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**A STUDY OF SWEAR WORDS IN MADURESE LANGUAGE AMONG COASTAL  
TEENAGERS OF MADURA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Swearing language among teenagers often reflects deeper social dynamics, especially in coastal communities. This study examines the types and functions of Madurese swearing language among coastal teenagers in Madura, particularly students at SMKN 1 Sepulu, Bangkalan Regency. Using a sociolinguistic approach and Hughes' (2006) and Andersson & Trudgill's (1990) theories, this qualitative study identifies six swearing categories, with general terms being the most common. Swearing functions include expressing emotions, building solidarity, and demonstrating peer closeness. The findings enrich the understanding of swearing's social roles among coastal Madurese teenagers.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Human life cannot exist without language. Language functions as a means to exchange information and express feelings. Language is the root of communication that plays many roles in social life. Various activities of human life always use language. By using language, humans can deliver their thoughts, opinions, ideas, and so on. Additionally, by language, humans can also communicate to express what they feel, such as happiness, sadness, and anger. Language can provide social value to someone who uses it. The use of language requires adjustments

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based on the situation and condition of the speaker. The way people communicate doesn't always come clearly, and sometimes people use the wrong words or phrases. This can happen because of their situation, condition, or mood. When interactions don't go well or don't meet expectations, it can make some problems for others. Sometimes, there are hidden meaning behind the words that people used in their communication. One of the use of language to express human feelings is through swearing.

Swear words refer to a form of language that conveys expressions considered culturally taboo. According to Robiah (2018) swearing is a form of speech that is often used in society when in uncomfortable situations. Therefore, swearing is often defined as something that has a negative meaning and can trigger the emotions of the listener. Based on Hughes (2006) swearing has always been interesting to people who study language and society. It often causes controversy and brings up current issues. Some words that are related to the expression of verbal cursing are known by several names, such as bad language, obscene language, or dirty words (Stone et al., 2015). Swearing is very suitable for expressing emotions because its primary meaning is connotative. However, swearing does not always have a negative meaning. The use of swear words in certain contexts can actually have a positive impact, reducing stress and indicating familiarity among friends (Stone et al., 2015).

This research focuses on analyzing the swear words used by the coastal youth in Madura. The study was conducted in the Sepulu District, Bangkalan Regency, Madura. However, despite its frequent use, especially among coastal youth, the social roles and cultural significance of swearing in the Madurese context remain underexplored. Most studies focus on general swearing in other regions, leaving a gap in understanding this phenomenon in Madura's sociolinguistic environment.

Swearing, often seen as impolite or offensive, is in fact a complex linguistic phenomenon that can be categorized and analyzed systematically. In the theory Hughes (2006), classified types of swearing into six types: (1) general terms; (2) animal terms; (3) religion terms; (4) stupidity terms; (5) anatomy terms; and (6) excretion terms. According to Andersson & Trudgill (1990) theory, swear words serve four distinct functions: (1) swear words to express strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, annoyance, or shock, without the intention of attacking others (expletive); (2) swear words aimed at attacking or insulting someone (abusive); (3) swear words to cause humor or in relaxed time (humorous); (4)

swear words used to emphasize a statement, without the intention of attacking (auxiliary).

Currently, the use of swear words is not restricted to a small number of groups. In various groups, including teenagers, have extensively adopted the context of using swear words. This phenomenon is also observed among the students of SMKN 1 Sepulu. In a manner similar to other teenagers in various cultures, the students at this school employ swear words in the Madurese language as a means of expressing emotion or establishing a sense of solidarity as part of their daily communication. The vocabulary employed in swear words is typically from the Madurese language and has a variety of meanings. Andersson & Trudgill (1990) discovered that swearing among teenagers is not only used to express frustration; it also serves as a form of humor, emphasizes the importance of expression, or even serves as a form of friendship closeness. Thus, the use of swear words in this context is often considered normal and acceptable, depending on the closeness between the speaker and the existing social interaction context. The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of swearing and analyze their communicative functions using Hughes' (2006) and Andersson & Trudgill's (1990) frameworks within the context of coastal Madurese youth interaction.

This research focuses on analyzing swear words used by coastal youth in Madura. Sinaga et al. (2023) examine the function of sarcasm in the form of swear words in the speech of the people of the Meranti Islands Regency, particularly in Selatpanjang City. The use of sarcastic language in social interactions in the Meranti Islands Regency, especially in Selatpanjang City serves not only to hurts offend on others. Nevertheless, it can also be employed as a form of humor to relieve fatigue, censure, mock, or gossip. Additionally, Kusmana & Afria (2018) also studied expletives in the Kerinci language. Erisyerico (2024) conducted research on swear words in the Daya Ngaju language on the island of Kalimantan, Damayanti et al. (2022) conducted research on curses in Pasa Lauak, Sungai Baramah, Lubuh Begalung District during the pandemic era as a language of learning, and Martina & Lubis (2022) also conducted research of swear words in the West Kalimantan community.

## **METHOD**

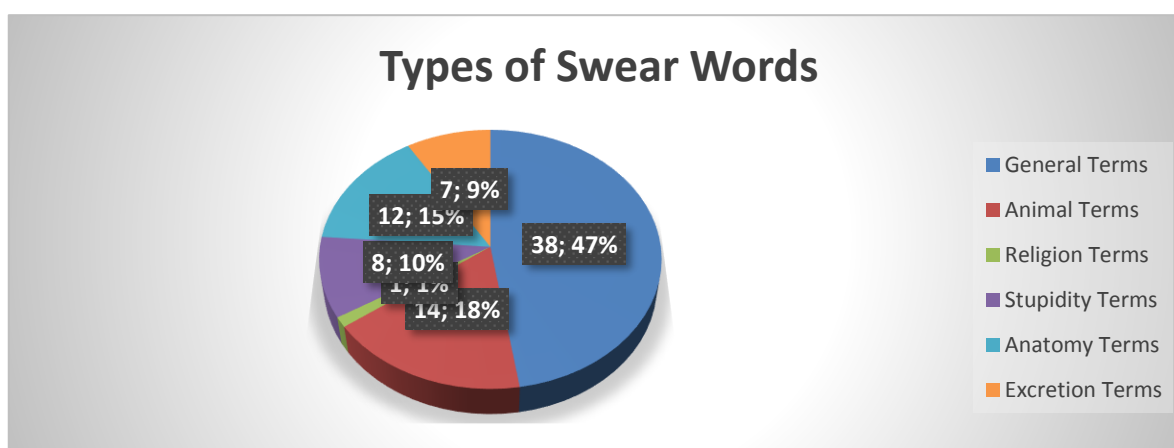
This research is a **qualitative descriptive study**, aiming to analyze the types and functions of swearing used by coastal adolescents in Madura, particularly in Sepulu Sub-district, Bangkalan Regency. Qualitative data offer rich and in-depth insights into human behavior, enabling researchers to understand event sequences, causal relationships, and

meaningful patterns (Miles et al., 2019). The study was conducted at SMKN 1 Sepulu, a school located near the coastal area, involving participants aged 15 to 18 years old. Teenagers were chosen as the focus because they tend to use swear words more frequently than adults. The key instrument in this study is the researcher herself, who conducted direct observations, took notes, and documented the data.

Data were collected using a questionnaire, where students listed commonly used swear words in their daily communication. To gain deeper understanding, additional data were gathered through in-depth interviews. The study employed linguistic techniques, such as observation and note-taking, to categorize the swear words based on Hughes' (2006) typology and their functions according to Andersson & Trudgill's (1990) theory. The analysis not only focused on linguistic forms but also explored the meanings and cultural contexts of swearing practices. Findings were interpreted in relation to Madurese cultural customs, providing insight into the motivations and social patterns behind swearing among coastal youth. This holistic approach offers a comprehensive view of the phenomenon within its natural social setting.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The use of swear words among coastal youth in Madura has various types and functions. Similarly, as described by Damayanti et al. (2022) who studied swearing in the context of the pandemic in Pasa Lauak, it was found that the types of swearing also appear in different cultural contexts. This can be seen from a sociolinguistic perspective, which is interesting to study. Based on its type, the form of swear words used by coastal youth in Madura, particularly students of SMKN 1 Sepulu, is as follows:



## 1.1 Types of Swear Words

From the data analyzed on the students of SMKN 1 Sepulu showed 80 data of swear words of various types were found, in line with Hughes theory. These words included general terms 38 data, animal terms 14 data, religion terms 1 data, stupidity terms 8 data, anatomy terms 12 data and excretion terms 7 data. This distribution highlights that general and animal terms are the most commonly used among coastal Madurese teenagers, reflecting patterns of informal communication embedded in their everyday sociocultural interactions.

### a) General Term

This type of swearing includes words that are used in general without reference to specific categories such as animals, religions, or others. For example, the word '*setalkah*' refers to general terms because it describes character or attitude in general without referring to a specific individual. It is used as a form of expression to show dislike or dissatisfaction with the attitude of someone who is considered arrogant. Its use is general and can be found in various situations involving social interaction. For example, among students of SMKN 1 Sepulu, this word is used when they are working on an assignment and see a friend who has completed the assignment first, then shows an attitude that is considered arrogant.

Similarly, several terms such as *ling jhellingan matanah* (what are you looking at), *arapa'ah* (what do you want?), *jrengkong alas* (devil), *cerrek* (stingy), *colok en* (your mouth), *buppak en* (your father), *ngelemes* (annoying), and *bangsat* (bastard) are often used by teenagers at SMKN 1 Sepulu to express annoyance or sarcasm in daily interactions. For example, the term *ling jhellingan matanah* is often used to criticise someone who is considered to be paying too much attention or staring excessively. The term *arapa'ah* is used to question or sarcastically address someone in an indirect but firm tone, indicating irritation. The word *jrengkong alas*, meaning devil, contains elements of humour as well as satire to describe someone who is considered to be misbehaving. The word *cerrek* is used to refer to someone who is cheeky or reluctant to share. Meanwhile, the terms *colok en* and *buppak en* are often used in a joking context but still describe an indirect expression of dissatisfaction or annoyance.

The use of these terms reflects the richness of the communication culture in Madura, where common sarcastic words are used as an indirect but effective form of expression.

This phenomenon is similar to the findings of Damayanti et al. (2022) which state that

common words are often used to insinuate. In Madura, the use of these words also illustrates the uniqueness of the local culture that combines sarcasm with more polite expressions of annoyance so that it is maintained within the limits of social norms.

#### b) Animal Term

Swear words that refer to animal names are sometimes used by people to insult others. For example, in Madurese, the word '*patek*' means "dog." This term is often used by students when they feel annoyed or angry, for example, when their friends do something that annoys or makes them uncomfortable. However, in some contexts, the word '*patek*' also has a lighter meaning, used to show familiarity or as a joke between friends.

Similarly, words such as *bebih* (pig), *moseng* (weasel), *blettang* (a kind of crab), *anjay* (slang for dog), *kuda*, *gentak* (crickets), and *celeng* (pig) are also often used by Madurese coastal youth to express their emotions, ranging from annoyance to annoyance to humor. The word *bebih*, for example, is often used to express annoyance at someone's behaviour, but in some situations can also be the subject of jokes between close friends. The word *moseng* refers to an expression of annoyance at behaviour that is considered annoying. Meanwhile, *blettang*, which means crab, is often used in a sarcastic or joking context, describing someone who is perceived as "clawing" or acting clumsily. The word *anjay*, which comes from a modification of the word "dog," has a lighter feel and is commonly used as an expression of admiration, mockery, or humor. *Kuda* and *gentak* have a more flexible context of use, being used to make fun of or joke with friends, while *celeng* is often used to satirise someone with a greedy or unsharing nature.

The use of these animal-derived words reflects the cultural richness of communication in Madura, where the terms are not only used to express emotions directly but also as part of humour and social interaction. This phenomenon is in line with Martina & Lubis (2022) research in West Kalimantan, which found that words referring to animals are often used in conversation to show familiarity. However, in Madura, the use of these animal terms has a more diverse cultural context and often portrays strong emotions, both in the form of annoyance and jokes.

#### c) Religion Term

This type of swearing uses terms or symbols related to religion to express anger or irritation. It is usually considered taboo because it is sacred in a religious context. '*Dajjal*' is classified as a swear word that refer to religion term. In Islam, the term '*dajjal*' refers to a creature. This creature is a figure who will appear before the Day of Judgment to deceive

humanity. The representation of '*dajjal*' is a powerful deceiver who will incite disorder in this world. Among the teenagers of SMKN 1 Sepulu, this word is used as an expression of annoyance towards a friend who is considered to provoke conflict or discord, which is inline with the findings of Kusmana & Afria (2018) regarding the Kerinci Language. The use of religious types of swear words shows a close relationship between language and religious values, which are regarded as having high level of sensitivity.

#### d) Stupidity Term

Swear words that refer to insulting someone's intelligence by calling them stupid, moronic, or incompetent fall under the category of stupidity terms. The word '*budung*' is a form of swearing that is often used to describe someone who is considered incompetent or has poor abilities. The term not only reflects an expression of disappointment but is also used to demean or ridicule the individual. Similarly, terms such as *tambengngah* (naughty), *bugheng* (stupid), *ngar-slangaran* (stupid), *goblok* (stupid), *tolol* (stupid), and *bego* (stupid) fall under the category of stupidity terms that are commonly used among teenagers to ridicule or demean individuals who are perceived as slow, careless, or incapable, particularly in the context of schoolwork or daily activities.

The term *tambengngah* is often used to sarcastically refer to the behaviour of someone who is considered impolite or naughty in the context of social interaction. Meanwhile, *bugheng* and *ngar-slangaran* are used to describe someone's stupidity or incompetence, with a stronger connotation of lack of understanding or logic. Words such as *goblok*, *tolol*, and *bego* are commonly used to make fun of friends who are considered less responsive or careless when doing tasks. Despite their insulting meaning, the use of these words among teenagers is often done in an informal setting and sometimes comes with a joking tone.

In the context of Hughes' theory of stupidity, the use of these words reflects the way individuals assess or comment on the limited skills or understanding of others, often in a derogatory tone. Among students of SMKN 1 Sepulu, these words are not only used to insult friends who are considered slow or less capable in completing school assignments but also as a means to create social hierarchy among their group. This phenomenon shows how language can be used as a tool to express resentment while strengthening social dynamics in the adolescent environment.

#### e) Anatomy Terms

In Hughes' theory of swearing, words fall into the category of anatomical terms, which are words that refer to the anatomy of a person's body or vital organs. '*Pokeh*' is a Madurese

swear word that refers to a woman's vital parts. This word has a taboo nature because it relates to body parts that are considered private and sensitive. The use of words like this usually occurs in certain situations and often has a negative or rude connotation. Besides *pokeh*, there are other examples of words included in anatomy terms, such as *puki* (pussy), *crot* (refers to sexual activity), *ler* (stands for male vital organs in Madurese), *kerembung* (pussy), *palak* (dick), *peller* (dick), *kontol* (dick), and *memek* (pussy). These words are used to express emotion in conversation, be it anger, insult, or ridicule, but often also occur in informal contexts or to people with close relationships.

The use of these words is considered impolite because they touch on sensitive physical aspects and can cause discomfort or offence to the listener. In the environment of Madurese coastal teenagers, these words are sometimes used in daily conversations, either to mock, show dislike, or as vulgar humor. However, in contrast to Robiah (2018) findings, which show that anatomical words as swearing are used more in very informal interactions or among people with close relationships, in Madura these words also reflect the uniqueness of the local culture in the use of language as an expression of strong emotions. Thus, the use of anatomy terms in swearing not only reflects linguistic aspects but also shows social and cultural dynamics in communication between individuals, especially among teenagers.

#### f) Excretion Term

This type of swearing relates to matters related to feces, defecation, or other bodily excretory activities. '*Taeh*' is a Madurese word that means human feces. This word is often used to express anger, annoyance, or contempt. Besides '*taeh*,' there are other terms such as *mancok* (animal faeces), *kadik taeh* (describing something that resembles human feces), *kentok* (fart), *tellek* (human feces), and *eek* (human feces in an informal context). These words fall under the category of language related to human excretion, as described in Hughes' theory of swearing. In the theory, words related to human bodily activities, especially those considered disrespectful or disgusting, fall under the category of excretion and are often used as a form of strong emotional expression.

These words, especially among students of SMKN 1 Sepulu, are used in daily conversation to express annoyance or contempt. However, it is not uncommon for these words to also be used in joking situations as a form of crude humor among peers. For example, *kadik taeh* is used to sarcastically or mockingly describe something that is considered bad or worthless, while *kentok* is often used to describe embarrassing behavior in a humorous way.

According to Hughes, the use of words related to bodily excretion falls into the abusive category because it touches on things that are considered taboo in formal communication. Timothy & Janschewitz (2008) research states that excretory swearing often has a significant emotional impact, as it is direct and tends to be vulgar. This is in line with the findings in the study of Sinaga et al.(2023) which showed that the form of sarcasm in swearing is often used to strengthen the intensity of emotions in daily conversations. In the context of Madurese, such words also have a cultural dimension, where excretion-based swearing not only serves as an emotional expression but also reflects social closeness in certain interactions. However, it is important to note that the use of these words is often considered rude and inappropriate in formal situations or with individuals who are not familiar. Thus, excretion-related terms in Madurese have not only linguistic but also social and cultural functions, reflecting the dynamics of daily communication in society, particularly among coastal teenagers.

## 1.2 Function of Swear Words

Swearing is a part of language used in communication. Given the relationship between language and swearing, describing the functions of its use is part of language expression. According to Andersson & Thrudgill (1990) in their theory, they propose four functions of swearing, there are: expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary. Here are the data that the researcher found based on the functions of swear words that have been explained previously.

### a) Expletive

This function refers to the use of swearing to express strong emotions, such as anger, frustration, or even shock. However, the swear words used are not intended to attack someone but are an emotional release or spontaneous reaction to a particular situation. In Madurese coastal youth, words such as *patek* (dog) and *giginah* (tooth) are often uttered when they feel angry or upset at someone's behavior. Meanwhile, the word *babih* (pig) is used to express annoyance, and words such as *setan* (devil), *ler* (abbreviation of the name of the male vital organ in Madurese), *cok* (abbreviation of asshole), and *sialan* (damn) are usually uttered spontaneously in response to surprising or unexpected events. These swear words reflect natural reactions to emotional stimulation, suggesting their role in helping individuals relieve sudden or overwhelming feelings.

This function is in line with the findings of Sembiring et al. (2019) in their research

on the use of swear words in the movie *Whiplash* based on Andersson's theory. The study shows that expressive swearing often appears as a way to express feelings, especially in intense or stressful situations. Such as the teenage characters in *Whiplash*, swear words are used to express personal emotions rather than to hurt. The spontaneous nature of these expressions also points to the universal appeal of expressive swearing, where it serves to ease tension or provide a spontaneous emotional outlet.

b) Abusive

Abusive swearing refers to the use of harsh words to express strong emotions, such as anger or frustration, with the aim of directly attacking or demeaning someone. Words such as *setalkah* (the arrogant one) and *bangsat* (bastard) are often used by adolescents in Madura to express anger or annoyance at someone's behaviour that is considered annoying. Similarly, words such as *kerembung* (female vital organs), *kadiktaeh* (human excrement), and *arapa'ah* (rude greeting) are used to challenge or respond aggressively to someone's attitude, especially in conflict situations. In addition, terms such as *cerrek* (stingy), *tambengngah* (naughty), *ngelemes* (annoying), and *gentak* (cricket) are used to mock or show displeasure with behaviour that is considered inappropriate, disrespectful, or selfish.

This kind of swearing indicates a pattern of communication that aims to assert emotional power and control social interaction. It reflects how language is used not only as a tool for expression but also as a means of establishing dominance or resistance within social dynamics. In an analysis of the movie *TED*, Lidyawati & Supri (2023) in their study of a movie, where the characters in the movie often used swear words to express dissatisfaction, and were also used to demean or challenge others.

c) Humorous

In this function, swear words are used in the context of humour or jokes, not to hurt but to create intimacy in social interactions or as a joke with friends. Among Madurese coastal adolescents, words such as *ngar-slangaran* (dumb) and *bugheng* (stupid) are often used to describe the behaviour of friends who are considered ridiculous, without the intention to seriously offend. Similarly, the words *celleng* (black) and *kettang* (monkey) are often used in a joking tone to insinuate someone's funny behaviour, although sometimes inserting elements of satire against physical aspects. In addition, the word *anjay* (slang word for dog) is used as a humorous response to the actions of friends who are considered ridiculous.

According to Tamola et al. (2024) in their analysis of the movie *Good Boys*, they found that comedic swearing often appears in conversations to create a relaxed atmosphere and improve relationships between characters. The use of humorous swearing by Madurese teenagers shows a communication pattern associated with their community culture, where humour is used to create familiarity and maintain social balance. Words like these show how language can function as a multifunctional tool by reflecting emotions and supporting more informal and light-hearted social interactions.

d) Auxiliary

This swear word function as an amplifier in the sentence without aiming to insult or express emotions directly. The swear word is used to emphasize a statement without pointing someone in specific. In this category, no data was found that met the criteria or contributed to this function. This absence may suggest that auxiliary swearing is less commonly used or less recognizable among coastal Madurese adolescents in their everyday interactions.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the use of swear words among Madurese coastal youth, especially students of SMKN 1 Sepulu, has complex variations in terms of types and functions. The types of swear words found include general terms, animal terms, religious terms, stupidity terms, anatomy terms and excretion terms. From the 80 data analyzed, the general terms dominate, then followed by animal and anatomy terms. In terms of function, swearing is used for various purposes, from expressing spontaneous emotions (expletive), insults or attacks (abusive); humor (humorous); to emphasis in communication (auxiliary). However, no data was found that fulfils the auxiliary category. The use of swearing does not always have a negative connotation, because in some contexts, swearing can reflect social closeness and friendship between teenagers. This study provides an in-depth insight into how swearing is integrated into the daily lives of Madurese coastal teenagers, as well as how words that are often considered taboo are used in various social contexts. It also shows that the use of swearing does not always refer to bad things but rather has a multifunctional role in social interaction among teenagers.

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