakov, Rosenthal, Farra, and Kumar (2019) created a comprehensive and detailed dataset called OLID (Offensive Language Identification Dataset), which includes fine-grained hierarchical annotations. The dataset classifies offensive content based on the type and target of the offensive language used. The dataset consists of three layers, with three different labels: Offensive Language Detection (offensive or not offensive), Categorization of Offensive Language (targeted insult or untargeted), and Offensive Language Target Identification (individual, group, or other). The training dataset contains 13,240 instances, out of which 4,400 instances are classified as offensive (positive). The test set comprises 860 tweets, including 240 positive examples.

Ariani (2021) conducted a study with the objective of exploring two main aspects related to Indonesian YouTubers: (1) the types of profanity used by male and female content creators, and (2) the reasons behind their use of profanity in their videos. The research adopted a qualitative research design, with male and female Indonesian YouTubers as the subjects whose videos were analyzed to identify the types of profanity used and the motivations behind their usage. Data collection involved the use of observation techniques and audio-visual digital materials. The collected data were analyzed following the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which included three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The findings of the study revealed the presence of four types of profanity utilized by both male and female Indonesian YouTubers in their videos: expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary profanity. Furthermore, the study

identified five reasons for the use of profanity by male and female Indonesian YouTubers, which included drawing attention, causing offense, conveying negative thoughts, responding to pain or misfortune, and making jokes or having fun.

Some studies envisioned that the use of "strong" swearwords by women would increase in certain contexts (Murray 2012), especially on social media (Telwall 2008) and this seemed especially true for younger generations of users (users aged 16–19) according to Telwall(2008). Telwall(2008) predicted that gender equality in swearing or a reversal in gender patterns for strong swearing, will slowly become more widespread such that the use of "strong" swearwords among young women will eventually be more frequent than among young men. Telwall's hypothesis suggests that, as adolescents are often shown to be leading linguistic changes, what he observed may apply to more than just young generations of women in the future, as even women from other generations may follow suit and adopt these linguistic preferences.
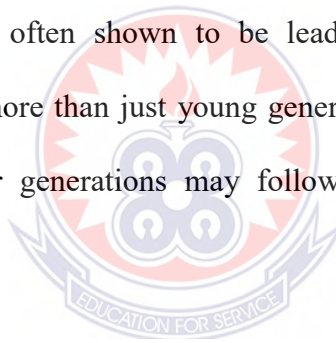
According to Telwall (2008), the swearing patterns displayed in MySpace in 2008 could keep evolving for a certain category of women (especially younger ones), which would correlate with a claim from Herring (2003), who said that computer-mediated communication as a whole could be empowering for women. Evidence of comparable usage of swearwords in computer-mediated communication could support this claim.

In a study conducted by Wulandari (2017), the usage of swear words in Pewdiepie's YouTube videos was investigated. The study focused on five videos selected from Pewdiepie's channel based on their high viewership. The findings of the study indicate that these five videos contained various types of swear words, including dysphemistic,

idiomatic, abusive, emphatic, and cathartic swearing. Furthermore, the research discovered that the use of profanity can serve as a means to express emotions without intending to offend others.

Vaattovaara and Peterson (2019) posit that, pragmatic borrowings into a recipient language tend to carry social and pragmatic meanings that distinguish them both from equivalent forms in the donor language and in the recipient language. With regard to swearwords in Finnish, according to Vaattovaara and Peterson (2019), it has been demonstrated earlier that paska 'shit' is among the most used swearwords, and that the lexical borrowed "shit" is favored among certain Finnish-speaking social groups, hence raising questions as to the social meanings and stylistic potentials of this particular borrowing. The study was based on survey results which present perceptual evidence on the borrowing shit compared to the heritage Finnish form paska in Finnish. The findings were based on a modified (online) matched guise test (MGT) and open-ended response data collected from Finnish speakers across different regions and social groups (N = 446) in Finland. The modified MGT was created to test the hypothesis that there is a consensus among native Finnish speakers concerning the level of incorporation of shit into Finnish discourse styles, and that style matters. The styles (varieties) tested in the matched guise test were 1) urban colloquial Helsinki Finnish or Helsinki slang, 2) a widespread, mostly rural pronunciation, and 3) standard Finnish.

The test results revealed that respondents were more accepting of the English borrowing shit when it was inflected in the nonstandard partitive form, shittii, typical of colloquial Helsinki Finnish, rather than in the standard partitive form, shittiä. In terms of respondent distribution, there was a general agreement across social and

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regional groups that the English borrowing is a mismatch in style with both standard and the relatively more rural styles of Finnish: the best match in terms of style is colloquial Helsinki speech.

Written commentary from the respondents on the MGT provides further evidence on the perceptual climate and the social meaning potentials of the borrowing by indicating that the English form shit is considered a normal, even expected, element of urban styles or slang, while as part of a more rural-associated style, it is considered unnatural or artificial. As a whole, the findings support the hypothesis based on earlier work on lexical borrowing in Finnish: borrowing from English is currently a flexible and meaningful resource available for speakers to create an indexical link to global urban (sub) cultures and lifestyles. (Vaattovaara & Peterson, 2019)

Husain, Wasif and Fatima (2023) explored profanity as a self-defense mechanism and an outlet for emotional catharsis in stress, anxiety and depression. A total of 253 participants from Pakistan were conveniently selected for the study. The research aimed to examine the relationship between the use of profanity and levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. To assess these factors, the researchers employed the Profanity Scale, the Urdu version of the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale, and a structured interview schedule. Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and t-tests were utilised to analyse the data and obtain the results. The findings indicated that the use of profane language exhibited significant inverse correlations with stress, anxiety and depression. Moreover, individuals who used profanity more frequently displayed significantly lower levels of depression compared to those who used profanity less frequently. The study did not find any significant correlations

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between profanity and age or education. Additionally, men exhibited significantly higher levels of profanity compared to women.

Contrary to stereotypes suggesting that men are more likely to employ indecent language than women in media environments, Schippers (2013) and Gustafson (2017) conducted studies in American and British media, respectively, which demonstrated that there was no gender difference in the usage of indecent language in terms of frequency or intensity.

Suganob-Nicolau (2016) conducted an investigation into the use of swear words among young learners. The study focused on the prevalence of swear words among children, particularly elementary students. The findings revealed that elementary students frequently employed swear words that were associated with intellectual concepts and religion. The primary motivation behind the use of profanity was to express anger. Additionally, the study highlighted that mothers played a significant role in influencing children's acquisition of swearing skills.

In a study conducted by Klerk (2015), a group of 160 adolescents was examined to explore the impact of variables including gender, age, and school type. The findings of this research indicate a correlation between social power and the use of expletives or profanity. Contrary to the prevailing stereotype that women are generally more polite in their language usage compared to men, the study revealed that both men and women employed profane language. This challenges the notion and breaks the stereotype that women are more inclined towards polite language usage than men.

Trandabat, Gifu, and Adrian (2022) conducted research focused on identifying offensive language within Romanian social media. Given the rapid rise in internet

usage among individuals from various countries and educational backgrounds, the identification of offensive online language has become a crucial challenge for natural language processing. Recognizing the detrimental effects such content can have on younger individuals, the urgent matter of safeguarding users' online safety necessitates the detection of toxic language in online environments. As part of their work, they created a labeled collection of offensive content specific to the Romanian language.

In his research, Sazzed (2021) also investigated the presence of vulgarity in the textual context of Bengali social media. To accomplish this, he constructed two benchmark corpora consisting of 7,245 reviews collected from YouTube. These reviews were then manually annotated and categorized as either vulgar or non-vulgar. The manual annotation process highlighted the prevalence of vulgar and swear words in Bengali social media content, ranging from 20% to 34% across the two corpora. To automate the identification of vulgarity, Sazzed employed multiple approaches, including classical machine learning (CML) classifiers, Stochastic Gradient Descent (SGD) optimizer, a deep learning (DL) based architecture, and lexicon-based methods. Despite the relatively small size of the corpus, the study revealed the effectiveness of using a swear/vulgar lexicon to identify vulgar language in Bengali social media, given the significant presence of certain swear terms. Furthermore, the analysis indicated a strong correlation between vulgarity and negative sentiment in social media comments.

Davidson, Warmsley, Macy and Weber (2017) employed a crowd-sourced hate speech lexicon to gather tweets containing keywords associated with hate speech. Through crowd-sourcing, a sample of these tweets was labeled into three distinct

categories: those containing hate speech, those containing offensive language only, and those with neither. Subsequently, a multi-class classifier was trained to differentiate between these categories. Detailed analysis of the classifier's predictions and errors shed light on situations where hate speech can be reliably distinguished from other forms of offensive language, as well as instances where such differentiation proves more challenging. The findings indicated that tweets with racist and homophobic content were more likely to be classified as hate speech, while sexist tweets were generally categorized as offensive. Moreover, tweets without explicit hate keywords posed a greater difficulty in classification.

Darwish and Ain (2020) also focused on "Foul Language on Arabic Television: A Case Study of the First Jordanian Arabic Netflix Series". The study explored the use of taboo words in "Jinn", the first original Jordanian Arabic Netflix series. The results showed taboo words fell under major themes like scatological, religious/supernatural, sexual activity, sex organ and mother. The study concluded that Jordanian society is still conservative when it comes to the use of taboo words in cinema and television through the angry reaction of Jordanians in the press, television and social media (Darwish & Ain, 2020).

Amin and Sharipudin (2021) examined the how and why behind the use of English swear words on social media by students from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Pulau Pinang (UiTMCPP). The study involved 100 university students who participated as respondents. Descriptive analysis was employed to examine the data, which was predominantly presented in the form of per centages, mean values, and standard deviations. The findings unveiled that a majority of the students preferred using complete spellings and language mechanics when utilizing swear

words on social media, rather than resorting to abbreviated forms. Additionally, most respondents agreed that UiTMCPP students employ swear words on social media to intensify their emotions. In conclusion, UiTMCPP students do employ English swear words on social media, and their usage is driven by emotional and psychological factors.

According to Gao and Huang (2017), the cyber world is laden with hate speech. Context accompanying a hate speech text is useful for identifying hate speech, which however has been largely overlooked in existing datasets and hate speech detection models. In their study, Gao and Huang (2017) provide an annotated corpus of hate speech with context information well kept. The study proposes two types of hate speech detection models that incorporate context information, a logistic regression model with context features and a neural network model with learning components for context. The evaluation shows that both models outperform a strong baseline by around 3% to 4% and combining these two models further improves performance.

Olúmúyìwá (2016) studied the linguistic appraisal of foul language in selected Yorùbá video films. The study gave a linguistic appraisal of the two types of foul language used in Yoruba video films; insults and curses. The study also examined the socio-semantic implications of foul language as used in video films. It showed that insults are more frequently used than curses and concluded that both are forms of expression used to express hatred, aggression and anger (Olúmúyìwá, 2016).

In a separate study, Wildes (2020) investigated the prevalence of indecent and profane content on television. The findings indicated that the rates of indecency and profanity have significantly increased in modern times compared to previous eras.

Pamungkas, Basile and Patti (2020) also studied predicting abusive swearing in social media. The study explored the phenomenon of swearing in Twitter conversations by differentiating between abusive swearing, which the study recommended should be regulated and countered in online communications, and non-abusive swearing, which they recommend should be allowed as part of freedom of speech (Pamungkas, Basile & Patti, 2020).

In a recent study conducted by Hilte, Markov, Ljubesic, Fiser, and Daelemans (2023), they investigated the characteristics of individuals who engage in hate speech by conducting a corpus-based demographic analysis. Their research involved utilizing binary logistic regression to examine the influence of authors' profiles, including their age, gender, and language, on the generation of hateful comments. The study's results demonstrated that men tend to produce a higher volume of hateful comments compared to women, and the production of hate speech increases as individuals age.

In terms of age, De Smedt, De Pauw and Van Ostaeyen (2018) discovered that the majority of individuals who authored online jihadist hate speech on Twitter were adults aged 25 and above, accounting for 95% of the sample. A smaller per centage, about 5%, consisted of individuals younger than 25 years old. Moreover, the largest portion of authors posting tweets related to jihadist content were young adults ranging from 20 to 35 years old.

In their study, Mishra, Del Tredici, Yannakoudakis, and Shutova (2018) introduced the concept of "community-based" user profiles, which were constructed by considering the characteristics of authors' social networks. They argued that individuals who are inclined to share hateful content often form online social groups. By examining the profiles of these "haters," the creators of hateful content, we can

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enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of hate speech (Vidgen & Derczynski, 2020).

In the Ghanaian context, Fordjour (2016) studied foul language in Ghanaian Electronic Media with a case study of some selected radio stations in Kumasi (Angel FM and Kessben FM). The study revealed that some media practitioners use foul language to spice their reportage, and many people commend them and thus urge them to perpetuate the practice. Thus, taking advantage of the anonymity provided by radio, certain individuals including program hosts, studio guests, interviewees, and audiences engage in the blatant misuse of free speech throught the use of offensive language such as insults and hate speech (Thompson & Anderson, 2018). Fordjour (2016) concludes that foul language abounds in the Ghanaian media landscape and recommends that it be avoided completely to sustain our cherished culture and to inculcate moral virtues that are the panacea for accelerated development in the country.
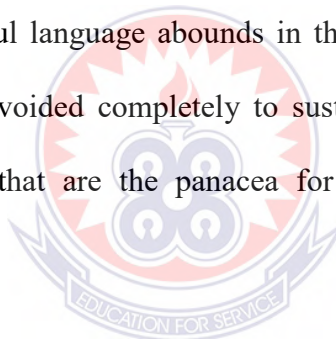
Amoakohene, Anderson, and Opare-Henaku (2021) conducted a research investigation into the presence of indecent language on Ghanaian radio. The study employed a quantitative approach and analyzed content data collected from specific radio stations in Ghana during the period between May 2016 and September 2016. This timeframe coincided with the lead-up to the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. The findings of the study identified six distinct types of indecent language prevalent on Ghanaian radio. Insults and offensive comments were found to be the most prevalent, while expressions promoting divisiveness were ranked as the least common among the identified types of indecent language.

Ofori (2017) conducted research on the utilization of insults as a means to challenge political authority. The study revealed that the Ghanaian media commonly employs animalization, wherein individuals are compared to animals like dogs, as a form of denigration. Ofori (2017) explained that this tactic associates the negative traits of the chosen animal with the person being insulted.

The necessity of promoting ethical and respectful political communication in Ghana has been emphasized by Asamoah, Yeboah-Assiamah, and Osei-Kojo (2014) as well as Ofori (2018). These studies highlighted the prevalence of abusive language in both Ghanaian broadcast media and political campaigns. Consequently, they recommended that political parties take disciplinary action against members who employ impolite language during political discourse. In addition, Marfo (2013) suggested that the media should boycott politicians who exploit their platforms to launch verbal attacks on their political rivals.

The above literature review not only highlights works on vulgarity in the media, thereby highlighting the gap in the literature, especially in the Ghanaian context, but also specifies the consequences of vulgarity, including the fact that it affects how people are judged (DeFrank and Kahlbaugh, 2018) and also how efforts are being made to do away with vulgarity in the media (Pamungkas, Basile & Patti, 2020).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Online Disinhibition Effect

The theory underpinning this study is the theory of the online disinhibition effect. The term "disinhibition" describes an individual's rebellious tendency to ignore social constraints and engage in behaviours that they would not normally do (Cheung, Wong and Chan, 2016). The online disinhibition effect, in simple terms, is the disregard for

social standards in the online space. According to Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2015), online disinhibition theory is reflected in reduced behavioural inhibitions and a lowered regard for behavioural boundaries while in cyberspace. Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2015) add that online disinhibition theory can be expressed in various online interpersonal behaviours, whether positive or negative. Thus there are two variations of the online disinhibition theory; positive online disinhibition and negative online disinhibition (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak 2015).

Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2015), refer to the positive manifestations of online disinhibition theory as benign disinhibition expressed in philanthropic gestures, giving advice and emotional support and greater self-disclosure. Cheung, Wong and Chan (2016) also refer to the negative manifestations of online disinhibition theory as toxic disinhibition or the dark side of using the internet, expressed through rude language, harsh criticism, threats and anger.

Online disinhibition is also known as the unique nature of cyberspace (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak 2015), which can eschew all other norms and standards of the real world and create an atmosphere of freedom for online users. This state of disregard for social norms in the online space, according to Hsiao and Zeng (2018) can, however, easily trigger communication problems, including cursing. Thus when an individual clearly knows about the social norm requirement in society but is still unwilling to exert self-control (Hsiao & Zeng, 2018), research suggests that such people often say or do things in the online space that they would not ordinarily say and do in the real world (Cheung, Wong and Chan,2016).

2.5 Relevance of Theory to Study

2.5.1 Relevance of Online Disinhibition Effect

With the increasing use of various information technologies, disinhibition has been frequently applied to explain why individuals engage in aggressive and deviant online behaviours (Cheung, Wong and Chan, 2016). This means that the online space has its problems that require relevant approaches, and this is where the online disinhibition effect comes in handy. The online disinhibition effect specifically helps to provide an understanding of why the phenomenon of foul language exists on the Ghanaian online space even when it is frowned upon in the real world of Ghanaians.

Unlike the usual face-to-face social interactions among people, online platforms and blogs provide a certain level of anonymity because users can interact under pseudo names and false identities. This allows blog users to engage in behaviours they would otherwise have avoided if they were having face-to-face interactions. In the Ghanaian context, especially where elders can easily rebuke the misbehaviours of younger ones, there appears to be more freedom in social spaces, such as blogs, where people can say whatever they like without consequence. To this end, the online disinhibition effect is relevant to the study as it plays a significant role in explaining the minimal restrictions people may encounter in using online blogs.

2.6 Summary of the chapter

The chapter presents the review, evaluation and analyses of relevant literature related to the study. It also presents and discusses the theory underpinning the study and its relevance to the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the methodological procedures employed for data processing in this study. These include research approach, research design, sampling technique, sampling size, data collection procedures and data analysis methods.

3.1 Research approach

The study is qualitative research where I seek to establish meanings by studying a phenomenon and providing answers through thick, rich descriptions backed by evidence and rationalization. Creswell (2014) states that the qualitative research approach delves into the meanings individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem or phenomenon with data analyzed inductively from themes.

Further, in the current study, I seek to explore the phenomenon of vulgar language use on Ghanaian entertainment blogs on the basis of Ghanaian cultural values. I significantly explore the phenomenon using the processes involved in qualitative research which includes emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants' setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particular to general themes; and making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the qualitative research approach provides complex textual descriptions of how people experience a phenomenon and that is exactly what I intend to do as a researcher in the current study. Thus proper and careful analysis of data through themes inferred from vulgar language (obscenity, profanity and invectives) will serve as emerging answers to the research questions to

significantly explain the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

3.2 Research Design

Research design encompasses the overall steps taken during research, including data collection procedure, method of data analysis, interpretation and reporting, which are all geared towards answering the questions in a research study (Creswell, 2014). The research design for this study is qualitative content analysis. According to Elo et al. (2014), qualitative content analysis is a qualitative research method for analyzing data through concepts that describe a phenomenon. Qualitative content analysis is designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation (Patton 2002). According to Wimmer and Dominik (2011), content analysis helps to discover and gain insights into complex social and communication trends and patterns.

In this regard, qualitative content analysis of sampled blog posts containing vulgar words and expression as used in the study helped me to answer the research question one which is targeted at the "predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs". That is, a content analysis of the sampled blog posts reveals certain themes that border on vulgarity including obscenity, profanity, and invectives. Moreover, the data gathered from the interviews with two Ghanaian bloggers reveals dominant themes which account for the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and thus, answers the research question three which is on the "rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers". According to Okazaki and Rivas (2002), content analysis has been used in the study of human – computer interactions such as web based

applications, norms of behavior and cultural values and I equally find it suitable in employing it to explore the use of vulgar words and expressions on selected Ghanaian entertainment blogs in the current study.

3.3 Unit of analysis

According to Wimmer and Dominic (2003), a unit of analysis refers to the basic unit of the phenomenon under study. Wimmer and Dominic (2003) add that the unit of analysis could be an image, a word, a symbol or an entire story. The unit of analysis for this current study is a blog post in the form of a text excluding videos and audios.

3.4 Sampling and sample size

Sample size refers to a section of the population used to represent the entire population in research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Here, I collected 1,008 posts from January 2021 to June 2021 from the Facebook pages of Celebrities Buzz, Zionfelix Entertainment NewsEntertainment News and GhSplash Entertainmentwhich constitute the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs involved in the current study. Celebrities Buzz, Zionfelix Entertainment NewsEntertainment News and GhSplash Entertainmentare social media entertainment blogs which emerged in the top 50 Ghanaian entertainment blogs in a 2020 ranking of blogs in Ghana by Ghanaian PR and Rating Agency, Avance Media. Avance Media, in its ranking, projected Celebrities Buzz (now Cngist.Com) as the most-followed blog on Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment NewsEntertainment News as the most-followed blog on Instagram, and GhSplash Entertainmentas the foremost Ghanaian female blog on the ranking.

However, It is worthy of notice that the 1,008 posts collected were not necessarily a complete reflection of the exact number of posts made by the bloggers within the period stated. Thus, considering the unit of analysis for the current study, which is

blog posts in text form, my focus as a researcher was on blog posts in the form of text only, excluding audios and videos. This was done to cut down on voluminous dataset (Shwandt 2001; Markham, 2020) resulting from thousands of blog posts, especially as the blogs can post as much as 10 to 20 times each in a day. Markham (2020) emphasises the need to cut down on voluminous datasets in a qualitative study when she states that; "to be fair, narrowing one's focus is important in any qualitative research since even the seemingly tiny projects produce innumerable possibilities for inquiry" (pg.13). The cutting down of the blog posts to just text helped narrow the scope of the work and also provided a more manageable dataset to facilitate in-depth content analysis.

In this regard, the 1,008 posts represent the total number of posts in text form that I came across within the six months on the Facebook pages of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study, bearing in mind that I may have possibly missed some blog posts in text form due to the poor internet connections I sometimes encountered in the course of the six months of data collection. The Facebook pages of the three blogs were preferred owing to a report by Statista (a German company specialising in market and consumer data) in February 2021, which projected Facebook as the second most used social media platform (after WhatsApp) in Ghana in the third quarter of 2020. In addition to the blog posts, I interviewed two of the three bloggers of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study. Although all three bloggers were contacted for the interview, the researcher could access only two of them, as all measures to reach the third blogger proved futile.

3.5 Sampling technique and sample size

The study employed the purposive sampling technique, which according to Castillo (2009), is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher selects respondents based on a specific criterion. Campbell et al. (2020) also state that purposive sampling involves selecting specific kinds of samples that hold important views about the aims and objectives of the research. In this regard, the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs, Celebrities Buzz , Zionfelix Entertainment News and GhSplash Entertainment which were among the top 50 Ghanaian entertainment blogs (Avance Media, 2020), were homogenously selected. Homogenous sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique where the samples selected share very similar characterisitics (Patton,2002).

 The three blogs used in this study were first selected based on the fact that they are all Ghanaian entertainment blogs (entertainment blogs mostly share information meant to entertain and information related to the entaintment industry including music and film); and secondly based on the presence of vulgar contents on all three blogs. Moreover, blog posts from the three blogs used for the study were purposively sampled based on their exhibition of themes that border on vulgarity including obscenity, profanity and invectives (Schnurer, 1941; Seizer, 2011).

3.6 Data Collection Method

3.6.1 Digital Ethnography

The data collection method used for the study is digital ethnography, also referred to as virtual or cyber ethnography (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017). Kaur-Gill & Dutta, (2017) define digital ethnography as a method used to address social phenomenon on digital or virtual spaces, that is, new media, online or social media spaces. Digital

ethnography is derived from ethnography involving research conducted over time through participant observations and interactions with community members (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017). In digital ethnography, Kaur-Gill and Dutta (2017) state that the researcher collects texts and graphics available on digital media and works towards making meaning out of them. Digital ethnography entails studying or observing specific virtual spaces over a period of time for ethnographic insight.

In the context of this study, I observed the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs over a period of six (6) months; that is, from January 1, 2021 to June, 30 2021. According to Schwandt (2001), qualitative studies mostly deal with small data samples, as analysis is often in-depth and voluminous. Lindlof and Taylor (2017) also add that qualitative research cannot capture every detail and event as they unfold in the study. In this regard, although there were blog posts with vulgar contents on the three blogs beyond the period June 2021, the researcher having followed all three blogs (close to a year) prior to this study, considers a six-month period as a fairly enough time to study the phenomenon of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

The observation led to the collection of 1,008 blog posts and a purposive sampling of ninety-three (93) blog posts with vulgar content from the three blogs under study. In the same manner, interactions from interviews with two of the three bloggers whose blogs were used in the study were recorded at the end of the six-month period. Thus both participant observation (of blogs) and interaction with community members (as bloggers) as required in ethnography were all employed in the digital ethnographic process of this study.

Digital ethnography according to Kaur-Gill and Dutta (2017) is the ideal method of data collection for studies like the current one as digital or virtual platforms offer

online cultural realities that demand ethnographic insight. They conclude that "it is particularly insightful when inquiring about the rich existence of cultural life and representation taking place on digital platforms" (pg. 3). The three Ghanaian entertainment blogs in this case are insightful in the quest to explore the existence of vulgarity in the Ghanaian online space based on Ghanaian cultural values.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews are one of the most widely used forms of data collection in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007) and thus necessary in the current study. According to Creswell (2014),qualitatitive interviews can be face-to-face interviews, via telephone, the internet or focus group interviews, which are generally unstructured or made up of open-ended questions to solicit views and opinions from participants in a study. In the current study, I conducted unstructured online interviews to better explore the perspective and insights of two of the three bloggers representing the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study to explore the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. According to Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2016), interviews are used as a research strategy in qualitative studies to gather information about experiences, views and beliefs surrounding the phenomenon under study.

Thus whereas the method of digital ethnography helped the researcher to explore the phenomenon of vulgar language as it exists on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs, the interviews also provided insights (from the perspective of the bloggers) into why the phenomenon exists and the rationale behind its use.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

3.7.1 Digital Ethnography

In the process of digital ethnography, I embarked on daily online visits to the Facebook pages of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study from January 1, 2021, to June 30, 2021, with the help of my mobile phone. This was backed by Wang and Liu (2021)'s recommendation of a regular substantial amount of time, often daily, in a digital ethnographic study for the researcher to familiarize him/herself with the site. The daily online visits were mostly done in the mornings between 7 am and 9 am as I noticed that the blogs mostly post fresh stuff in the mornings to welcome their audience to a new day. Thus in order not to miss a lot of the new posts later in the day when an internet connection is mostly unstable in my jurisdiction, I found the early morning to be a favourable time for online visits. However, on days when the internet was unstable in the mornings, the data collection is done later in the day, either in the evening or at night depending on access to a fairly stable internet connection.

The daily online visits mostly lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour where I spent 15 to 20 minutes on each blog site which is a fairly enough time to go through blog posts and capture both fresh posts and older posts which may have been previously missed. In the course of these daily visits, blog posts in text form, excluding audios and videos were selected and screenshot with the help of a "Samsung Galaxy A30" smartphone which automatically saves the screenshots as pictures in the phone's gallery. I found this appropriate as Sugiura, Wiles and Pope (2017) state that contents in an online space can be gathered either with a computer programme or by manual copy and paste functions. At the end of every daily visit, I proceeded to move the screenshot posts from the phone's gallery to a Dropbox app (a cloud storage application) on the phone,

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which is also accessible on my computer in order to avoid losing any data in the event of a damage to the phone or a misplacement or theft.

At the end of the six-month period, all screenshot blog posts were accessed from the Dropbox app on a Dell laptop and purposively sampled. In the process of purposively sampling, the focus was on posts containing vulgar expressions or denoting themes of vulgarity, including obscenity, profanity and invectives. All these were gathered in a folder and labeled appropriately.

The purposively sampled vulgar posts were further edited on the computer with the help of Microsoft Photo Editor where the vulgar contents were underlined in red and yellow ink to highlight the particular theme of vulgarity they fall under. Thus a red ink indicates an obscene or profane vulgar content, whereas yellow ink indicates an invective. The edited sampled blog posts were further saved into their respective folders bearing the names CelebritiesBuzz, Zionfelix Entertainment Newsand GhSplash Entertainment, representing each of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs involved in the study.

3.7.2 Interviews

The process of digital ethnography was followed by an unstructured one-on-one online interview sessions with two Ghanaian bloggers. Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2009) define unstructured interview, also known as unstandardized interview as one in which there are no set of answers to questions and the interviewer usually follows the direction of the interviewee's responses in the process of the interview. Ryan, Coughlan and Cronin (2009) add that this type of interview comprises of themes rather than specific questions as in the case of standardized interviews. The interview

for this study generally bodered on the theme of vulgarity with the question of why some Ghanaian bloggers engage in vulgar language on their blogs.

Online interview also refers to an interview conducted on the online space (the internet) rather than face-to-face (Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour, 2014). According to Janghorban, Roudsari & Taghipour (2014), technological changes over the years have allowed online interviews to overcome "time and financial constraints, geographical dispersion, and physical mobility boundaries, which have adversely affected onsite interviews" (pg. 1).

In the context of this study, the online interview conducted via WhatsApp came in handy, especially as the participants (bloggers) preferred it to the face-to-face interview due to time constraints and physical mobility boundaries. Thus, coupled with the busy schedules of the bloggers, they opted for a WhatsApp interview as they are both based in Accra, outside of the researcher's jurisdiction in Cape Coast.

Scheduling online interviews with bloggers

On July 22, 2021, between 9:30 am and 9:45 am, I sent messages to the bloggers for GhSplash Entertainment and Zionfelix Entertainment News via their Facebook pages, introducing myself as an Mphil student of University of Education, Winneba and requesting for interviews for a scholarly research. At exactly 9:45 am on the same day, I sent a similar message to the blogger for Celebrities Buzz but this time via WhatsApp as a direct WhatsApp link was provided on the blogger's Facebook page. This message was responded to positively where the blogger consented to the interview and willingly provided the contact of the blogger for GhSplash Entertainment whose message was met with an automatic reply. I contacted the blogger for GhSplash Entertainment that same day and the blogger also consented to

the interview. All efforts to reach the blogger for Zionfelix Entertainment News however proved futile as the message I sent was never replied to.

3.7.2 Interview with blogger for Celebrities Buzz

I messaged the blogger on July 22, 2021 and they consented to schedule an interview with me only on condition that the interview will take place on WhatsApp due to busy schedules. With this, I interviewed the blogger on July, 27, 2021. The interview bodered on the main question of why Ghanaian bloggers use vulgar expressions on their blogs. This was followed up with questions emerging from the blogger's responses on the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. The interview started at 8:52am and ended at 9:16am on the same day.

3.7.3 Interview with blogger for GhSplash Entertainment

On July 28, 2021, a day after the interview with the blogger for Celebrities Buzz, I contacted the blogger for GhSplash Entertainment via Whatsapp at exactly 7:42am and they responded at exactly 8:13am. After a brief introduction, they consented to the interview and proceeded to scheduling it at 1pm on that same day. This blogger also opted for a Whatsapp interview where they would respond to questions with audio recordings or voice notes. The interview lasted for about 45 minutes.

At the end of the two interviews, all questions and responses were left in the WhatsApp chat history of the two bloggers on the researcher's phone after they were copied onto a Microsoft word document with the help of a laptop via WhatsApp Web (WhatsApp for desktop or PC). The whatsApp audio recordings were subsequently transcribed in a word document and all data was saved on a named folder and later retrieved for analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis according to Lindlof and Taylor (2017) refers to the process of condensing raw data into patterns, themes, concepts and propositions. It is the process of breaking down data collected in the course of the research into descriptive and meaningful forms including themes to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The main process of data analysis for the current study is thematic analysis. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is an appropriate method of analysis in a research when seeking to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a data set. Braun and Clarke, (2006) adds that thematic analysis is a way of identifying what is common to the topic under study and of making sense of those commonalities. Thus, in seeking to understand the problem of vulgar language use on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with the help of the research objectives, research questions,theories and relevant literature, thematic analysis to a significant extent appears appropriate for the current research. This is because all the sampled blog posts exhibit themes of vulgarity in the context of this research (obscenity, profanity and invectives). Thus,, analyzing the sampled blog posts under the named themes of vulgarity to answer the research question one which is on the predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs is undoubtedly proper. In the same manner, emerging themes from the online interviews with the two Ghanaian bloggers were also analyzed using the thematic analysis procedures to help provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and the rationale behind its use.

Brawn and Clarke (2006) cited in Kiger and Varpio (2020) talk about the most widely-accepted steps in conducting a thematic analysis of data to include the following:

1. **Familiarizing oneself with the data**: This is the first step in the process of thematic analysis and involves repeatedly reading through the data to become familiar with the entire data set. Familiarizing yourself with the data is the foundational for all subsequent steps in a thematic analysis process. In the context of this study, the researcher repeatedly and thoroughly read through the sampled blog posts and responses from the bloggers interviewed for a firsthand experience of the data collected for the study.

2. **Generating initial codes:** This helped to organize data at a specific level with the researcher taking notes on potential data items of interest. This step specifically dealt with generating codes (the most basic forms of data that can be analyzed meaningfully) manually or with the help of a computer program, and not themes. In arriving at this step, the researcher in this study manually generated codes by penning down all ideas that emerged from the data in the form of words and phrases. Here, words like "dick", "pussy", "prostitute"; and phrases like "hard audience" and "vulgarity sells" among others emerged and were later developed into themes.

3. **Searching for themes:** This involved examining the generated codes to look for potential themes through analyzing, combining, comparing and mapping how codes relate to one another. As stated earlier, the generated codes in the form of words and phrases were compared and those that were related to vulgarity were grouped to form common themes for the purpose of thematic analysis.

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4. **Reviewing themes:** This involves reviewing the generated themes to check whether there is adequate data to support them. Here, themes are revised and modified by joining themes, dividing themes or even discarding themes for a better and adequate data analysis. In the current study, the generated themes were reviewed and grouped under the main themes that define vulgarity, that is, obscenity, profanity and invectives.

5. **Defining and naming themes:** This involved defining each theme to ensure they are brief and adequately descriptive of the phenomenon under study. In the process of naming the generated themes, three predominant themes primarily bodering on the phenomenon on vulgarity including "sexual expletives", "prohibitive body parts" and "invectives" were named. The analysis of these themes was used in answering the research question one on the predominant themes of vulgarity used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

 "Sexual expletives" as a theme is coded as use of words and expressions that paint vivid pictures of wild sexual acts like "pussy licking" and "chopping kɔte" (eating penis). These expressions according to Fordjour (2016) have the tendency to arouse sexual passions and lead to immorality.

"Prohibitive body parts" as a theme in this study refers to the unacceptable use of names of sex organs and other body parts in the public domain. Examples include "twɛ" (Akan name for the vagina), "kɔte" (Akan name for the penis) and "trumu" (Akan name for the anus) whose public use is culturally frowned upon in Ghana (Fordjour, 2016).

The theme of "invectives" in the context of this study refers to insulting, abusive and derogatory remarks. Such expressions include "stop fooling", "prostitute" and

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"stupidity" which according to Ofori (2015) represent an uncouth behavior that is frowned upon in any civilized society.

Moreover, to help answer the research question three on the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers, the themes of "hard audience", "economic benefits of blogging", "audience' obsession with vulgarity" and "bloggers obsession with fame" were named and defined to help in the thematic analysis of the phenomenon under study. The theme of "hard audience" emerged when one blogger revealed that the audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs are "hard" which means that the audience do not like good stories or stories devoid of vulgar language. In his words, "the Ghanaian audience are hard; they don't like reading about good things". Thus the theme of "hard audience" constitutes reasons that account for bloggers' use of vulgar language on their blogs in their quest to please their audience.

"Economic benefits of blogging" is a theme that was also generated when one blogger stated categorically that she is into blogging solely to make money and thus would publish anything that would give her blog traffic. She states that "vulgarity especially in the Akan language sells" and she engages in it for money.

"Audience' obsession with vulgarity" as a theme emerged after a thorough review of the responses from the two bloggers interviewed which led to the conclusion that the Ghanaian audience to a significant extent loves the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. Consequently, "bloggers obsession with fame" also emerged with the conclusion that audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs alone cannot take the blame when it comes to the use of vulgar language on the blogs. Thus inasmuch as the bloggers put the blame on their audience that they

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(the audience) do not like stories devoid of vulgar language, one can equally argue that the bloggers keep up with what they claim their audience like just to reach more audience and achieve fame in the long run. audience have only become used to what the bloggers feed them with on their blogs, which is vulgar language.

6. **Producing the report:** This is the final step in a thematic analysis process and involves a written analysis and description of the findings of the research (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The final report of the thematic analysis of the current study is seen in the findings and discussion section of this paper.

Akinyode and Khan (2018) posits that a proper understanding of the steps necessary in a qualitative data analysis cannot be overemphasized as it leads to a better interpretation of data. This implies that proper data analysis involves careful implementation of established data analysis procedures. With this, the most widely-accepted steps in conducting a thematic analysis according to Kiger and Varpio (2020) as explored above served its purpose of ensuring an adequately informative analysis of data in the current study.

3.9 Trustworthiness of data

Nowell et al. (2017) explain trustworthiness in a qualitative research as way in which a researcher demonstrates to readers that the research, with special regard to data analysis, has been conducted in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner worthy of attention. Gunawan (2015) adds that a research can only be judged as trustworthy by readers of the research. This means that, in the course of the study, the researcher must strive to ensure trustworthiness such that the study is found credible in the eyes of readers.

Creswell (2014) posits eight methods of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research including triangulation, member checking, rich, thick description, clarifying bias, presenting negative or discrepant information, prolonged time at the field, peer debriefing and external audits. According to Creswell (2014), these methods help to provide accuracy to the research findings which can be attested to by both the researcher and readers. Creswell (2014) further recommends multiple (more than one) approaches in a research to enhance the accuracy of findings and convince readers of the trustworthiness of the data in the research. In this regard, the researcher in the current study employed five out of the eight methods; triangulation, member checking, rich, thick description, spending prolonged time in the field and peer debriefing in a quest to prove the trustworthiness of the data analysis in this study. Creswell (2014) explains the eight methods of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research as follows; indicating how the five methods chosen by the rsearcher were applied and how the remaining three methods do not apply to the current study:

Triangulation: This method of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research involves using different sources of data or information for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study. In the context of this study, the researcher collected data from three different Ghanaian entertainment blogs in addition to interviewing two Ghanaian bloggers for their various perspectives on the phenomenon. At the end of it all, the 93 vulgar blog posts that were sampled from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs which were further grouped under various themes provided a comprehensive understanding of the vulgarity that exists on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. In addition, the varying perspectives of the two Ghanaian

bloggers which were discussed as themes also helped to provide insight into why the phenomenon of vulgar language exist on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

Member checking: This involves taking the final descriptions or specific themes back to the participants of the study so that they (the participants) can determine whether they are accurate representations of their inputs. Here, the themes that emerged from the bloggers perspective through the initial interview conducted were evaluated by the two bloggers in a short WhatsApp messaging where they both agreed to the themes I have come up with in my analysis and confirmed they are a true reflection of their perspectives in their respective interviews.

Rich, thick description: This involves providing a detailed description of the data, including multiple persepectives of themes to enrich the analysis of the research findings. In the context of this study, the vulgar words and expressions present in the ninety-three sampled blog posts are vividly and adequately explained and accurately placed at where they evidently fall within the context of vulgarity including obscenity, profanity and invectives (Schnurer, 1941; Seizer, 2011).

Clarifying the bias: Clarifying the bias in a qualitative research involves the researcher portraying how their gender or cultural and historical backgrounds affected their interpretation of the research findings. This method of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research helps present an honest analysis which readers would find credible. With regard to the current study, there was no bias to be clarified and so this method was not employed.

Presenting negative or discrepant information that runs counter to the themes: This means that the researcher must include all conflicting information in the

discussion to make the anlysis more realistic and credible to readers. This method was also not employed in the current study as there were no conflicting ideas to be incuded in the analysis.

Spending prolonged time in the field: This involves the the researcher spending an extensive amount of time at the data site in order to obtain a deep insight or understanding of the phenomenon under study. This will help the researcher to come out with more accurate and credible findings. In the context of this study, the researcher observed the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs over a period of six (6) months; that is, from January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021 which led to the collection of 1,008 blog posts. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2017), qualitative research cannot capture every detail and event as they unfold in the study. In this regard, a six-month period is a fairly enough time to study the phenomenon of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. This is evident in the 93 vulgar blog posts which were sampled from the total 1008 blog posts collected within the six-month period. Thus the analysis of the 93 sampled vulgar blog posts in addition to interviews with bloggers did give a deep insight into the phenomenon under study.

Using peer debriefing: Peer debriefing involves the researcher making the final account available to another person (usually a familiar person) to review and interrogate to enhance accuracy. Here, the researcher employed the service of a debrifer (a lecturer at the University of Cape Coast) whose review enhanced the accuracy of this study.

Using an external auditor to review the entire project: This involves the researcher employing an external auditor to review the final work to help provide an objective assessment of the research. This method of ensuring trustworthiness in the research is

different from peer debriefing as the external auditor is usually not familiar with the researcher. (Creswell, 2014) this method of ensuring trustworthiness in a qualitative research was not employed in this study.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

Creswell (2009) posits that in the interpretation of data in a qualitative research including those done on the internet or electronic media such as the current study, researchers need to provide accurate account of the information gathered. He continues that there should be no room for suppressing, falsifying, or inventing findings to meet a researcher's or an audience's needs.

Sugiura (2017) also argues that researchers in a cyber-ethnographic studies should assess the privacy of the cyber space to determine whether or not to seek consent for data collection, adding that potential participants should be made to decide if they want to participate in the study or not.

Drawing insights from these scholars, the analysis of the findings drawn from the data collected by the researcher in the form of blog posts and perspectives of bloggers in the current study are nothing but true reflections of the issue of vulgarity as they play out on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

Moreover, all three blogs used for the current study can be considered as public spaces which needed no consent from the bloggers as the blog posts are made public and can therefore be easily accessed by anyone without permission or necessarily being a follower of the blogs. Studies carried out on public internet spaces like the current one according to Sugiura (2017) ensures that natural behaviour is observed in

its natural context. Thus the blogs carried on with the postings of vulgar content within the period of study just as they have been noted to do prior to the study.

Furthermore, all three bloggers of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs were contacted for the purpose of interviews to which two of them responded and duly honoured. Here, the bloggers were made to be in the know that their blogs have been selected and their perspectives were needed for research purposes which they readily consented to, and thus fulfilled the recommendation of participants being made to decide whether or not to participate in the study (Sugiura, 2017).

However, the identies of the two bloggers interviewed have not been revealed in any part of this research. In this regard, the pseudonyms P1 and P2 (pseudonym 1 and pseudonym 2) have been used to represent the two Ghanaian bloggers to help conceal their identity. This anonymity is necessary in a qualitative research and it is motivated by the desire to conceal the identities of research participants to protect them from any possible harm that their real identities may pose to them. (Tilley & Woodthorpe,2011) Thus, in the quest to answer the research question three on the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers, the various perceptions of the bloggers that have been have been discussed as themes cannot be tied particularly to any of the two Ghanaian bloggers interviewed for this study. At the end of the interviews, the researcher proceeded to confirm with the two bloggers that the themes inferred from their perspectives are indeed a true representation of the interviews. In a nutshell, no part of this research has been suppressed, falsified (Creswell, 2009) or unnecessarily exaggerated for any reason.

3.11 Summary of the chapter

The chapter consists of the research approach, research design, population, sampling and sampling technique, data collection method, data collection procedure, data analysis method, data analysis procedure and trustworthiness of data which altogether have aided in a proper analysis of data collected for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of vulgar language and the overall success of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents analysis and discussion of findings from the data collected from sampled blog posts from the Facebook pages of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study, and the perspectives of the two Ghanaian bloggers interviewed in the course of the study. These are presented with the help of frequency tables and charts and further discussed under thematic analysis. The study focused on the use of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with the help of the following research questions:

1. What are the predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

2. Which institutions and personalities are featured in the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

3. What is the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers?

To help answer the above research questions, a thematic analysis of the emerging themes generated from the sampled blog posts and the interviews conducted have been duly explored.

4.1 What are the predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

In answering the research question one on the predominant themes that emerge from the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs, the following themes emerged; *sexual expletives, prohibitive body parts* and *invectives.*

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4.1.1 Sexual expletives

Out of the ninety-three (93) sampled blog posts containing vulgar contents, forty (40) emerged under the theme of sexual expletives representing 43 per cent (43.01%) of sampled blog posts. GhSplash Entertainmenthad nineteen (19) blog posts under the theme of *sexual expletives*; Zionfelix Entertainment Newshad thirteen (13) and Celebrities Buzz also had eight (8).

In table 1 is a display of the theme of *sexual expletives* and its frequency on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

Table 1: Sexual expletives on Ghanaian entertainment blogs

Blog	Frequency	Per centage
GhSplash Entertainment Entertainment	19	47.5
Zion Felix Entertainment News	13	32.5
Celebrities Buzz	8	20
Total	40	100

As seen in Table 1, GhSplash Entertainmentemerged with the highest number of posts (19) under the theme of sexual expletives. This was followed by Zion Felix Entertainment with 13 posts and then Celebrities Buzz with 8 posts.

Sexual expletives as a theme in the context of this study is defined by the use of sexually explicit words and expressions that paint vivid pictures of wild sexual acts. It refers to words and expressions that talk about the act of sexual intercourse in an immoral way. According to Fordjour (2016), this act is not acceptable in the Ghanaian culture. The theme stems from the moral concept of vulgarity established by Schnurer (1941) which focuses the concept of vulgarity on obscenity and profanity. Wene and

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Ena (2020) define obscenity to characterise sexual function and excretion in a crude way, and profanity to involve the rough use of what is considered sacred which confirms the theme especially as the sampled blog posts under the theme of *sexual expletives* exhibit what has already been established.

The following figures show samples of the 40 blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs that emerged under the theme of *sexual expletives*. The profane and obscene vulgar expressions have been underlined with red ink for emphasis.

GhSplash Entertainment

Figure 2: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook-GhSplash Entertainment**

Figure 3: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash Entertainment**

Figure 4: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash Entertainment**

Zionfelix Entertainment News

Figure 5: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment**

News

Figure 6: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment**
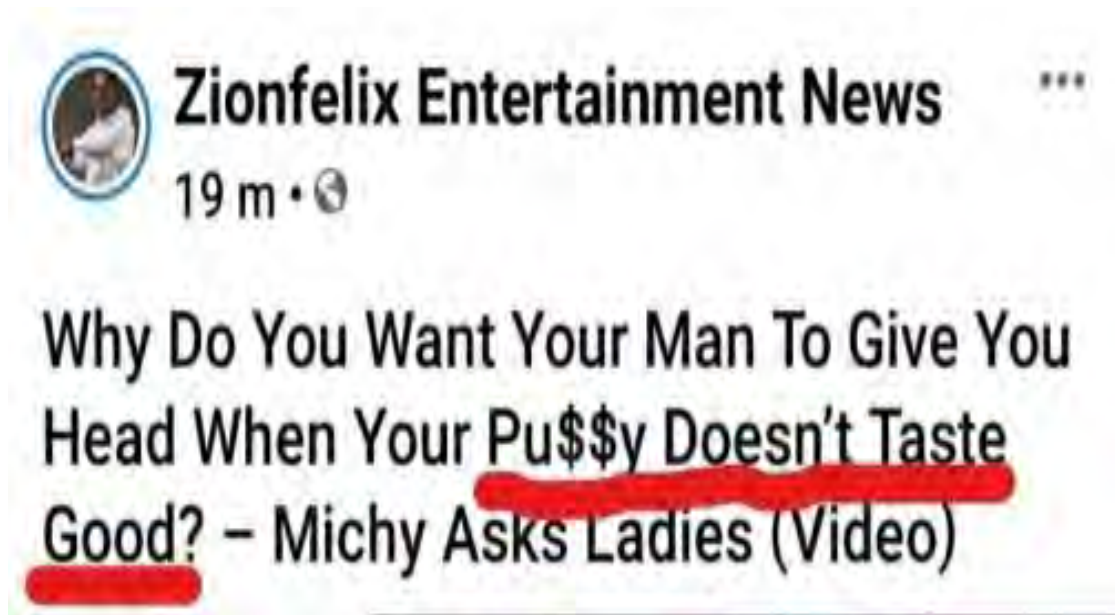
News

Figure 7: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment**

News

Celebrities Buzz

Figure 8: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz**

Celebrities Buzz
2 Feb · 🌐

Photos of the beautiful & curvy cousin Ayisha Modi is alleging Shatta Wale is 'Eating'

The lady deaa she dey bee mmom

Figure 9: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz**

Celebrities Buzz
35 m · 🌐

If you are a lady & you text me, I'll use my fame to Chop you without giving you anything – Oseikrom Sikanii
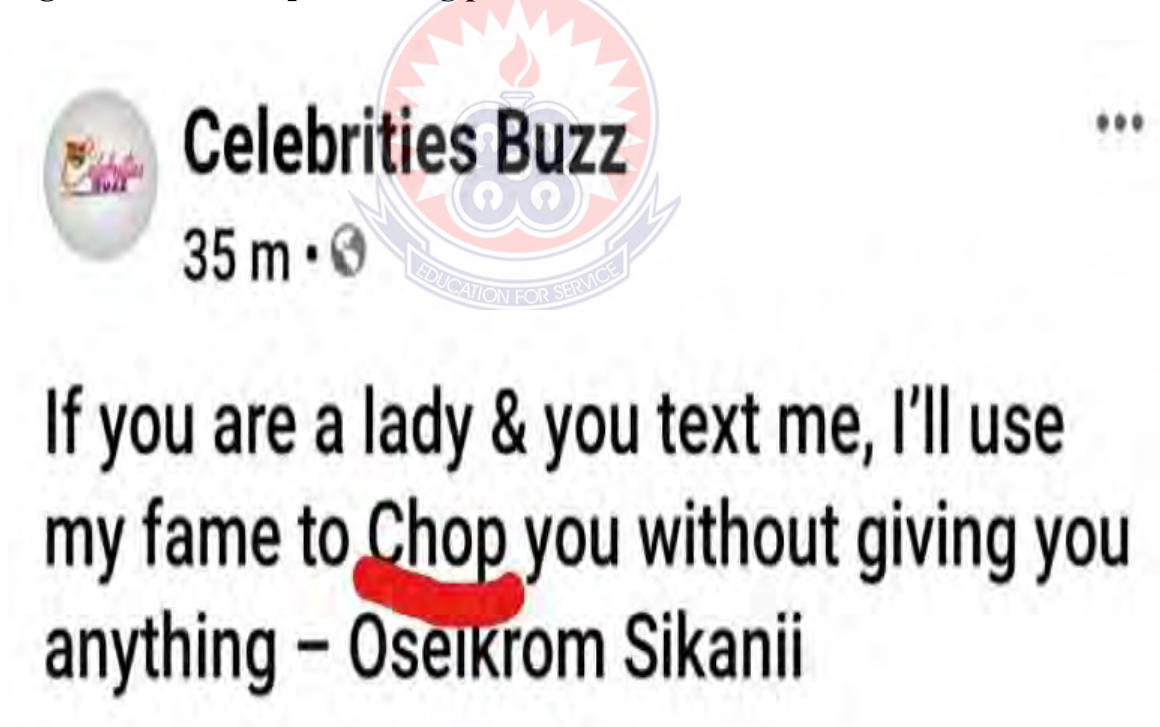
Figure 10: *Sexual expletive* **blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz**

The obscene and profane expressions evident in the above blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs are "chopping koti", "trumudii" and "eats" (GhSplash Entertainment); "fingering", "pussy licking" and "pussy doesn't taste good" (Zionfelix Entertainment News); and "chopping" and "eating" (Celebrities Buzz).

The expression "chopping koti" in Figure 2 literally means "eating penis" as "kɔte" is the Akan name for penis. Moreover, "chopping" in the Ghanaian context means to eat or consume something. "Trumudii" in Figure 3 is also an Akan expression for anal sex as "trumu" is the Akan word for anus and "dii" is an Akan verb which means to eat. The expression "eats" is used in Figure 4 to refer to sexual intercourse in a rude manner as it portrays "Salinko's wife" as a food meant to be consumed. "Fingering" as used in Figure 5 connotes a sexual act which literally involves one inserting fingers into the vagina. "Pussy licking" in Figure 6 also literally refers to one licking the vagina of a sex partner. The expression "pussy doesn't taste good" used in Figure 7 is referring to the vagina of the addressee as unappealing in sexual context. "Chopping", "eating" and "chop" as used in Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10 respectively are all in their context referring to sexual intercourse in a rather crude manner. All these expressions as used in the blog posts by the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs go against the acceptable norm of making reference to the act of sexual intercourse in a refined manner to rather paint explicit pictures of something considered sacred in the Ghanaian context.

According to Fordjour (2016), sexual intercourse is considered sacred such that direct mention of it especially in public is considered vulgar in the Akan setting. He argues that "me ne no ada" or "me de me ho aka no" in Akan (I slept with him or her) is preferred to the plain language "m'adi no" (in Akan) which literally means "I've

eaten" or "I've chopped" in the context of sexual intercourse. He concludes that such obscene and profane expressions have the tendency to arouse sexual passions and lead to immorality.

4.1.2 Prohibitive body parts

Out of the ninety-three (93) sampled blog posts, ten (10) emerged under the theme of "prohibitive body parts" representing 10 per cent (10.75%) of sampled blog posts. Zionfelix Entertainment Newshad six (6) blog posts under the theme of "prohibitive body parts"; GhSplash Entertainmenthad four (4) and Celebrities Buzz had none (zero).

Table 2 is a display of the theme of *prohibitive body parts* and its frequency on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

Table 2: Prohibitive body parts on Ghanaian entertainment blogs

Blog	Frequency	Per centage
Zion Felix Entertainment News	6	60
GhSplash Entertainment Entertainment	4	40
Total	10	100

As shown in Table 2, Zionfelix Entertainment Newstook the lead in the theme of prohibitive body parts with 6 posts followed by GhSplash Entertainmentwith 4 posts. Celebrities Buzz however did not feature in the theme of *prohibitive body parts* at all.

The theme of "prohibitive body parts" in this study is characterized by the unacceptable use of names of sex organs and other body parts in the public domain. According to Schnurer (1941), "the growth of taboos brought with it a vast flood of

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euphemisms and hence the struggle to expel from the mind bodily parts and functions, and in particular those which are associated with digestion and sex" (pg. 8 & 9). This means that in the context of vulgarity, the use of certain names of some parts of the body, especially those associated with sex are prohibited and considered taboo Schnurer (1941). Thus in the context of this study, the theme of *prohibitive body parts* is characterized by prohibited or culturally unacceptable names used to refer to sex organs and other body parts.

The following images show samples of the 10 blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs that emerged under the theme of "prohibitive body parts". The prohibitive names have been underlined with red ink for emphasis.

Zionfelix Entertainment News

Figure 11: Prohibitive body part blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix

   Entertainment News

Figure 12: Prohibitive body part blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix

Entertainment News

Figure 13: *Prohibitive body part* blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix

Entertainment News

GhSplash Entertainment

GHANA ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
GHSPLASH GOSSIP

"εtwe biaa yε εtwε" –
Patapaa replies lady
who asked why he
chose White lady over
Ghanaians (Video)

Figure 14: *Prohibitive body part* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash**

Entertainment

GhSplash Entertainment
19 Jan · 🌐

VIDEO: Rev. Anthony Kwadwo Boakye
also talked about a lady who stormed his
office to accuse him of stealing her
'εtwε'

Figure 15: *Prohibitive body part* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash**

Entertainment

GHANA ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
GHSPLASH GOSSIP

Ghanaian Gay actor recounts how his 'Trumu' got rotten (Video)

Figure 16: *Prohibitive body part* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash**

Entertainment

"Pussy" and "dick" as used in Figure 11 and 12 respectively are both prohibitive names used to refer to the vagina and penis respectively. In their study of the use of swearwords in blog data, Lutzy and Kehoe (2016) included the words "pussy" (vagina), "dick" (penis) and "ass" (buttocks or anus) in their list of vulgar words used on blogs and thus making the use of these words unacceptable. The words "twɛ", "ɛtwɛ" and "trumu" as used in Figure 13, Figure 14 and Figure 15, and Figure 16 respectively are the Akan names for the vagina and the anus respectively.

However, according to Fordjour (2016), using such names publicly is frowned upon in Ghana. He argues that in the Akan setting, the girl child is taught that her vagina is called "n'ase" in the same way the boy child is taught that his penis is called "ne barima". Thus "n'ase" and "ne barima" are considered more appropriate to use compared to "ɛtwɛ" and "kɘte" which are both considered vulgar. Consequently, "ne to" or "agyanan kwan" in Akan is considered a more appropriate way of referring to the anus in the Ghanaian cultural context. This means that the use of "pussy", "dick", "kɘte", "ɛtwɛ" and "trumu" to refer to the vagina, penis and anus respectively in the

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blog posts representing *prohibitive body parts* is considered vulgar and culturally unacceptable both in Ghana and elsewhere.

From the analysis of *prohibitive body parts* above, the female sex organ was alluded to nine (9) times; the male organ two (2) times, and the anus once (1), indicating that vulgar expressions for the vagina dominate other body parts (penis and anus) on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study.

4.1.3 Invectives

Out of the ninety-three (93) sampled blog posts, forty-three (43) emerged under the theme of "invectives" representing 46 per cent (46.24%) of overall sampled blog posts. GhSplash Entertainmenthad twenty-four (24) blog posts under the theme of "invectives"; Zionfelix Entertainment Newshad thirteen (13) and Celebrities Buzz also had six (6).

Table 3 displays the theme of *invectives* and its frequency on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study.

Table 3: Invectives on Ghanaian entertainment blogs

Blog	Frequency	Per centage
GhSplash Entertainment Entertainment	24	47.5
Zion Felix Entertainment News	13	32.5
Celebrities Buzz	6	20
Total	43	100

As evident in Table 3, GhSplash Entertainmentemerged with the highest number of posts (24) under the theme of invectives. Zion Felix Entertainment followed this with 13 posts and then Celebrities Buzz with 6 posts.

Seizer (2011) establishes the concept of vulgarity beyond obscenity and profanity. According to him, vulgar words equally cover derogatory words that are capable of causing discomfort and anger when they are used. Thompson and Agyekum (2015) refer to such derogatory words as invectives; that is, abusive or insulting words or expressions with a "violent censure or reproach on the addressee" (pg. 5). This means that the concept of vulgarity goes beyond obscenity and profanity to include expressions that are unacceptable by social standards which justifies the theme of invectives in the current study. In this regard, the theme of *invectives* in the context of this study refers to words and expressions that are insulting, abusive and derogatory.

The following images show samples of the 43 blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs that emerged under the theme of *invectives*. The insulting, abusive and derogatory expressions have been underlined with yellow ink for emphasis.

GhSplash Entertainment Entertainment

GHANA NEWS   GHSPLASH GOSSIP

Parents of overused lady with sagging breast deserve only GH¢100 as bride price – Prophet Kofi Oduro

Figure 17: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash Entertainment**

GHANA NEWS   GHSPLASH GOSSIP

Owusu Bempah is impotent; his pɛnɨs is filled with evil deeds, not spɛɤms – Pep Donkor

Figure 18: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash Entertainment**

Wo Gyimii no, Kwasia your Dad didn't sleep, he worked hard to make life easy for you – Twene Jonas to Kennedy Osei

Figure 19: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, GhSplash Entertainment**

Zionfelix Entertainment NewsEntertainment News

People With No Sense And Have Kerosene Pumped In Their Minds Will Think Kwaku Manu is Chopping Me – Kumawood Actress Afia Atopa

Figure 20: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment News**

Figure 21: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment News**

Figure 22: Invective blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment News
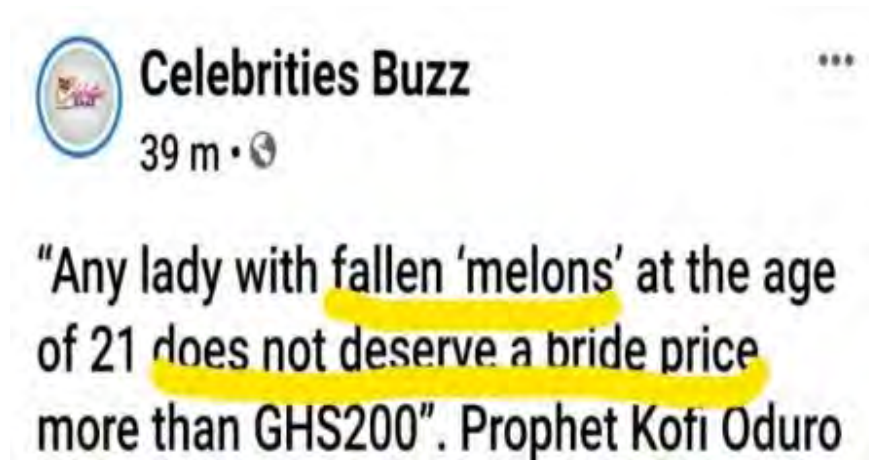
Celebrities Buzz

Figure 23: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz**

Figure 24: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz**
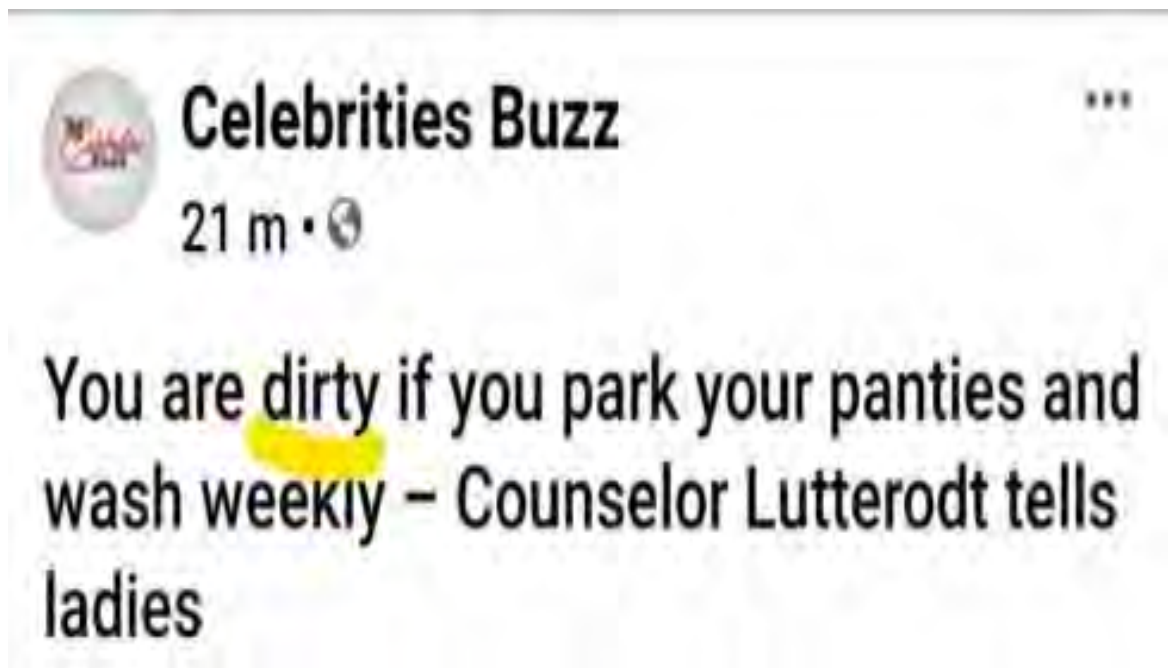
Figure 25: *Invective* **blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz**

"Overused lady with sagging breast" as used in Figure 17 is an abusive remark describing a lady as one who has had multiple sexual encounters in addition to body shaming her as having sagging breasts. "Owusu Bempah is impotent; his penis is filled with evil deeds" in Figure 18 is also an abusive remark describing the addressee as one who lacks sexual prowess in addition to associating his penis with evil. The expression "wo gyimii no; kwasia" used in Figure 19 is an insulting expression describing the addressee as foolish and stupid. "People with no sense and have kerosene pumped in their minds" used in Figure 20 is a derogatory remark referring to the addressees as senseless or lacking straight thinking minds. Also, the word "prostitute" used to describe Ghanaian artiste Kuami Eugene's mother in Figure 21 is an insulting word that describes the woman as promiscuous. "You are fool" as used in Figure 22 is also an insult referring to the addressees as foolish or senseless. "Lady with fallen melons does not deserve bride price" used in Figure 23 is an offensive expression that is body shaming the addressee as having sagging breasts and

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additionally not deserving bride price (money paid by groom to bride's family) which simply means the person is unworthy of marriage. "Wenim side by side tisɛ drawer" as used Figure 24 is also an Akan derogatory expression literally translated as "your face like a drawer" to liken the face of the addressee to a drawer. The word "dirty" as used in Figure 25 is an insulting word referring to the addressee as unclean.

According to Ofori (2015) insults represent an uncouth behavior that is frowned upon in any civilized society. Thompson and Agyekum (2015) also add that an invective is "a face-threatening communicative behavior" which has the potential to humiliate, offend or provoke, and are used by people to show displeasure or disapproval of others.(pg. 5) Moreover, Fordjour (2016) concludes that abusive words have the tendency to wreck peace and all these are an indication that not only are invectives considered vulgar and culturally unacceptable in the Ghanaian context but their adverse effects on individuals and society as a whole cannot be overemphasized.

From the analysis of the three predominant themes above, the theme of *invectives* emerged as the dominant theme of vulgarity used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs representing 46 per cent of sampled blog posts. This was followed by the theme of *sexual expletives* with 43 per cent and then *prohibitive body parts* representing 10 per cent as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Predominant themes of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment

   blogs

Theme	Frequency	Per centage
Invectives	43	46.2
Sexual expletives	40	43.1
Prohibitive body parts	10	10.7
Total	93	100

Moreover, GhSplash Entertainmentemerged the leading Ghanaian blog with the most vulgar content represented by 47 vulgar blog posts out of the ninety-three (93) sampled blog posts. This was followed by Zionfelix Entertainment Newswith 32 vulgar blog posts and then Celebrities Buzz with 14 vulgar blog posts as shown in Table 5.
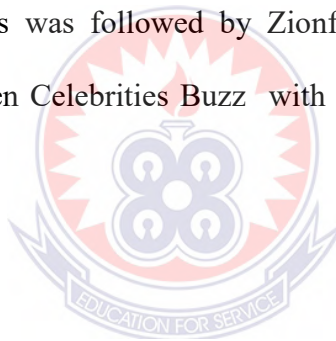
Table 5: Comparative frequency of the predominant themes of vulgarity on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs

Themes	GhSplash Entertainment	Zionfelix Entertainment News	Celebrities Buzz
Invectives	24	13	6
Sexual expletives	19	13	8
Prohibitive body parts	4	6	0
Total	47	32	14
Per centage	50.5	34.4	15.1

As seen in Table 5 above, GhSplash Entertainmentemerged the leading Ghanaian blog with the most vulgar content representing 50 per cent (50.5%). This was followed by Zionfelix Entertainment Newswith 34 per cent (34.4%) and then Celebrities Buzz representing 15 per cent (15.1%) of sampled vulgar blog posts.

Consequently, the bar graph (Fig 18) shows the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs under study and their frequency in all the three predominant themes in the study.
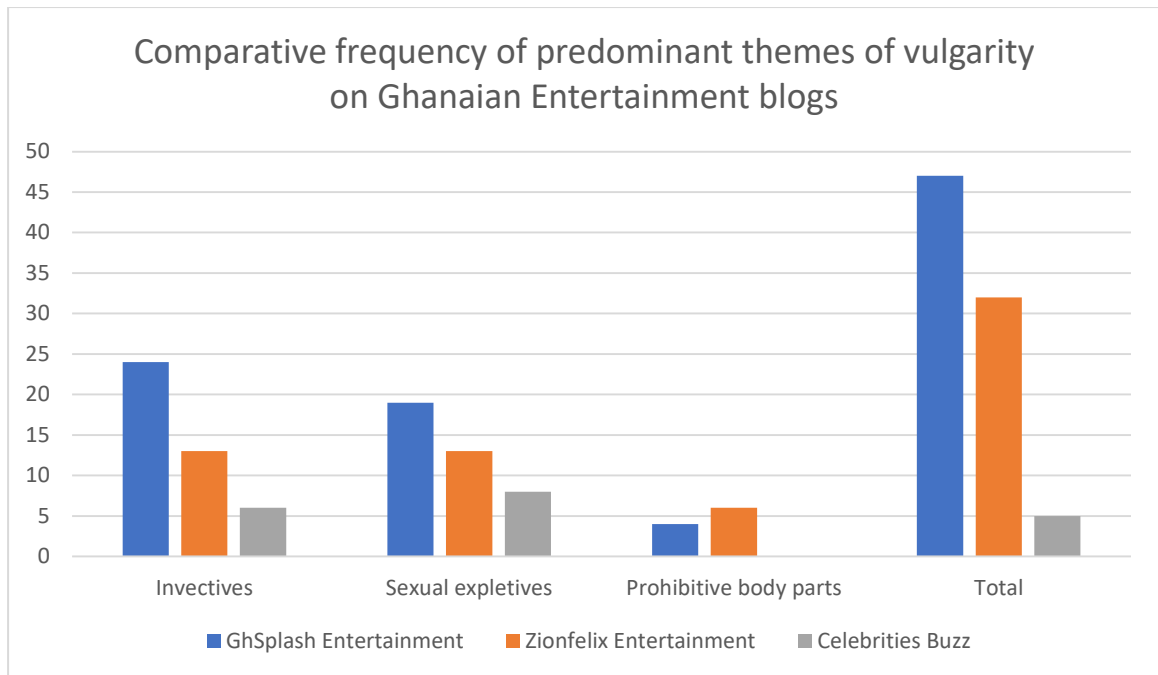
Figure 26: Comparative frequency of predominant themes of vulgarity on Ghanaian Entertainment blogs

As seen in Figure 18, GhSplash Entertainmentwhich emerged as the blog with the most vulgar content leads in two of the themes; *sexual expletives* and *invectives*. Zfion Felix Entertainment which emerged the second Ghanaian blog with the more vulgar content also leads in the theme of *prohibitive body parts* whereas Celebrity Buzz which emerged as the Ghanaian blog with least vulgar content features in only two of the themes (*sexual expletives* and *invectives*) with the least number of posts.

From the discussion of the three predominant themes that emerge in the use of vulgar expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs above, the theory employed in the study, the online disinhibition effect, evidently plays a significant role to justify its inclusion in this research. The online disinhibition effect plays a direct role in explaining why vulgar language exists on the Ghanaian online space even when it is culturally unacceptable in the real Ghanaian world. According to Lapidot-Lefler and

Barak (2015), online disinhibition effect is reflected in reduced behavioral inhibitions; a reduced regard for social behavioral boundaries while in the online space. With this, it is safe to say that the online disinhibition effect is what accounts for the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. That is, the theory directly speaks to the question of why vulgarity exists on Ghanaian entertainment blogs even when it is evidently frowned upon in the Ghanaian society. Even though the online disinhibition effect can be manifest both positively and negatively (Lapidot-Lefler and Barak, 2015), what is evident on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs involved in the study is the negative manifestations of the theory.

According to Cheung, Wong and Chan (2016), the negative manifestations of the online disinhibition effect is mostly seen in the use of rude or foul language, and this is evident in the predominant themes that emerged in this study. Thus, the themes of vulgarity that emerged in the quest to answer the research question one on the predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs are an indication that vulgar language indeed exists on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. With the prevalence of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with evidence from the themes that emerged, it is safe to say at this point that it is the online disinhibition effect that accounts for the vulgarity on the blogs even when it is frowned upon by the Ghanaian culture.

4.2 Who are the targets of the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

In answering the question of who the targets of the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs are, notable Ghanaian institutions (organisations, agencies, groups) and other personalities (musicians, politicians, chiefs, pastors,

actors, lawyers and media practitioners) emerged. Out of the 93 sampled blog posts, seven (7) featured institutions including the police, school (law school), religious groups (Christians), ethnic groups (Ashantis) and social groups (fix the country conveners) as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Institutions featured in vulgar expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs

Institutions	Frequency	Percentage
Ghana Police	3	3.2
Law School	1	1.1
Christians	1	1.1
Ashanti Youths	1	1.1
Fix the country conveners	1	1.1
Other	86	92.4
Total	93	100

As evident in Table 6, the Ghana Police Service as an institution in Ghana appeared the most featured institution in the use of vulgar expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with 3 blog posts. The remaining groups including law school, religious (Christians), ethnic (Ashanti youths) and social ("Fix the country" conveners) were all featured once each in 4 out of the 7 blog posts representing institutions. The majority of the vulgar expressions, 86 (92.4%) had nothing to do with specific institutions. They either targeted individual personalities or were just general vulgar posts.

The following images show samples of the 7 blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs that featured notable Ghanaian institutions.

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Zionfelix Entertainment News
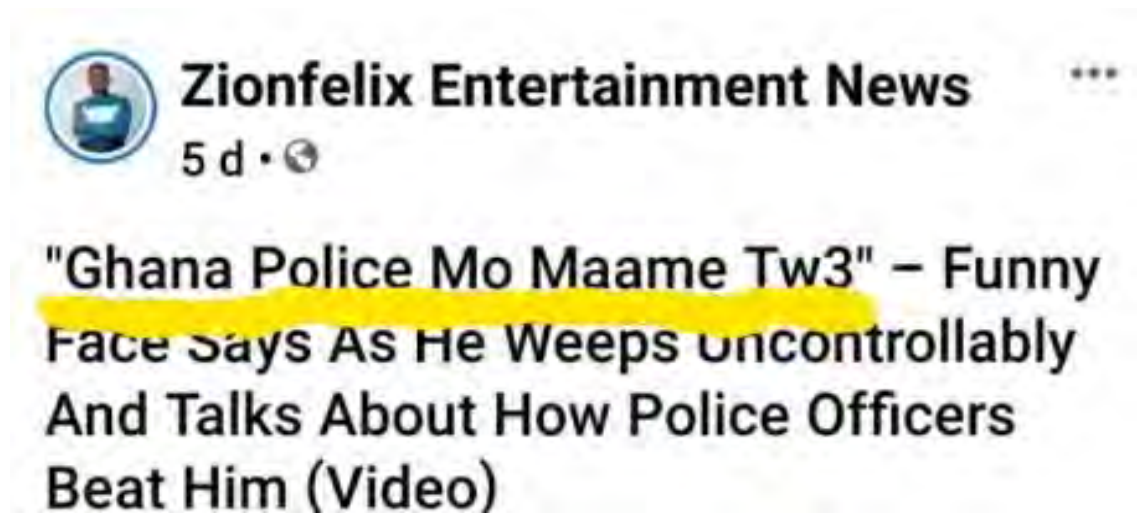
Figure 27: Vulgar blog post featuring *institutions*; Facebook, Zionfelix

   Entertainment News

Figure 28: Vulgar blog post featuring *institutions*; Facebook, Zionfelix

   Entertainment News
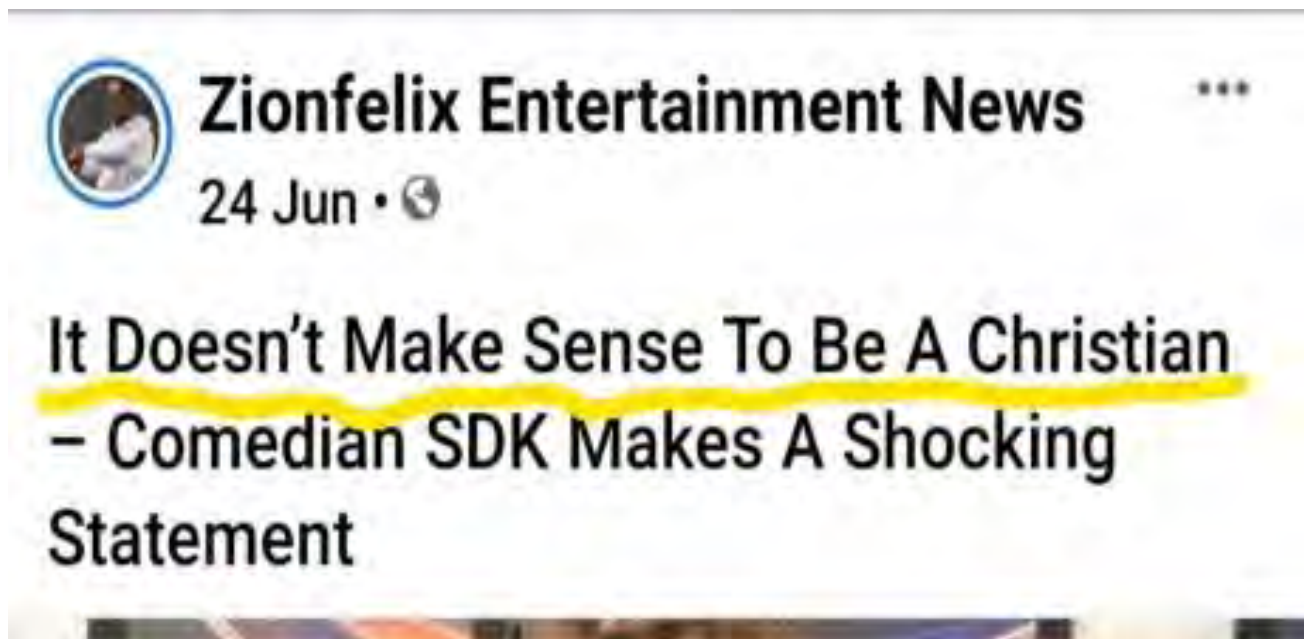
Figure 29: Vulgar blog post featuring *institutions*; Facebook, Zionfelix

Entertainment News

GhSplash Entertainment

Figure 30: Vulgar blog post featuring *institutions*; Facebook, GhSplash

Entertainment

GHANA ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
GHSPLASH GOSSIP

Law School is not like chopping Koti — Afia Schwar mocks Mona Gucci for lying to Ghanaians

Figure 31: Vulgar blog post featuring *institutions*; Facebook, GhSplash

        Entertainment

The expression "Ghana Police mo maame twɛ" as used in figure 19 is an Akan insult literally translated as "your mother" or "your mother's vagina". Thus the expression is a direct insult to "Ghana Police" making reference to the vaginas of their mothers. "You are all fools" as used to refer to "Ashanti youth" in figure 20 is an insult referring to the people in the group as foolish or senseless. The expression "it doesn't make sense to be a Christian" in figure 21 is a derogatory remark describing "christians" as people who lack sound judgment. "Fix the country people are educated fools and cheap thinkers" as used in figure 21 is also an insult referring to "fix the country" convenors as people who lack knowledge or common sense and are also shallow thinkers. In the expression "law school is not like chopping koti" in figure 22, a revered institution (law school) is featured in the vulgar expression "chopping koti" which literally means "eating penis".

Aside the 7 blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs that featured notable Ghanaian institutions as already discussed, seventy-five (75) blog posts out of the 93 also featured notable Ghanaian personalities including musicians, media

practitioners, actors, pastors, politicians (including President Akufo-Addo), lawyers and chiefs as shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Personalities featured in vulgar expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs

Personalities	Frequency	Percentage
Musicians	25	29.1
Actors	16	18.6
Media practitioners	14	16.2
Pastors	11	12.8
Politicians	7	8.1
Lawyers	1	1.2
Chiefs	1	1.2
Other	11	12.8
Total	86	100

From Table 7 musicians as are in the lead with 25 posts out of the 75 blog posts featuring personalities. This is followed by actors with 16 posts; media practitioners with 14; pastors with 11; and politicians (including President Akufo-Addo) with 7 posts. Moreover, lawyers and chiefs (Otumfour Osei Tutu II) were each featured once in the sampled blog posts.

The remaining eleven 11 blog posts out of the 93 sampled blog posts however did not feature any specific institutions or personalities.

The following images show samples of the 75 blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs that featured notable Ghanaian personalities.

GhSplash Entertainment

GHANA ENTERTAINMENT NEWS
GHSPLASH GOSSIP

Cecilia Marfo a demon sent from marine world to destroy the gospel industry – Broda Sammy

Figure 32: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities***; Facebook, GhSplash**

Entertainment

GhSplash Entertainment
22 Jun • 🌐

Afia Schwar Takes On 'Ofrii' Dag Heward Mills For Insulting Otumfuo

Figure 33: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities***; Facebook, GhSplash**

Entertainment

VIDEO: You're the most ugliest of all God's creatures − Ken Agyapong blasts Otukonor for hiring Nima thugs to fight Greater Accra Regional Minister

Figure 34: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities*; Facebook, GhSplash Entertainment

Zionfelix Entertainment News

"Salinko Wo Maame Tw3 One More Time" − Angry Funny Face Does Salinko Messy And Alleges He Beats His Wife (Video)

Figure 35: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities*; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment News

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Figure 36: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities*; Facebook, Zionfelix

       Entertainment News

Celebrities Buzz

Figure 37: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities*; Facebook, Celebrities

       Buzz

Figure 38: Vulgar blog post featuring *personalities*; Facebook, Celebrities

      Buzz

The expression "demon sent from marine world" referring to the gospel musician "Cecelia Marfo" in Figure 23 is a derogatory remark portraying the musician as an evil person. The word "ofrii" used in Figure 24 to refer to "Dag Heward Mills" (a pastor) is an Akan offensive word for an albino. "You're the most ugliest of all God's creatures" as used to refer to politician "Otukunor" in Figure 25 is an insulting remark describing the politician as the least attractive of all things created by God. The expression "wo maame twƐ" referring to Ghanaian actor Salinko in figure 26 is also an Akan insult literally translated as "your mother" or "your mother's vagina". This is a direct insult to the actor making reference to the vagina of his mother. The Pidgin English expression "e be sense you no get" as used by media personality "Giovani" in Figure 27 is referring to the addressee as a senseless person. Moreover, "any lady with fallen melons does not deserve bride price" as used by "Prophet Kofi Oduro" in Figure 28 is an offensive expression. This offensive expression does not

only body shame ladies who do not have firm breasts but also portray them as people who do not deserve bride price (money paid by groom to bride's family) or are simply unworthy of marriage. "Wenim side by side tisɛ drawer" as used in Figure 29 to refer to blogger Zion Felix is an Akan derogatory expression literally translated as "your face like a drawer" which likens the face of the blogger to a drawer. The fact is, all these notable Ghanaian personalities like musicians, actors, media practitioners and lawyers who have been featured in the vulgar expressions discussed above can have their dignities at stake as the Ghanaian culture, according to Fordjour (2016), abhors the use of vulgar language. This view is supported by DeFrank and Kahlbaugh (2018) who posit that language choice matters and for that matter, the use of profane or vulgar language affects how people are judged. Thus the notable Ghanaian personalities featured in the vulgar expressions used on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs involved in the study can be judged wrongly by people who come across the vulgar expressions.

Meanwhile, 11 blog posts out of the 93 sampled blog posts did not feature any specific Ghanaian institutions or personalities. These blog posts can be referred to as general blog posts on vulgarity. The following images show samples of the 11 general blog posts on vulgarity from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

Zionfelix Entertainment News
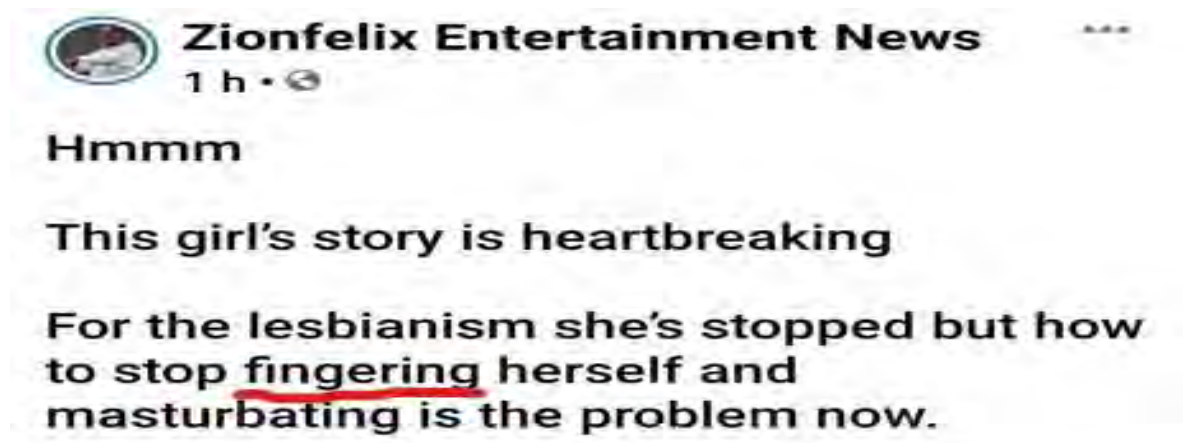
Figure 39: General vulgarity blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix

   Entertainment News

Figure 40: General vulgarity blog post; Facebook, Zionfelix Entertainment

   News

Celebrities Buzz

Celebrities Buzz

1 h · ◎

"I eat some Twitter girl rydee for Evandy (name of a hostel) she tell ein boy for hostel say she dey go SU all night".

Figure 41: General vulgarity blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz

Celebrities Buzz

20 h · ◎

The Comedian said in his post that, it will be grave mistake for boys to try his daughter because he is fully battle prepared to deal with anyone who will make an attempt to "Eat" his daughter.
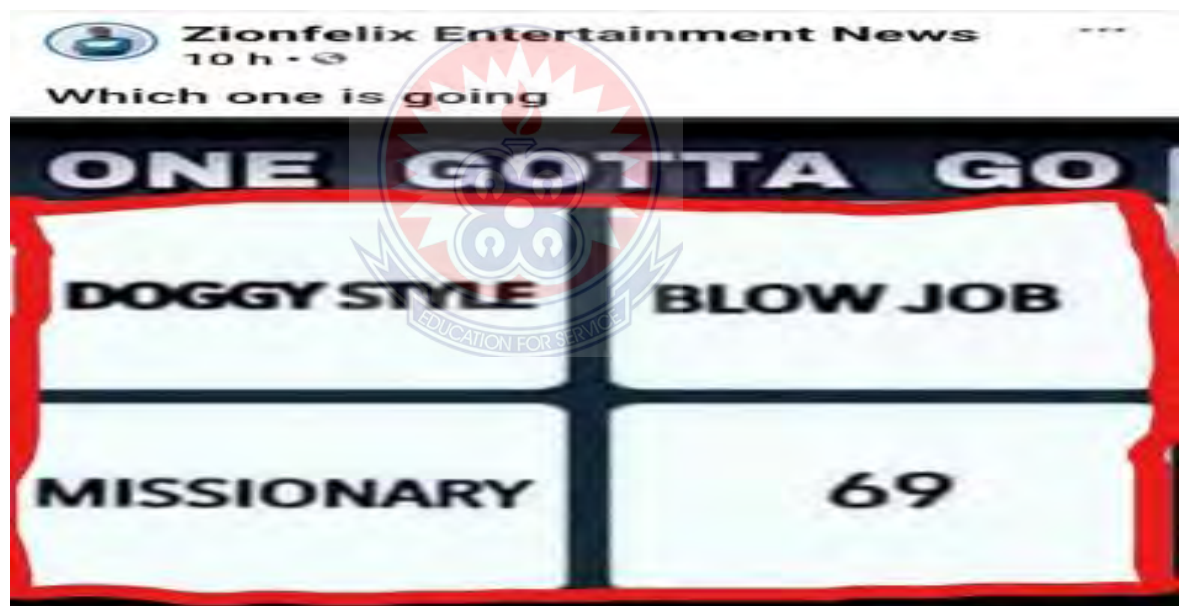
Figure 42: General vulgarity blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz

Figure 43: General vulgarity blog post; Facebook, Celebrities Buzz

GhSplash Entertainment

Figure 44: General vulgarity blog post; Facebook, GhSplash

Entertainment

As evident in the images above, the blog posts border on vulgarity in general without specifically mentioning any notable Ghanaian institutions or personalites.

From the analysis of the institutions and personalities that are featured in the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs in response to the research question two on the targets of the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs, it can be concluded that vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs mostly deals with famous, recognized and prominent personalities in the Ghanaian society. This can be attributed to the online disinhibition effect which is noted to empower people on the internet to engage in certain bad behaviours (including the use of foul language) that the real world prohibits them from doing (Lapidot-Lefler and Barak, 2015). This is rather problematic because the various personalities featured in the vulgar expressions on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs could possibly have their dignities at stake as the Ghanaian culture frowns on vulgarity and especially considers perpetrators as uncivilized (Fordjour, 2016).

4.3 What is the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers?

To answer the research question three on the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers, online interviews with the blogger for GhSplash Entertainment (foremost female blog) and the blogger for Celebrities Buzz (most followed blog on Facebook) were conducted via WhatsApp. The interview bodered generally on the theme of vulgarity with the question of why some Ghanaian bloggers engage in vulgarity on their blogs.

In the course of the interview, there was no denial from the two Ghanaian bloggers that vulgarity does exist on Ghanaian entertainment blogs including theirs. In the

opening statement of one the bloggers, P1 (pseudonym 1) noted not to really post vulgar contents because they personally dislike it. "*I personally don't like the vulgar words being used by this popular people and that's why I don't report all on my site as compared to other blogs*" (P1). Here, the participant as shown in the excerpt has confirmed that vulgarity does exist on their blog although it is not as prevalent as it is with other Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

With regard to the other Ghanaian blogger, it was established that they do not waste time writing non vulgar contents. According to P2 (pseudonym 2), they "*won't be able to waste much time writing good stories or non-vulgar or normal stories that people might not read that would not amount to anything*". (P2)

At the end of the interviews, the bloggers' quest to justify the existence of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs revealed three themes which I named as *hard audience*, *economic benefits of blogging*, *audience' obsession with vulgarity*, and "*bloggers obsession with fame*".

4.3.1 Hard audience

The theme of *hard audience* emerged from the interview with blogger P1 who revealed that the audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs are "hard" which means that the audience do not like good stories or stories devoid of vulgar language. P1 noted that; "the fact is the Ghanaian audience are hard, they don't like reading about good things so you always have to study and do what they like". Here, it has been established that the Ghanaian audience are difficult to please and the only way to get their attention is through the use of vulgar language. This fact was further established when it was added that "vulgarity sells in Ghana", and that any news on people who are known to use vulgar language trends more than stories devoid of vulgar language.

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A classical example was given in the case of Twene Jonas (a Ghanaian social media sensation noted for insulting Ghanaian leaders) that anything on him (Twene Jonas) sells in the Ghanaian blogging business.

Thus the theme of *hard audience* from the blogger's perspective constitutes reasons that account for bloggers' use of vulgar language on their blogs in their quest to please their audience. The ultimate reason here is the fact that the audience are "hard" and do not like reading stories devoid of vulgar language.

4.3.2 Economic benefits of blogging

The other Ghanaian blogger established the theme of *economic benefits of blogging* when they stated categorically that they are is into blogging solely to make money and thus would publish anything including vulgar contents to give their blog traffic. The blogger noted that;

> "*We have people who are doing the blogging job because they love to write; some of us like me, I do the blogging job because I have to make some ends meet; I want to be able to pay my workers; I want to be able to pay my bills; I won't write on things that people would not read for me to make the money that I want; I will not even waste one cent*". (P2)

Here, the blogger has maintained that they use vulgar contents on their blog primarily to make money indicating that vulgarity sells on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and as long as they can get the money they desire, vulgarity will always be on sale on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

The theme of *economic benefits of blogging* inspired by blogger P2 is similar to that of *hard audience* informed by blogger P1 in that both have established that their audience like the use of vulgar content on their blogs. One notable element here however is that both bloggers have different claims of what pushes them into the use of vulgar language on their blogs. Thus whereas blogger P1 claims to engage in

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vulgarity to please his *hard audience*, blogger P2 does so just to make the *money* they desire.

4.3.3 Audience' obsession with vulgarity

Audience' obsession with vulgarity encompasses both *hard audience* and *economic benefits of blogging* which emerged as a theme after a thorough review of the perspectives of the two Ghanaian bloggers and led to the conclusion that audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs to a significant extent love vulgarity. In the interview with Ghanaian blogger P1 ,they indicated that Ghanaian audience love Twene Jonas for the insults he uses. In P1's words, "*they love to listen to him; even if they missed his live, they will want a breakdown from the bloggers*". An audience that "don't like reading about good things" but love to read stories with insults from people like Twene Jonas only means that they love the use of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. Blogger P2 grounded the theme of *audience' obsession with vulgarity* when they noted that the Ghanaian audience love vulgarity especially when it is in the Ghanaian Twi language. P2 noted that;

> *"When you mix Twi words in your headlines it attracts readers trust me; the same headline, write it in English and don't add anything in Twi like "aboa" (animal) or "kwasia" (stupid) in the headline and people will not read*". (P2)

From the perspectives of the two bloggers interviewed in this study, it can be concluded that everything that happens on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with regard to vulgarity lies on the audience. Thus the rationale for the use of vulgar expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs by Ghanaian bloggers is in the bloggers' quest to please their audience who have been established as lovers of vulgarity. Even when the motive is solely to make money on the part of the bloggers as, it all boils down to the

audience who make vulgarity sell on Ghanaian entertainment blogs due to their love for it.

4.3.4 Bloggers obsession with fame

Bloggers obsession with fame consequently emerged after the conclusion that the audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs alone cannot take the blame when it comes to the use of vulgar language on the blogs. Thus, inasmuch as the bloggers put the blame on their audience that they (the audience) do not like stories devoid of vulgar language, one can equally argue that the bloggers keep up with what they claim their audience like just to reach more audience and achieve fame in the long run. The fact is, blogs have opened up a flexible communication platform for the public (Dutta et.al 2018), and this flexible communication platform has not only created a permanent alternative source of information (Fricker, 2015), but has also created an avenue for fame for the individuals engaged in the field of blogging. For instance, in Ghana today, we can talk of top bloggers like Felix Adomako Mensah (Zion Felix) the same way we talk of top journalists like Nana Aba Anamoah.

Thus, it can be concluded that the audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs have only become acustomed to the vulgarity that the bloggers feed them with; and it is in their (audience) thirst for more vulgar contents that Ghanaian bloggers find the *fame* as well as the *economic benefits* that come with blogging in Ghana. All these can be attributed to the online disinhibition effect which do not only empower Ghanaian bloggers to post vulgar content on their blogs but also makes audience forget their Ghanaian cultural backgrounds and consent to the vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

4.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented the findings and discussions of the research questions. The study sought to explore the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs as well as bloggers rationale behind the use of vulgar language. Through the analysis and discussion of findings from the data collected towards the research questions set for the study, it has been established that vulgarity does exist on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. This is evident in the expletive, prohibitive and invective nature of the posts shared on the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs employed in the study. The chapter further revealed that vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs mostly deals with famous, recognized and prominent personalities in the Ghanaian society which is rather problematic as vulgarity plays a role in influencing how people are judged, and can therefore lead to poorer impressions of the personalities featured in it. Furthermore, the two bloggers interviewed in the course of this study concluded that they engage in vulgarity to please their "hard audience" and also to make money for themselves.
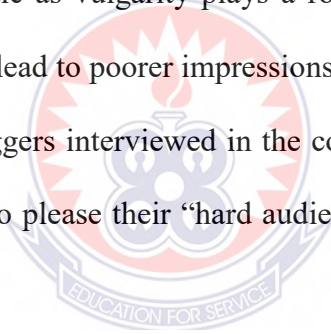
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings of the study in the quest to explore the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs including the rationale behind the use of vulgar language by Ghanaian bloggers. It also draws conclusions on the study and finally makes the necessary recommendations based on certain limitations to the study.

5.1 Summary

The study sought to explore the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs as well as bloggers rationale behind the use of vulgar language and through the use of thematic analysis through the following research questions:

1. What are the predominant themes that emerge from vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

2. Which institutions and personalities are featured in the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

3. What is the rationale behind the use of vulgar expressions by Ghanaian bloggers?

In answering the above research questions, vulgar blog posts sampled from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs were first grouped under profane and obscene; prohibitive (Schnurer, 1941; Wene & Ena, 2020); and insulting, abusive and derogatory (Seizer, 2011) which make up the three predominant themes of vulgarity featured on Ghanaian entertainment blogs including *sexual expletives*, *prohibitive body parts* and *invectives*. Through a careful thematic analysis (Kiger and Varpio,

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2020) of these emerging predominant themes of vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs, the first research question set for the study was significantly explored.

In addition, a thorough study of the sampled blog posts used as data for this study revealed seven (7) institutions and seventy-five (75) personalities answering the research question two on the targets of the vulgar expressions used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs. The featured institutions and personalities included government, police, school (law school), religious groups (Christians), ethnic groups (Ashantis) and social groups (fix the country conveners); and musicians, media practitioners, actors, pastors, politicians, lawyers and chiefs respectively.

Moreover, interviews (Creswell, 2014; Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2016) with two Ghanaian bloggers representing two of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs used for the study revealed that the themes of *hard audience* and *economic benefits of blogging* from the two bloggers' perspective; *audience' obsession with vulgarity* and *bloggers' obsession with fame* are what drive Ghanaian bloggers into the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

5.2 Conclusions

After a careful analysis of the findings in a quest to explore the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs, the following conclusions were made with respect to the research questions set for the study:

1. From the analysis of the three predominant themes emerging in the study, the theme of invectives emerged as the dominant theme of vulgarity used on Ghanaian entertainment blogs indicating that Ghanaian entertainment blogs mostly employ words and expressions that are insulting, abusive and derogatory in nature.

2. Based on the number of institutions (7) and personalities (75) that featured in the sampled blog posts from the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs used for the study, it can be concluded that vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs mostly deals with famous, recognized and prominent personalities in the Ghanaian society.

3. From the perspectives of the two bloggers interviewed in this study, it can be concluded that everything that happens on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with regard to vulgarity lies in the audience' *Audience' obsession with vulgarity*. *Audience' obsession with vulgarity* encompasses the two themes from the bloggers' perspective (*hard audience* and *economic benefits of blogging)* and leads to the conclusion that the audience of Ghanaian entertainment blogs love vulgarity. Thus the rationale for the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs by Ghanaian bloggers is as a result of the audience's Audience' obsession with vulgarity. Even when the motive is solely to make money on the part of the bloggers, it all comes back to the audience who make vulgarity sell on Ghanaian entertainment blogs.

5.3 Limitations

In the quest to explore the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs, the following limitations were encountered:

1. Poor or unstable internet connection was encountered in the course of the digital ethnography and this affected the data collection procedure to some extent. Although the 93 vulgar blog posts sampled in the study helped to explore the phenomenon of vulgar language to a significant extent, the overall 1,008 blog posts collected at the digital ethnography stage cannot be said to be a complete reflection of the exact number of posts made on three blogs within

the six-month period. Some vulgar blog posts which could have significantly contributed to the findings of this study may have possibly been missed due to the poor internet connections sometimes encountered in the course of data collection for this study. Despite this, all the 93 vulgar blog posts that were available to the researcher reflected themes of vulgarity and thus significantly contributed to exploring the phenomenon of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs..

2. Although the researcher in this study employed three Ghanaian entertainment blogs with the intention of interviewing all the three bloggers associated with the three blogs, only two bloggers were interviewed as all efforts to reach the third blogger proved futile. This means that any further perspective that would have probably helped to better explore the current phenomenon, especially with regard to the rationale behind Ghanaian bloggers' use of vulgar expressions on Ghanaian entertainment blogs has been missed. This notwithstanding, the perspective of the two bloggers representing two of the three Ghanaian entertainment blogs, who were interviewed can be considered an adequate representation of all the three Ghanaian bloggers whose blogs were involved in the study.

5.4 Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that the findings and conclusions of this study should be a wake up call to the Ghanaian media policymakers including the National Media Commission (NMC), the National Communication Authority(NCA) and the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) to formulate regulatory policies to check the use of vulgar language in the Ghanain media. Specifically, there should be a code of ethics that would guide the activities of bloggers in the country. In addition, licensing

bloggers, and sanctioning bloggers who fail to adhere to regulations are ways that can ensure sanctity of blogging in Ghana and also curtail the use of vulgar language on the Ghanaian media landscape.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Further studies on the phenomenon of vulgar language in the Ghanaian media landscape are needed to contribute significantly to the seemingly limited literature on the subject. In this regard, it is recommended that the focus go beyond blogs and be explored on other forms of media including television and radio.

Also, the current study sought to explore vulgarity on Ghanaian entertainment blogs with a focus on vulgar blog posts in text form only and as such it is recommended that future researches focus on posts in the form of videos and audio which are equally existent on Ghanaian entertainment blogs and other media platforms.

5.6. Summary of the chapter

This chapter presents the summary of the findings of the study in the quest to explore the use of vulgar language on Ghanaian entertainment blogs including the rationale behind the use of vulgar language. The chapter also presents the conclusions on the study and the necessary recommendations based on limitations to the study.

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APPENDIX

Interview guide

1. How long has your blog been in existence?

2. Why do you use vulgar words on your blog?

3. Why do you think vulgarity sells on Ghanaian entertainment blogs?

4. Do you think Ghanaians love people like Twene Jonas for the insults he uses?

5. Will you keep using vulgar words on your blog even though it is against our culture as Ghanaians?