

The Use Of Taboo Words And Expressions In Today`s Society

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Abstract

Taboo affects everyone's daily life in one way or another because of the natural use of language. Countless words are considered taboo, such as words related to religion, sex, the human body, and other related types. Many of these words are the result of major events such as migration, urbanization, wars and depressions (Mubo, 2014) Taboo is universal and almost exists in different cultures This research paper on the topic "The Use Of Taboo Words And Expressions In Today's Society" deals with the social aspect of language, more specifically, it deals with the sociolinguistic aspect of the use of taboo expressions The aim of this study is to analyze the use of taboo words and expressions in Kosovar society. Since society determines what is appropriate to use in language, and what is not. It is a changing interaction between language and society. Through this research, we aim to identify which words are considered taboo, how many types of taboo words exist in the Albanian language, and which words have lost their taboo character.

Keywords: *Taboo Words, Taboo Expressions, Types Of Taboo, Language, Society.*

INTRODUCTION

In the given time and place the understanding and the usage of taboo language varies depending on the culture, literacy, gender, age, social status, profession, upbringing so on and so forth. In this modern era, when everything in the world is subjected to change with the spread of technology, followed by advancement in the fields of education, agriculture, medicine and many more, changing the mind set of people living in 21st century over the globe. Culture is changing leading to the change in people and their dealings enough to stimulate language change. (Pervaiž, Arshad, KhudaDad, Tahir, 2021)

To analyze the data that we collected to realize this paper, we used two study methods, the qualitative and quantitative method. The collection of material for the realization of this research was done through questionnaires, the questionnaires consist of ten questions. The research paper is divided into three chapters, the first chapter deals with the theoretical aspect of the research, i.e. first the definition of taboo, the history of the word taboo, previous studies on taboos, the nature and status of taboo words, the categorization of taboo words, as well as factors influencing the use of taboo words. The second chapter deals with language etiquette, avoiding taboo words. While, the third chapter deals with research methodology, material collection, research participants, results and analyses, as well as the conclusions.

What Is A Taboo?

A Taboo is ‘any prohibitions which carry no penalties beyond the anxiety and embarrassment arising from a breach of strongly entrenched custom’ (Steiner 1967:143). The encyclopedia of social sciences (1937) defined taboos as ‘a negative sanction whose infringement results in an automatic penalty without human or In this paper the following working definition developed by the researcher will be used for a linguistic taboo: superhuman mediation.’

A linguistic taboo is any word or a phrase or a topic that if mentioned in public causes embarrassment and feeling of shame or provokes a sense of shock, and it is offending to the bearer's sensibilities or his beliefs. (Qanbar, 2011)

In Oxford Advanced Learner's English Chinese Dictionary (2004), taboo refers to cultural or religious custom that curbs people to do, practice or talk about a particular thing, taboo words are considered as offensive and shocking by many people i.e., they involve body, people's race or sex. Taboo words constitute highly emotional and provocative language depending on the context in which it is used. Siddiqui (2003)

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attests that meaning of taboo in the Western world correlates with Arabian term for taboo that is *haram* (p. 78). Taboo language consists of words and acts which are better to be referred to in roundabout ways (p.153). Campbell (1989) defines verbal abuse as ‘negative statements by significant others. Gu (2002) asserts that “Taboo” phenomenon refers to “*holy*” or “*untouchable*” (p. 264). According to Heins (2007), taboo words in a language are archaic which include profanity i.e., irreverent speech, and blasphemy i.e., attacks on religion, that are prescribed by religious authorities since biblical times while Gao (2013) discussed various taboos including body excretions, death and disease, sex, four-letter words, privacy, discriminatory language, form example sexist language and racist language. Additionally, Finn (2017) describes that there are five types of taboo words that trigger negative emotions. They are supernatural- invoking fear related to one’s religion, bodily secretions and organs stimulating disgust, disease and death to create a sense of dread, disfavored people or ethnicity to evoke hatred, sexuality to evoke revulsion (Pervaiz & Arshad & Khudadad & Tahir, 2022 f.13-26)

History Of Taboo Words

Taboos differ from one society to another society relying upon beliefs, ethics, and cultural differences, however, where does the actual word, taboo, come from? The word “ Taboo “ comes from the Tongan word(tapu) or Fijian tabu (prohibited , disallowed , forbidden) , related among others to the Maori tapu . Taboo arrived in the English language when James Cook visited Tonga. The 1777 journal entry describes the Tongan people as follows: “Not one of them would sit down, or eat a bit of anything.... .On expressing one's surprise at this, they were all taboos, as they themselves said. This word, taboo, has a very comprehensive meaning, but in general, it signifies that a thing is forbidden.” It seems that its usage in English dates back to 1777 when the British explorer, James Cook visited Tonga. (Cook,1812,p. 676)

Taboos influence a person’s every day life in one way or another because of his/her natural use of language. Countless words are regarded taboos such as those related to religion, sex, our bodies and their functions in addition to the insulting ones and other related types. Many of such words are resulted from great events such as migration, urbanization, wars, and depressions (Allan, Keith and Kate Burrige , 1991, p.4) (Muho, 2014)

Taboo is universal and almost exists in different cultures. The existence of taboos throughout the language has created a need to find words and expressions that enable people to talk about topics concerned without feeling uncomfortable or being afraid of hurting another person’s feelings, i.e. euphemisms that will be discussed later.

Crystal (1992, p. 381), believes that taboo words mean words which people may not use without causing offence, because they refer to acts , objects , or relationships which are widely felt to be embarrassing , distasteful , or harmful .' Moreover, the words especially verbal ones are usually related to sex, the supernatural, excretion and death, but in some cultures they extend to other aspects of domestic life such as in-laws, private names, and certain animals. Furthermore, the word ,taboo , is generally related to something that is socially, culturally ,and religiously forbidden and more and more frequently used in everyday speech. (Muho, 2014) Taboos have always existed in language and culture, however, this word was not defined until 18th century especially the year (1777) by Captain James Cook as mentioned before, (Cook ,1812, p. 676) .

Definitions Of Taboo Word

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Specialists do their best to define and explain the word, taboo, since it is directly connected with humans’ life (Muho, 2014). Dictionary of the Albanian language defines the word "taboo" as *1. ethnogr. Prohibition to perform a certain action, to utter a word, to use an object, etc., which was applied to primitive tribes (or which is still applied today to some peoples in a tribal state) and which should not be violated, because, according to superstitions, he was punished by supernatural powers; the action, thing or word, which was prohibited or is prohibited in this way. 2. fig. Something that is called untouchable, that is forbidden to be violated or put in the mouth.*

The Category Of Taboo

As mentioned before, the word taboo is usually related to something that is socially, culturally, or religiously forbidden. Mercury (1995,p. 29) states that in Western society speakers classify words for sex, sex organs and excrement as taboos, i.e. several types of taboo words are heard in society today and even more , but there are four main categories that include taboo or obscenity, profanity, blasphemy, expletives , cursing ,etc

Crystal (1992, p.381) believes that there are four types of taboo expression they can be listed as follows:

Profanity

Blasphemy

Obscenity

Expletive

Hudson ,1993, p.50 also identifies the area of taboo by saying ' the whole area of taboo and semi-taboo language (slang, swearing, insults, etc.) merits serious research by sociolinguists, which should tell us a lot about language in relation to society".

Profanity

This term and the social state are found only in impolite society. Crystal, believes that profanity is a relatively mild notion, the choice of language conveying disrespect for what hold sacred. (McEnery ,2006 ,pp.154-5) believes that profane words are one of collocates of swearing „for swearing , it is possible to place six collocates in convergence semantic fields by placing excessive in merriment , lewdness in sex , and cursing , damning , profanation and blasphemy in verbal acts.'

Blasphemy

This term related to one's social character, therefore, this speech has link to ungratefulness to God's fate or destiny , Crystal sees much more serious , being the expression of gross irreverence towards the divine' (McEnery , 2006 ,p.138) states that the consequences' of this divine judgment will be profound indeed.' Really blasphemous deeds as the Holy Quran clears out that, is the iniquity against Allah.

Obscenity

Obscenity is mostly related to bad language (sexual function) and swearing., furthermore , Webster Merriam dictionary says that this statement may include the moral repugnance as saying' The word obscenity can be used to indicate a strong moral repugnance, in expressions such as "obscene profits" or "the obscenity of war". Thus, an obscenity is any statement or act which strongly offends the prevalent morality of the time, swearing and persons who involved in the obscenity of war.

Expletive

Expletive is another social abuse or damn arouses in one's health condition or suffering or complaining one's destiny: a word or phrase (such as "Damn it!") that people sometimes say when they are angry or in pain; *especially* : one that is offensive. Crystal ,p.381 believes that the term expletive is used in official contexts.' (Muho, 2014)

Factors Behind Using Taboo Words

Taboo words are found in a large number of languages in the world, i.e. they are mostly universal. People use them differently depending on their culture, race, gender, religion and .etc. Societies find words that may be unsuitable for usage in a polite company, that is to say, people or speaker decide what is or what is not proper language since society affects language and language affects society in one way or another. This means

language is changeable under the process of time and society, in turn, changes and develops since people's needs are also changeable. (Stageberg, 1981, pp. 88-89).

The Avoidance of Taboo Words

There are many ways to avoid the phenomenon of taboo words in the society. Some of them are concerned to morphology, semantic morphology; pragmatics Murphy (2003, p.40) believes that 'many cultures invent synonyms in order to avoid taboo terms, as exemplified by American English's proliferation of synonyms for a room with *toilet* (bathroom, restroom, powder room, etc.)

Brown and Levinson constructed a Model Person (MP), who is a fluent speaker of a language who has two special qualities: rationality and face. By 'rationality' Brown and Levinson mean that the MP would be able to use a specific mode of reasoning to choose means that will satisfy his/her ends. By 'face', Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) define it as the "public self image that every member wants to claim for himself." It refers to the social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. Face consists of two related aspects: a) negative face: "the want of every 'competent adult member' that [their] action be unimpeded by others" (p.62), and b) positive face: the want of every member that [their] wants be desirable to at least some others" (p. 62) ... [the] perennial desire that [their] wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable"

(p.101). According to the positive face needs, rational members of the society would continually try to present themselves in the best shape possible. They strive to keep their faces intact and present themselves worth-respect, self-sufficient, pure, and free from bad or filthy matters that may damage the integrity of their faces. They need to be reinforced in their view of themselves as polite, considerate, respectful members of their society. From this perspective, this image ought to be reflected both physically and linguistically. It will go against the fulfilment of one's positive face needs if one shows in public that he/she answers the nature's call or copulates as an instinctive need, for example. Douglas (1966) thinks that by default we are polite, and euphemistic; and we censor our language use to eschew tabooed topics in pursuit of well-being for ourselves and for others. (Qanbar, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

Are taboo words and expressions used in Kosovar society?

What words and expressions do they use and consider taboo?

In what context does Kosovar society feel free to use taboo words?

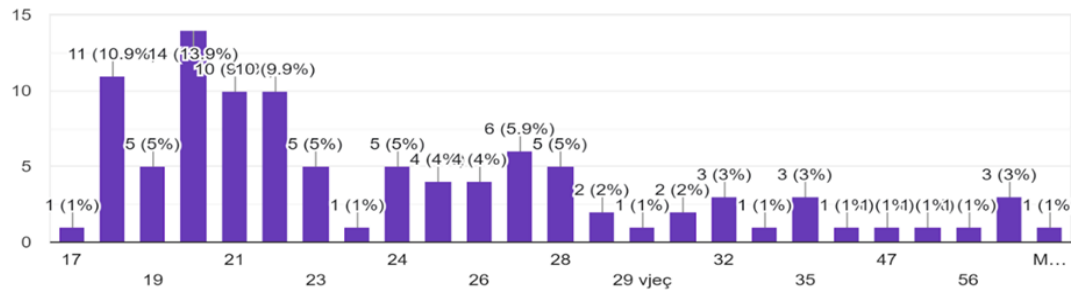
Data Collection

Data were collected in quantitative form, through questionnaires. The questionnaires contain a total of ten questions. Some of the questions require an extended written response, while others are optional.

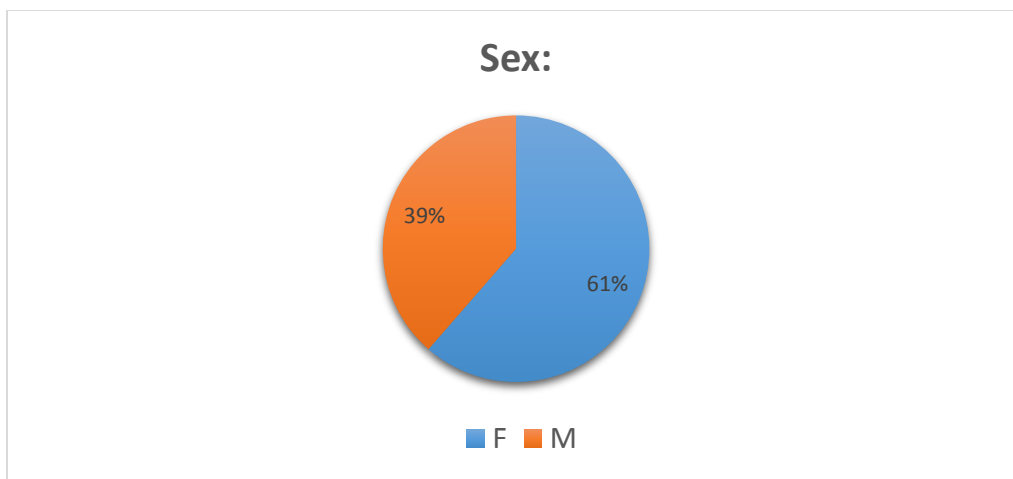
Participants

The introduction of the questionnaire is built with a short biography of the respondents, who are asked to know identify their gender, age and profession. It is important to note that 101 participants aged between 17 and 60 took part in this study.

Age:
101 responses



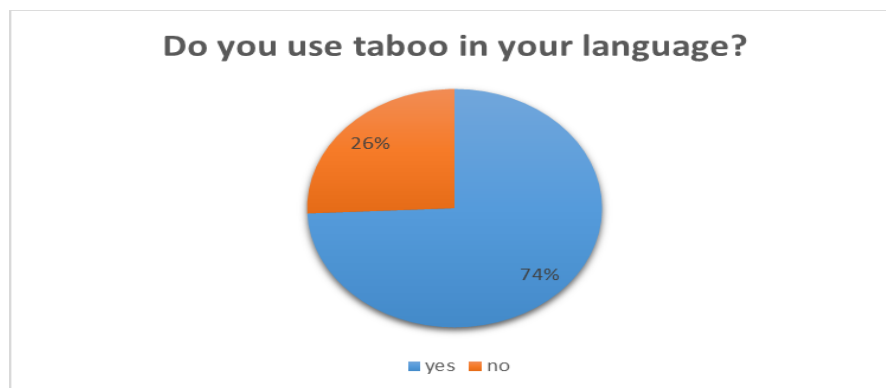
61.4% of participants are females whereas 38.6% of them are males.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

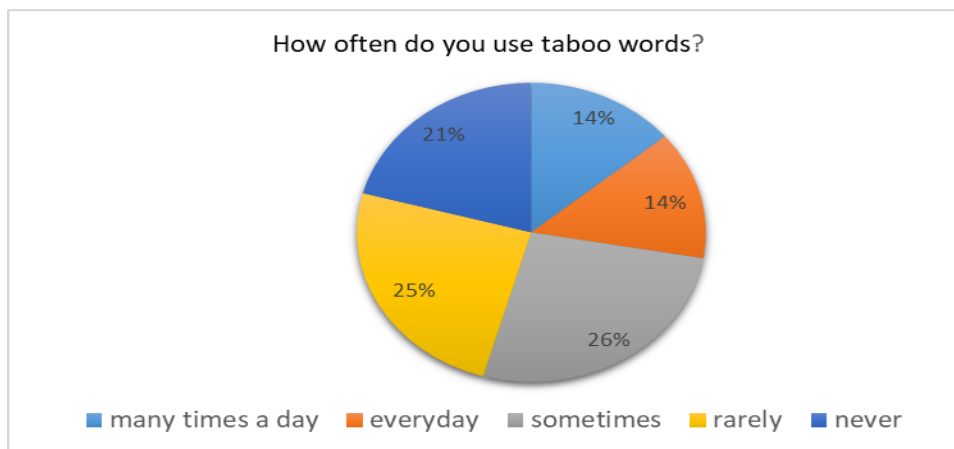
Now we can see the questionnaire with answers and percentages. The first question is:

Do you use taboo in your language? Two options are given for this question, yes or no. 74 % of the respondents have admitted that they use taboo words by answering yes to this question. While 26% declared that they do not use taboo words.



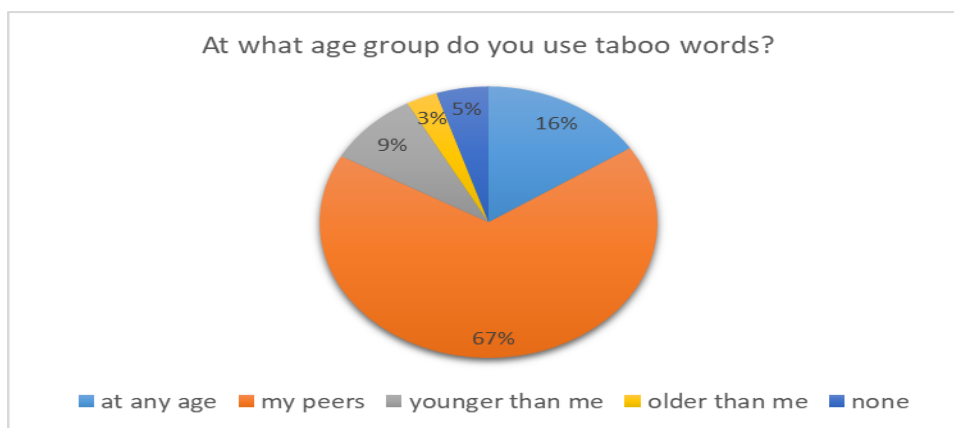
In research, it is important to know the frequency of use of taboo words. We have asked the respondents: How often do you use taboo words? We gave them several options, the first option, *many times a day*, was selected by 14% of respondents, the second option, *everyday*, was selected by 14% of them, the third option,

sometimes, was selected by 26% of respondents, the fourth option, *rarely*, was selected 24.8%. 20.8% of the respondents have declared that they *never* use taboo words.

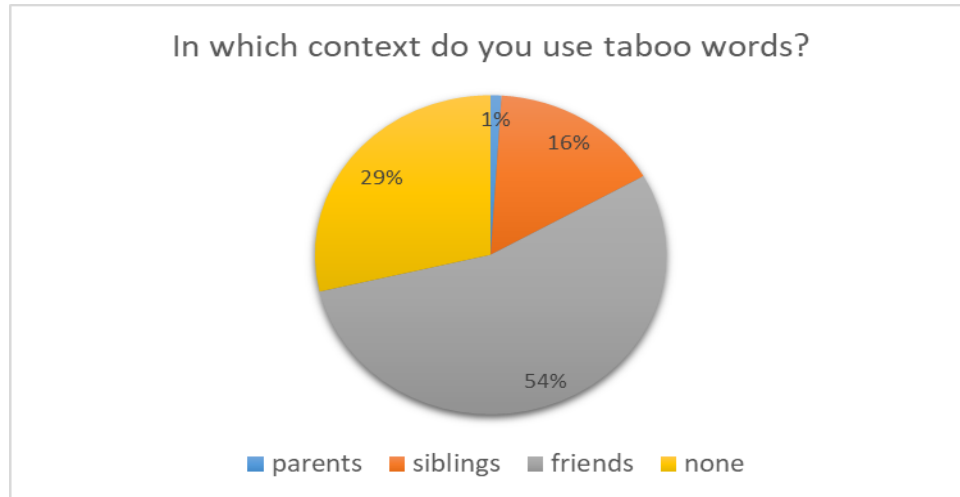


The third question asked in the questionnaire is: What are the five taboo words you use? we received 101 different answers to this question. Each answer has a special significance, because a word may be taboo for one person, but not for another. The answers are given below: the five most used taboo words are: fool, whore, cow, motherfucker and shit

An issue that is important for study is the age group with which speakers are free to use taboo words, for this question we have given several options with different age groups. Respondents mostly chose the option with my peers around 67%, at any age 16%, with younger than me 9%, and fewer speakers selected the older than me age group, with 3%.



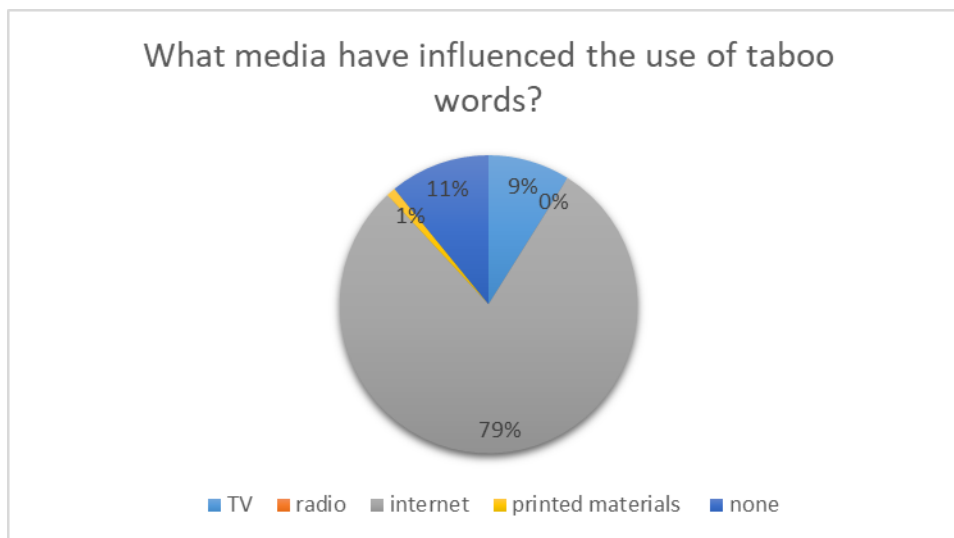
In addition to the age group, the issue in which taboo words are used is also of interest for research, with this question some issues are given in which the respondents are assumed to feel comfortable using taboo words. From these, it was found that 54% of respondents feel more comfortable using taboo words in their social circle, while only 1% of participants use taboo words with their parent.



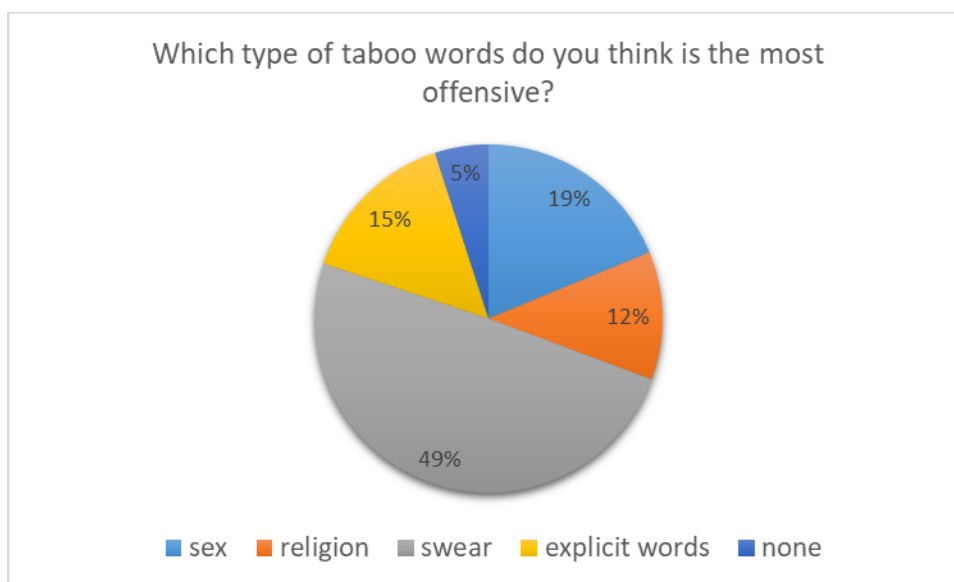
Respondents who stated that they use taboo words were asked what makes them to swear, in this question several variants were given that could be triggers that influence the use of swearing. Anger turned out to be the main cause of the use of profanity with about 65%. In the second position comes satisfaction with about 15%, whereas the third cause has turned out to be pain with about 8.9%, while the desire to offend someone has resulted in 1%.



In this age that we are living, the exposure to taboo words is direct, this is done from various sources, be it through television, radio, internet, or even printed materials. By asking: What media have influenced the use of profanity? It turned out that the Internet has a greater influence on the respondents with about 79%, TV with about 9%, while printed materials with about 0.5%.



Of all the types of taboo words, it is of interest to study which type of taboo words is considered the most offensive from the speakers' point of view. Out of all types of taboo words, profanity turned out to be the most offensive type of taboo word with about 49%, followed by sex 19%, explicit expressions 15%, religion 12% and none 5%.



At the end of the questionnaire, we provided a text in which some taboo words were used, in which we asked the respondents to find and write down which words they consider taboo. Below we have provided 101 different answers that we have received.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to research the use of taboo words and expressions in the Albanian language. Based on the collected data and analysis, we can answer the research questions. For the first question: Are taboo words and expressions used in Kosovar society? We can conclude that taboo words and expressions are used in Kosovar society, just like in all other societies. Because taboo words are found in a large number of languages in the world, so they are almost universal. People use them in different ways, depending on culture, race, gender, religion, etc. For the second question: What words and expressions are used and considered taboo in Kosovar society? We can conclude that the five most used taboo words are: fool, whore,

cow, motherfucker and shit. In the text at the end of the questionnaire, these words are considered as taboo words: Son of the bitch, fool, a piece of shit, fool, dirty cops, save your ass, go to hell! For the third research question: In what context do Kosovar society feel free to use taboo words? Our conclusion for this question is that speakers feel free to use taboo words with their age group, and with their friend.

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