Impact of Digital Streamers' Language on the Moral Development of Vietnamese Adolescents: A Qualitative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

The growing concern over the ethical implications of online content sets the stage for this inquiry. This qualitative study investigates the impact of streamers' swearing on the morality of Vietnamese teenagers, a topic of increasing importance in the era of digital streaming and online entertainment. The research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with nine Vietnamese teenagers, providing in-depth insights into their perceptions and attitudes toward the language used by streamers and its influence on their behavior. The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four key themes: the normalization of swearing in digital spaces, the delineation between online and offline behaviors, the influence of streamers as role models, and critical reflection and selective adoption. The study found that while swearing by streamers was normalized in digital contexts, participants also demonstrated a clear distinction between acceptable behaviors in online and offline environments. Streamers were often viewed as influential role models, affecting the language and attitudes of adolescents. However, participants also engaged in critical reflection, selectively adopting behaviors that aligned with their personal and cultural values. These findings contribute to the understanding of digital media's impact on adolescent development, particularly in non-Western contexts. By examining how digital content influences youth, the research illuminates broader societal issues related to digital consumption and behavioral norms. The study underscores the complex interplay between cultural norms, digital media consumption, and moral development, highlighting the need for comprehensive digital literacy and ethical content creation in the digital age.

Keywords: *Qualitative Inquiry, Digital Streamers, Language, Moral Development, Vietnamese Adolescents*

INTRODUCTION

The advent of digital entertainment and online streaming has significantly altered the landscape of media consumption, particularly among adolescents. In recent years, the popularity of live streaming, especially game streaming, has skyrocketed, creating a new paradigm of interactive entertainment (Li et al., 2020, Subiyantoro et al., 2023). This phenomenon has given rise to a new breed of celebrities: streamers, individuals who broadcast their gameplay and other content in real-time to a global audience. While this form of entertainment offers unique benefits such as real-time interaction and community building

(Sheng & Kairam, 2020), it also raises concerns regarding the content and its potential impact on young viewers, particularly in terms of language and behavior (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2020).

In Vietnam, where the penetration of the internet and digital media is rapidly increasing, these concerns are particularly acute. Vietnamese teenagers, like their counterparts worldwide, are increasingly turning to live streams for entertainment (Luong, 2021). Among the various aspects of streaming content, the language used by streamers, specifically their use of swearing or profanity, has become a point of contention. Swearing, while often considered a form of expression in many cultures (Montagu, 2001), can have different connotations and implications in the context of Vietnamese culture, which traditionally emphasizes respect and proper conduct.

Previous research has explored various aspects of media influence on youth, ranging from the effects of television and video games to the role of social media in shaping identity and behavior (e.g., Lin et al., 2015; Gunter & Gunter, 2019; Kostyrka-Allchorne et al., 2017). However, fewer studies have specifically examined the impact of live streaming and the use of coarse language by digital personalities on adolescent morality. Particularly, research focusing on non-Western contexts remains limited, highlighting a gap that this study aims to address. Morality, in the context of this research, is understood not just in the narrow sense of right or wrong, but as a broader construct encompassing values, ethics, and behavioral norms. This study explores how exposure to swearing in the digital realm might intersect with these facets of morality, potentially influencing the attitudes and behaviors of adolescents. This inquiry is particularly pertinent given the traditional moral framework in Vietnamese culture, which may interact in complex ways with modern, globalized forms of entertainment like live streaming. Building on existing literature, this study delves into a less charted territory by focusing on the specific dynamics of streaming media and its ethical repercussions in Vietnam. This study promisingly contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural impacts of new media forms, particularly in non-Western contexts. The findings are expected to offer insights for parents, educators, and policymakers, helping them navigate the challenges posed by the rapidly evolving landscape of digital entertainment.

LITERATURE REVIEW
The Rise of Live Streaming and Its Cultural Impact

The emergence and proliferation of live streaming platforms such as Twitch, YouTube Live, and Facebook Gaming have revolutionized the landscape of digital entertainment (Cunningham et al., 2019; Hutchins et al., 2019). This transformation is particularly evident in the gaming community, where streamers broadcast their gameplay to live audiences, often incorporating commentary and interaction (Johnson & Woodcock, 2019). The phenomenon has extended beyond gaming, encompassing various forms of live content that attract diverse audiences (Jia et al., 2020). The cultural impact of live streaming is profound. Researchers like Reischauer and Mair (2018) have noted how these platforms have blurred the lines between content creators and consumers, fostering interactive communities. However, this interactivity and the often unfiltered nature of live content raise concerns regarding the influence of streamers on young audiences, particularly in non-Western contexts like Vietnam, where digital media consumption is rapidly increasing (McCauley et al., 2020).

Language Use in Streaming: The Role of Swearing

Swearing, a common element in many streamers' content, has been a topic of debate in media studies. Researchers have argued that swearing, while a form of authentic expression, can have negative impacts, especially on young, impressionable audiences (Rinaldi, 2020). Studies focusing on Western audiences, like those by Copen-Mielitz (2004), have highlighted the potential for desensitization to profanity and aggression due to exposure to such content.

However, the cultural nuances of swearing are less explored in non-Western contexts. In Vietnamese culture, where respect and decorum are highly valued, the impact of exposure to swearing may differ significantly (Tran, 2021). This gap in research underscores the need to explore the implications of streamers' language use within different cultural frameworks.

Morality and Media Influence

The relationship between media consumption and moral development has been a longstanding focus in psychological and media studies. According to Bandura and Walters' (1977) Social Learning Theory, media serves as a powerful agent of socialization, shaping viewers' perceptions and behaviors. In the context of live streaming, this suggests that the language and behavior of streamers could influence the moral reasoning and conduct of adolescent viewers. Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) stages of moral development provide a framework for understanding how adolescents process moral dilemmas and ethical decision-making. Applying this to the context of digital media consumption, researchers have begun to explore how exposure to certain types of content, such as violence or profanity, impacts this developmental process (Jensen & Arnett, 2012).

Vietnamese Cultural Context and Adolescent Development

In Vietnam, the intersection of rapid digitalization and traditional values presents a unique context for studying the impacts of media consumption. Vietnamese culture, with its emphasis on filial piety and community-oriented values, may interact with the influences of global digital media in distinctive ways (Vu et al., 2020). Studies on Vietnamese adolescents (McCauley et al., 2020) have indicated a growing consumption of digital media, but research on how this consumption affects their moral and ethical development is still nascent. The cultural dimension is critical, as the traditional Vietnamese moral framework may moderate or amplify the effects of media influences like swearing in live streams.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews to delve into the experiences and perspectives of Vietnamese teenagers regarding their exposure to swearing in live-streaming content. The choice of a qualitative approach was driven by the study's aim to explore complex social phenomena — in this case, the nuanced interplay between media consumption and moral development within a specific cultural context. Qualitative methods are particularly suited for this task, as they allow for in-depth exploration of participants' perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, providing rich, detailed data that is essential for understanding the subtleties of this interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study are twofold. First, Bandura and Walters' (1977) Social Learning Theory serves as a foundation for understanding how media, as a form of social influence, can impact behavior and moral reasoning. According to this theory, individuals learn and internalize behaviors observed in others, particularly those deemed as role models. In the context of this study, streamers could be perceived as such role models, and their use of swearing may be internalized by adolescent viewers.

Second, Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) stages of moral development provide a framework for analyzing how exposure to certain types of media content, such as swearing, influences the moral reasoning process of adolescents. This theory suggests that moral development occurs in stages and is influenced by a range of social factors. Applying the framework allows for an exploration of whether and how the observed behaviors and language in live-streaming content influence the moral development of Vietnamese teenagers.

Participants

The study focused on a group of nine Vietnamese teenagers, selected to provide insights into the research question regarding the impact of streamers' swearing on their moral perspectives and behavior. This small, focused sample size was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of individual experiences and perspectives, which is central to the qualitative nature of this study. The participants, aged between 14 to 18 years, represented a mix of genders, urban and rural backgrounds, and varying levels of exposure to live-streaming content, thus ensuring a diverse range of viewpoints. In recruiting participants, ethical considerations were paramount. Given the age group of the participants, consent was a two-fold process. Firstly, informed consent was obtained from the parents or legal guardians of the teenagers. This consent process involved a detailed explanation of the study's purpose, methods, potential risks, and the confidentiality measures in place. Secondly, assent was also obtained from the teenagers themselves, ensuring that they were willing and comfortable to participate in the study. This dual consent process was crucial to respect the autonomy of the young participants while also recognizing their status as minors.

Confidentiality and anonymity were emphasized throughout the study. Participants were assured that their identities would be kept confidential and that any identifiable information would be anonymized in the reporting of the study's findings. This measure was taken to protect the privacy of the participants and to create a safe space for them to express their thoughts and experiences freely. During the interviews, sensitivity to the participants' comfort and well-being was maintained. The interviewer was trained to recognize signs of discomfort or distress and to respond appropriately, including pausing or stopping the interview if necessary. This approach was essential to ensure that the study was conducted in an ethical manner that prioritizes the welfare of the participants.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews, a method that offered both structure and flexibility, allowing the participants to express their thoughts and experiences comprehensively. Before the main data collection phase, a pilot study was conducted with two participants who did not form part of the main study sample. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the interview guide for clarity, relevance, and flow. Feedback from this pilot phase led to several revisions of the interview questions, ensuring they were culturally sensitive, understandable, and capable of eliciting in-depth responses.

The revised interview questions included prompts such as, "Can you describe your experience when you hear streamers using swear words during their live streams?" and "How do you think listening to streamers who swear influences your thoughts and behavior?" These questions were designed to probe the participants' perceptions and interpretations of swearing in live-streaming content, as well as its potential impact on their moral reasoning and behavior.

Each interview was scheduled to last between 45 to 60 minutes, a duration deemed sufficient to explore the research questions thoroughly without causing fatigue to the participants. The interviews were conducted in various settings chosen by the participants for their comfort and convenience, including quiet cafés, community centers, and in some cases, their homes. This flexibility in the choice of location was aimed at ensuring the participants felt at ease, facilitating open and honest communication.

The language used in all interviews was Vietnamese. This choice was made to ensure that the participants could express themselves in their native language, which is critical for capturing nuanced responses and reducing potential misunderstandings. The use of

Vietnamese also helped establish rapport and a comfortable atmosphere, as language plays a significant role in cultural and interpersonal dynamics.

To ensure the fidelity of the data, each interview was audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim by a bilingual researcher. To maintain the integrity of the participants' responses, particular attention was paid to linguistic nuances and cultural expressions during transcription and subsequent translation into English for analysis. This process was critical in preserving the authenticity of the participants' voices and ensuring that their perspectives were accurately represented in the study's findings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted using thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. This approach allowed for a flexible yet structured process of interpreting the rich, detailed narratives provided by the participants, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on the impact of streamers' swearing on their moral framework.

Following Braun et al.'s (2023) guidelines for thematic analysis, the process began with a thorough reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts to achieve immersion and familiarization with the data. This initial stage was crucial for the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the content and context of the participants' responses. It also facilitated the identification of initial ideas and patterns that would form the basis for more detailed analysis. The next step involved generating initial codes from the data. In this phase, the researchers systematically coded the entire data set, organizing the data into meaningful groups. This coding process was both inductive, driven by the content of the data, and deductive, guided by the study's theoretical frameworks. The aim was to identify specific instances where participants discussed their perceptions and experiences related to the influence of streamers' language on their moral reasoning and behavior.

Following coding, the researchers moved to searching for themes. This involved collating all the codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. This phase was characterized by a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts, and the developing themes, ensuring a coherent and accurate representation of the data.

The next stage was reviewing themes. Here, the researchers checked if the themes worked with the coded extracts and the entire data set. This iterative process involved refining and splitting themes where necessary, and continually reassessing the validity of each theme in capturing the essence of the data. Defining and naming themes was the subsequent phase. During this stage, the researchers developed detailed analyses of each theme, identifying the essence of what each theme captured about the data and determining what aspect of the research question it addressed. This phase required a careful balancing act between providing a concise and coherent narrative for each theme while ensuring that the richness and complexity of the data were not lost. The final stage involved producing the report. The analysis was written up with a narrative that weaved together the analytic insights into a coherent and compelling story about the data. This narrative included vivid and compelling extracts from the interviews, which were used to illustrate the themes and bring the perspectives of the participants to the forefront.

Throughout the thematic analysis process, the researchers maintained a reflexive stance, acknowledging their own biases and perspectives and how these might influence the analysis. This reflexivity was integral to ensuring the rigor and credibility of the analysis, ensuring that the findings were grounded in the data and reflective of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Normalization of Swearing in Digital Spaces

A significant finding from the thematic analysis was the normalization of swearing among Vietnamese teenagers within digital spaces, particularly when engaging with streamers' content. This theme was highlighted by seven out of the nine participants, indicating a prevalent trend in their perception and acceptance of profanity in online environments.

One participant, a 17-year-old male from an urban area, noted, "At first, I was shocked to hear streamers swear so casually, but over time, it just seemed normal. It is like everyone in the chat is okay with it, so I started to think it is not a big deal." This excerpt demonstrates the gradual shift in perception from initial shock to eventual acceptance of swearing as a norm in the digital context. Another participant, a 16-year-old female, echoed this sentiment, "I hear these words so often when watching streams that they do not feel offensive anymore. It is just how people talk online."

These findings can be interpreted through the lens of Social Learning Theory, which posits that behaviors can be learned through observation and imitation of others, particularly in social contexts. In the setting of live streaming, where streamers often serve as influential figures, their use of profanity can be internalized by adolescent viewers as an acceptable form of expression. This process of normalization reflects the social learning dynamics at play, where repeated exposure to a behavior in a social context (such as a streaming platform) leads to its acceptance and adoption.

Moreover, from the perspective of stages of moral development, this normalization of swearing among teenagers suggests an interaction with their moral reasoning process. As adolescents develop their moral understanding, they are influenced by the social and cultural contexts they are exposed to. In this case, the digital space of live streaming, where swearing is commonplace and accepted, appears to influence their moral judgment regarding language use. This influence could be indicative of a developmental phase where external influences, particularly those from admired figures like streamers, have a strong impact on their moral and ethical perceptions.

Delineation Between Online and Offline Behaviors

An intriguing finding from the study was the delineation participants made between their online and offline behaviors, particularly concerning language use. This theme emerged prominently in the narratives of six out of the nine participants, who articulated a clear distinction between how they perceived and engaged with swearing in digital spaces versus real-life settings.

A 15-year-old male participant illustrated this distinction: "When I am online, watching streamers swear feels normal and sometimes funny. But I know it is different in real life. I would not use those words with my family or in school." This statement reflects an awareness of the contextual appropriateness of language and a conscious separation of online behavior from offline conduct. Similarly, a 17-year-old female participant shared, "In the streaming world, swearing is just part of the entertainment. It does not mean I would talk like that. There is a difference between what you see online and how you act in the real world."

These excerpts underscore a cognitive process where teenagers differentiate between the norms and behaviors acceptable in the digital realm and those in their physical day-to-day lives. This finding can be interpreted through the stages of moral development theory. It suggests that these teenagers are navigating the conventional stage of moral development, where conformity to societal rules and understanding the expectations of behavior in different contexts become prominent. Their ability to distinguish between the online and offline contexts indicates an evolving moral understanding that recognizes the nuances and boundaries of acceptable behavior in different social environments.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Social Learning Theory, this delineation can be seen as a sophisticated form of modeling, where adolescents selectively adopt behaviors based on their understanding of social cues and contextual appropriateness. The distinction made by the participants between their online and offline personas indicates an awareness of the different social norms governing these spaces and a deliberate decision to modulate their behavior accordingly.

Influence of Streamers as Role Models

A prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the influence of streamers as role models, particularly in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to language use. This theme was referenced by eight out of the nine participants, indicating a significant impact of streamers on teenagers' perceptions and behavior.

One participant, a 16-year-old female, expressed, "I look up to some streamers. The way they talk, including the swearing, sometimes influences how I speak with my friends online. It is like you pick up bits of their style." This comment highlights the role of streamers as influential figures whose language patterns, including the use of profanity, are often adopted by viewers. Another participant, a 14-year-old male, mentioned, "There is this streamer I watch a lot. I know it is not good to swear, but when he does it, it somehow seems okay. It is like he is cool, and it does not seem wrong when he does it."

These excerpts suggest a significant degree of influence exerted by streamers, who are often seen as role models or figures to emulate, especially among adolescents. This observation aligns with the principles of Social Learning Theory, which posits that people, particularly adolescents, learn behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions through observing others, especially those they admire or consider role models. In this context, the streamers' use of profanity and their overall communication style can have a notable impact on the language use and attitudes of their teenage viewers.

From the perspective of stages of moral development, this finding can be interpreted as indicative of the participants being in the transitional phase between the conventional level of moral reasoning and the post-conventional level. This phase is characterized by an increasing awareness of broader societal norms and ethical principles, yet still being significantly influenced by immediate social references, like streamers, in shaping one's own moral and ethical stance.

Critical Reflection and Selective Adoption

Another significant finding of the study was the theme of critical reflection and selective adoption in the way teenagers processed the swearing they encountered in live streams. This theme was brought up by five out of the nine participants, reflecting a level of active engagement and discernment in their interaction with online content.

A 17-year-old male participant explained, "Sometimes when I watch a streamer swear, I think about why they are doing it. Is it just for fun, or are they angry? I do not just copy them; I think about whether it makes sense for me." This statement indicates a level of critical thinking applied to understanding the context and intention behind the streamers' use of profanity. Similarly, a 15-year-old female participant shared, "I hear lots of swearing in streams, but I know it is not always okay to talk like that. I choose what to take from what I watch. Not everything fits with how I want to be."

These insights reveal that while teenagers are influenced by the language and behavior of streamers, they also engage in a process of selective adoption, where they critically reflect on what they observe and decide what aligns with their personal values and social norms. This finding can be contextualized within the framework of stages of moral development, suggesting that these teenagers are navigating complex moral judgments. They are not merely

absorbing behaviors and attitudes passively but are actively evaluating and integrating them based on their evolving moral understanding.

Moreover, this theme resonates with the principles of Social Learning Theory, particularly the aspect of cognitive processes involved in observational learning. The teenagers' reflections indicate that they are not simply imitating the behaviors of streamers but are actively processing and assessing the appropriateness and relevance of these behaviors in their own lives.

DISCUSSION

Normalization of Swearing in Digital Spaces

The finding of the normalization of swearing in digital spaces among Vietnamese teenagers offers an intriguing contribution to the existing body of research on media influence and adolescent behavior. Previous studies have similarly observed the normalization of various behaviors and language through digital media consumption in different cultural contexts (Schwartz et al., 2013). However, the current study extends this understanding by specifically focusing on the Vietnamese context, where traditional values around respect and decorum are strongly emphasized. This cultural backdrop makes the normalization of swearing, a traditionally frowned upon behavior, particularly noteworthy.

The observation that Vietnamese teenagers gradually perceive swearing as a norm in online environments aligns with the findings from Western contexts, where exposure to certain behaviors in digital media leads to their normalization among adolescents (Throuvala et al., 2019). However, the contrast in cultural contexts highlights an important contribution of this study: it demonstrates that the influence of digital media transcends cultural boundaries, suggesting a globalized impact of digital content on youth behavior. This finding enriches the existing literature by illustrating that the processes of normalization observed in Western adolescents are also applicable to non-Western adolescents, albeit within their unique cultural frameworks.

Furthermore, the application of Social Learning Theory to understand this phenomenon adds to the existing discourse on the role of digital media as a socializing agent. While previous studies have utilized this theory to explain behavior adoption in various contexts (Cheung et al., 2015; Chwialkowska, 2019), the current study specifically applies it to the context of live streaming and its impact on language use. This application not only reaffirms the theory's relevance in the digital age but also expands its scope to include the influence of new forms of media, like live streaming, on adolescent behavior.

Additionally, using stages of moral development to interpret the findings offers a novel perspective on how adolescents integrate and rationalize the behaviors observed in digital spaces. While previous research has explored the impact of digital media on various aspects of adolescent development (Jensen & Arnett, 2012), the current study specifically links it to moral development in the context of swearing and language use. This connection provides new insights into how digital media consumption intersects with and influences the moral reasoning process of adolescents, particularly in a non-Western setting.

Delineation Between Online and Offline Behaviors

The finding of the delineation between online and offline behaviors among Vietnamese teenagers presents a fascinating dimension to our understanding of adolescent behavior in the context of digital media consumption. This distinction, observed in the current study, offers a nuanced perspective that contrasts with some previous research, which often suggests a more direct translation of online behaviors to offline contexts (Dovchin, 2015).

In existing literature, the impact of digital media on behavior is frequently discussed in terms of direct influence, where behaviors observed online are mirrored in offline settings

(O'Donnell & Ray, 2018). However, the current study reveals a more complex interaction. Vietnamese teenagers demonstrate an ability to compartmentalize behaviors, distinguishing between what is permissible in the digital sphere and what is acceptable in real life. This finding is particularly significant in the context of a culture that values respect and decorum, as it suggests a sophisticated level of cognitive and moral engagement with digital content that was not fully explored in previous studies.

The use of Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) stages of moral development to interpret this behavior underscores a crucial developmental aspect. It suggests that these adolescents are not merely at the mercy of the digital content they consume but are actively engaging with it in a way that aligns with their moral understanding and the societal norms they adhere to. This aspect of moral development, where adolescents navigate and reconcile different sets of norms in online and offline environments, is a relatively underexplored area in existing literature, particularly in non-Western contexts.

Similarly, the application of Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977) in this context highlights a selective adoption of behaviors, rather than the straightforward imitation often discussed in prior research. This selective adoption, based on an understanding of social norms and appropriateness, indicates a level of critical thinking and agency in adolescents that adds depth to the theory's application in digital media research.

Influence of Streamers as Role Models

The finding regarding the influence of streamers as role models on Vietnamese teenagers' attitudes and behaviors, especially in terms of language use, offers a valuable addition to the existing literature on media influence and role modeling. While previous studies have extensively documented the impact of traditional media figures like film and television stars on adolescent behavior (Brown & Babkowski, 2011), this study extends this understanding to the realm of digital streaming and its influencers.

In line with the principles of Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977), the study corroborates the idea that role models significantly influence behavior, particularly in adolescents. However, it also highlights the unique dynamics of this influence in the digital era, where streamers – a new category of media figures – emerge as influential role models. This finding is significant as it suggests that the influence of digital media personalities can be as substantial, if not more, as traditional media figures, a concept that has been less explored in previous research, especially in the context of non-Western audiences.

Furthermore, the application of Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) stages of moral development provides an innovative lens through which to view these findings. While previous research has often focused on the influence of media on the earlier stages of moral development, primarily centered around obedience and conformity (Jensen & Arnett, 2012), the current study suggests that Vietnamese teenagers are navigating a more complex moral landscape. They are influenced by digital role models but also engage with these influences at a level that involves critical assessment and integration into their moral framework, indicating a transitional phase in moral development.

Critical Reflection and Selective Adoption

The theme of critical reflection and selective adoption regarding teenagers' interactions with swearing in live streams is a nuanced finding that contributes to the broader discourse on media influence and adolescent development. This theme diverges from some previous research that often portrays adolescents as passive consumers of media content, easily swayed by the behaviors and attitudes depicted in digital spaces (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). Instead, the current study reveals a more active, discerning engagement with online

content, where Vietnamese teenagers are not merely absorbing what they see but are critically reflecting on it and making selective choices about what to adopt into their behavior.

This finding aligns with and extends the principles of Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977) by highlighting the role of cognitive processes in observational learning. While Social Learning Theory has been widely applied to understand how individuals adopt behaviors observed in others, particularly in media contexts, this study emphasizes the aspect of selective adoption based on critical reflection. This perspective adds depth to the theory's application, suggesting that the influence of media on behavior is not a straightforward process of imitation but involves a higher level of cognitive engagement and decision-making.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Kohlberg and Hersh's (1977) stages of moral development, this finding indicates a sophisticated level of moral reasoning among the participants. It suggests that they are actively engaged in forming their moral judgments and are not just influenced by external behaviors but are integrating them with their internal moral and ethical frameworks. This aspect of moral development, characterized by active processing and integration of observed behaviors, challenges some previous assumptions that adolescents' moral judgments are predominantly shaped by external influences without significant internal processing (Jensen & Arnett, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the impacts of watching streamers' swearing on the morality of Vietnamese teenagers, a topic of increasing relevance in the era of digital entertainment and online streaming. Positioned within the cultural context of Vietnam, where traditional values emphasize respect and decorum, this qualitative study aimed to understand how the modern phenomenon of live streaming and the associated language use by streamers influence the moral reasoning and behavior of Vietnamese adolescents. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with nine Vietnamese teenagers. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of the participants' perspectives, providing rich, detailed insights into their experiences and perceptions. The interviews were meticulously designed to elicit responses that were both reflective of the participants' personal experiences and informative regarding broader social and cultural trends. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, a method that facilitated the identification and interpretation of key themes in the participants' narratives. In summary, the study's main findings indicate that swearing in digital contexts is normalized among Vietnamese teens, though they maintain a clear distinction between online and offline behaviors. Streamers significantly influence adolescent behavior as role models, but teens selectively adopt these influences, integrating them critically into their moral framework.

The findings of this study carry several important implications for understanding the impact of digital media on adolescent behavior and development, particularly in the context of non-Western cultures like Vietnam. Firstly, the normalization of swearing in digital spaces suggests a need for increased awareness and dialogue about the influence of online content on youth. Parents, educators, and policymakers should be cognizant of the fact that digital environments can significantly alter perceptions of language use and behavior among adolescents. This awareness could lead to more proactive discussions about digital literacy and the development of critical thinking skills, enabling teenagers to navigate online spaces more responsibly. The delineation between online and offline behaviors observed in the study highlights the adaptability and discernment of adolescents in different social contexts. This finding suggests that digital media literacy programs should not only focus on the content adolescents are exposed to but also on enhancing their ability to understand and negotiate different social norms and expectations in online and offline environments. Such programs could help reinforce the idea that behaviors acceptable in one context may not be appropriate

in another, aiding in the holistic development of adolescents' social and moral competencies. The influence of streamers as role models underscores the impact of new forms of digital influencers on adolescent behavior. This finding has implications for content creators and streaming platforms, emphasizing the responsibility they hold in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of their young audience. It calls for a consideration of ethical standards and practices in content creation, especially content aimed at or accessible to adolescent audiences. Furthermore, the theme of critical reflection and selective adoption indicates that adolescents are not passive consumers of digital content. This insight has significant implications for the design of educational content and strategies. Educational programs and interventions aiming to foster positive development and decision-making in adolescents should leverage this capacity for critical thinking. Encouraging adolescents to reflect on the content they consume and make conscious, informed choices can be a powerful tool in their moral and cognitive development.

This study, while providing valuable insights, has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size of nine Vietnamese teenagers, although sufficient for a qualitative study, is relatively small and may not be representative of the broader adolescent population in Vietnam. This limitation restricts the generalizability of the findings, as the experiences and opinions of a small group may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and behaviors of all Vietnamese teenagers. Additionally, the study's focus on a specific age group and cultural context means that the findings may not apply to adolescents in different cultural or age contexts. Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases such as social desirability bias, where participants might give responses they believe are expected or acceptable. Furthermore, the study did not explore the potential impact of other variables, such as socioeconomic status, family environment, or educational background, which might influence how adolescents perceive and are influenced by online content.

In light of these limitations, several recommendations for further research are proposed. Future studies could expand the sample size and include a more diverse range of participants to enhance the representativeness and generalizability of the findings. Research involving adolescents from different regions of Vietnam, varying socioeconomic backgrounds, and educational levels would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of digital media on Vietnamese youth. Additionally, longitudinal studies would be valuable in examining how exposure to online content influences adolescent behavior and moral development over time, offering insights into the long-term effects of digital media consumption. Comparative studies between Vietnamese adolescents and those from other cultural backgrounds could also be beneficial in understanding the cultural nuances in the relationship between digital media consumption and adolescent development. Finally, incorporating quantitative methods or mixed-methods approaches could provide a more holistic view and help validate and extend the findings of this study.

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