

# Swearwords Used by Gangsters in the “Alpha Dog” Movie

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## ABSTRACT

Many people assume that swearwords is a rude word and should be avoided. Those words are used to insult, to curse, to offend or to mock at something when the speaker has strong emotion (Hughes, 1991,05). To swear at someone or something is to insult and deprecate the object of abuse, as well as to use other kinds of dysphemism (Allan & Burrige, 2006,76). Apparently some experts and scholars have been able to prove that swearwords also has a purpose and a meaning beside the one as commonly held. Therefore, the writer took the "Alpha Dog" movie as an example of the analyzed cases. Examples have been found by the writer including the categories of epithets derived from tabooed bodily organs, epithets derived from bodily effluvia, epithets derived from sexual behaviours, dysphemistic epithets that pick on real physical characteristics that are treated as though they are abnormalities, imprecations and epithets invoking mental subnormality or derangement. Finally, the writer also managed to find a purpose or a reason for the people to use swearwords in real life.

**Keywords:** Swearwords, Swearing, Epithets

Human beings created in this world need each other. They cannot live alone without the help of others. When they want to ask for help or need help of others they need a way to express through language. In general, they define the language itself into two, formal and informal. Those two types of the language are used in accordance with the context. For example the formal language is used in a business context, parties, speeches, meetings, teaching, presentations, seminars, and so on. Then the second is an informal language that is often used when people talk with others of his same social status or just below his social status.

There is a unique phenomenon when people use informal language, in which the elements in informal language may contain swearwords. Society in general found that swearwords is negative and forbidden. They also argue that swearwords are offensive and disrespectful. Based on Jay and Janschewitz's statement that, "the main purpose of swearing is to express emotions, especially anger and frustration" (in Gruyter, 2008, p.267). Although swearwords are forbidden, there are still many people who use them, especially young people even adult people. There are other facts when young people such as students use swearwords is not only to insult or curse others, but they also use it to show closeness, intimacy, and solidarity.

Jay and Janschewitz also state that "people are more likely to swear in relaxed environments than in formal environments" (in Gruyter 2008, p.273). According to their statement we can conclude that there is no doubt that users of swearwords are not restricted to age. Users of swearwords are also more likely to use swearwords when they are in informal situations, especially among close friends. Each swearwords has it own category or classification. The classification is based on the meaning of the swearwords itself. There are many classifications of swearwords dealing with sex, religion, genital, anatomy and others. For example, "Fucking" which means making love is classified into sexual irregularities term. It is classified into sexual irregularities because the word deals with sex activity.

The reason why the writer chose the movie entitled "Alpha Dog" is because this movie tells a story of a young gangster and sellers of illegal drugs such as marijuana in California that got involved in the kidnap and murder based on a true story. When talking about gangsters, teenagers, and illegal drugs, then of course there are elements of swearwords in it. Swearwords in a movie are also diverse as they are spoken by teenagers as well as adults. The writer argue that the movie deserves a research because he wants to know the reasons why the characters in the movie use swearwords frequently. There must be some reasons why they use swearwords.

*Alpha Dog* is a 2006 American crime drama movie written and directed by Nick Cassavetes, produced by Sidney Kimmel and Paul Ralph, Distributed by Universal Pictures. Alpha Dog movie first screened at the Sundance Movie Festival on January 27, 2006, with a wide release the following year on January 12, 2007. The movie is based on the true story of the kidnapping and murder of 15-year-old Nicholas Markowitz and related events in 2000. The “Alpha Dog” movie is a movie based on a true story that narrate Johnny Truelove as leader of Alpha Dog gang and selling marijuana supplied by his own father Sonny Truelove. Johnny has some gang members and one of them is Jake Mazursky. The main case in this story is Jake Mazursky who owe illegal drugs valued at \$ 1,200 at Johnny and Jake could not pay the money because he involved a lot of debt. Jake find it hard to repay the debt and ask for leniency on Johnny but he does not give it then they fight and threaten each other. Johnny felt that Jake had not owed him politely and then he intends to take revenge on Jake. One time Johnny and his gang members who were on the trip saw Jake’s little brother, Zack Mazursky that is actually running away from home because of family problems. Seeing this opportunity of course he get an idea to kidnap Zack. In fact that Zack is actually kidnapped but he feels safe and comfortable because Johnny’s gang members actually treat Zack well. Throughout the movie shows how these teenagers in their activities such as doing parties and getting high with the marijuana then doing the free sex. Of course in every scene and the things they do there always emerge diverse swearwords. Every swearwords spoken by the characters in the movie is not only among friends but also to the girlfriend, stranger, and family.

## **METHODS**

The approach used in this research is descriptive qualitative approach. The writer chose a descriptive qualitative because he thinks this method is the most appropriate to analyze and process data accurately. Descriptive qualitative research methods are carried out on several groups of people, an object, a condition and understanding at this time. That's why the writer chose this method as a reference to process and explore the data that have been obtained and finally draw a conclusion when researching.

The source of data used in this research was the movie entitled “Alpha Dog”. The subjects of this data are four main characters of Alpha Dog (Johnny Truelove, Frankie Ballenbacher, Jake Mazursky, Sonny Truelove).

In conducting this research, the writer himself did the whole process of collecting and analyzing the data. Therefore, the key instrument of this research was the writer himself.

In order to collect the data; the writer used some steps. First, the writer watched the movie for several times until he could get the data and make a list of the swearwords. Second, the writer browsed in the internet to look for the movie script, so he could analyze the data easily. Third, after browsing in the internet and watched the movie several times, the writer identify the swearwords into the classification based on the theories of classification, which consists of five term: bodily organs, bodily effluvia, sexual behaviours, physical characteristics (abnormalities), mental subnormality (derangement). Fourth, the writer started to classify each term to it appropriate category and put it in the table of swearwords classification. Fifth, the writer continued to analyze the reasons of each character in the movie using swearwords on their dialog.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Swearwords Categories**

#### **4.1.1 Epithets derived from tabooed bodily organs**

- **Cock**

The word “cock” here means a penis / male genitalia. The examples taken by the writer for the word *cock* in the movie are *cock* and *cocksucking*.

The word “cock” not only has impolite meaning, but in its use also tends to express the emotion of anger. As an example, the movie always used it to express angry and annoyed expression. People are more inclined to use the word "cock" than “penis”

- **Dick**

The word “dick” here has the same meaning as “cock” which means male genitalia. The examples taken by the writer of the word *dick* in the movie are *dick* , *dickwad* , and *dickhead*.

The word "dick" has in common with the word "cock" in both the sense and meaning and its use in the system. The frequency of the word "dick" is also more often used than the word "penis"

- **Ass**

The word "ass" in general means “butt”, but when used in the context of swearing could have some extra meaning as stupid, fool, or a loser. It is understood that the use of the word "ass" as well as swearing have the meaning as degrading. Besides that if the word “ass” affixes then it will get a different meaning as in the example. The examples taken by the writer of the word *ass* in the movie are *slave-ass* and *asshole*.

- **Balls**

The word “balls” has the meaning of “man’s testicles”. Although the word "balls" in the category of "bodily organs" but rather as related to the context of "sexual Behaviours". The example taken by the writer of the word *balls* in the movie is *suck my balls*

- **Pussy**

The word “pussy” has the meaning of female genitalia or commonly known as vagina. In swearing it also has the meaning as a coward. The word "pussy" in addition has the impolite meaning (vagina) and also has the meaning of provoking the emotion of the interlocutor. The example taken by the writer of the word *pussy* in the movie is “fucking *pussy*”

#### **4.1.2 Epithets derived from bodily effluvia**

- **Shit**

The word “shit” in general has the meaning as a feces. While in swearing it could be as an exclamation of disgust, anger, annoyance, or shocked. The word "shit" here can stand alone, but also can get or be additive to the other swearwords like in the example. The frequency of use the word "shit" is also more used than the word "feces" itself. The examples taken by the writer of the word *shit* in the movie are *Holy shit*, *shit*, *fuck that shit*.

#### **4.1.3 Epithets derived from sexual behaviours**

- **Fuck**

The word "fuck" basically means having intercourse or sex. Over time the word "fuck" in the context of swearwords has some development. The word "fuck" has a meaning that is very rough and tends to be used for swearing but sometimes it is also used in the lingua franca of a community, especially teenagers. The word "fuck" also gets affixes as in the example. The examples taken by the writer of the word *fuck* in the movie are *motherfucker*, *Fucko*, *Fucker*, *Fuck You*.

- **Bitch**

The word "bitch" does not just mean a prostitute. However, in daily practice it has several different definitions. It can also mean a man whose abilities, character, mindset, or emotional responses is typical of that which is generally associated with being a man but acting like a girl, wimp, or homosexual. Although it sounds rude and disrespectful but it can be a non-offensive colloquialism meant to reference to a girl or a woman with whom the speaker is associated in some way. The example taken by the writer of the word *bitch* in the movie is *bitch* that has three different meanings.

#### **4.1.4 Dysphemistic epithets that pick on real physical characteristics that are treated as though they are abnormalities**

- **Short**

The word “short” basically has no meaning as swearword. However, according to Allan & Burridge when someone calls another person with the insinuation refers to the physical

then it becomes as part of swearword. This is because the word “short” has a meaning that is rude and inappropriate.

- **Midget**

“Midget” is a tiny sub-species of the human race. Mainly raised in midget mills, for the entertainment of normal people. Midgets in the wild are attracted to sugar packets, and if captured they serve many purposes, such as, midget butlers, wrestlers, and as collectables.

#### 4.1.5 Imprecations and epithets invoking mental subnormality or derangement

- **Fag**

“Fag” is short form of faggot. A word used by ignorant homophobic teenage males to describe anybody/thing but themselves. This is almost always in a subconscious attempt to prove that they are not gay; everybody around them is. The word meaning "homosexual" is often used to provoke emotions and sounds have a powerful meaning. Those who use this word more likely to be male. It is understandable that a real normal man will be very upset when it is said that he was a fag.

- **Faggot**

“Faggot” is an extension of the word fag. The word faggot has an offensive meaning. The term is used to refer to homosexuals, often as a slur. The word meaning "homosexual" is often used to provoke emotions and sounds to have a powerful meaning. Those who use this word are more likely to be males. It is understandable that a real normal man will be very upset when it is said that he was a fag.

- **Homo**

“Homo” is the short for homosexual, meaning someone who likes members of the same sex. The word is also used by immature teenagers as the ultimate insult word. The word meaning "homosexual" is often used to provoke emotions and sounds to have a powerful meaning. Those who use this word are more likely to be males. It is understandable that a real normal man will be very upset when it is said that he was a fag.

- **Gay**

“Gay” has the same meaning as faggot, fag, homo. Means someone likes other people who has the same sex. The word meaning "homosexual" is often used to provoke emotions and sounds have a powerful meaning. Those who use this word more likely to be male. It is understandable that a real normal man will be very upset when it is said that he was a fag.

- **Queers**

“Queer” is an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities that are not heterosexual, or gender-binary. Originally meaning strange or peculiar, queer developed a usage as a pejorative term for *homosexual* in the late 19th century. The word meaning "homosexual" is often used to provoke emotions and sounds have a powerful meaning. Those who use this word more likely to be male. It is understandable that a real normal man will be very upset when it is said that he was a fag.

- **Crazy**

The word “crazy” means having or showing a very abnormal or sick state of mind. It could have a rough meaning when used to curse. The word "crazy" has an impolite meaning, because normal people would not accept if they are called crazy or insane.

- **Maniac**

The word “maniac” could be described an insane person or a wild disorderly person and acts in a wildly irresponsible way. It has the meaning as indicated disrespectful because someone is acting beyond reasonableness and sanity.

- **Idiot**

An “idiot” is a disabled person, or someone who acts in a self-defeating or significantly counterproductive way. The similar terms moron, imbecile, and cretin have all gained specialized meanings in modern times. Sometimes an idiot refers to an utterly foolish or senseless person or in psychology. The word "idiot" has a meaning that is very rough due to direct as to say they are talking with people who has very stupid brain

- **Nuts**

“Nuts” could be as a satire for a person suffering from insanity. It also implies a slightly crazy person but usually not really crazy. It has in common with the word "idiot" as humble as the other person who has a stupid impression

- **Insane**

“Insane” is a spectrum of behaviors characterized by certain abnormal mental or behavioral patterns. Insanity may manifest as violations of societal norms, including a person becoming a danger to themselves or others, though not all such acts are considered insanity. In modern usage insanity is most commonly encountered as an informal unscientific term denoting mental instability.

- **Stupid**

“Stupid” is a lack of intelligence, understanding, reason, wit, or sense. Stupidity manifests itself in a person's lack of ability to assimilate information and to use that information. This is the type of a person that continues to make the same mistake over and over, not understanding what is wrong. The word "stupid" is the simplest form of a few examples of swearwords signaling abnormalities and a tendency to think the brain power is low.

- **Moron**

“Moron” is a term once used in psychology to denote mild intellectual disability. It has the same meaning as stupid or idiot when used to swear. The word "moron" is still in the same context of "stupid". The use of the word “moron” is rather sparse compared to the other sub-categories. The word "moron" also has a rude meaning.

## 4.2 Reasons for Expressing Emotions

### 4.2.1 To express frustration or anger

*JM : I know, man! I mean, do you... Do you think I'd **fuckin**g be here if this wasn't the last stop on earth?*

Jake tried to convince Butch that he would not ask for help if he was not really pressed. He showed his frustration and hoped that Butch would lend him money. From this conversation it can be seen that Jake was in a state of stress which peaked depressed. This can be as Butch was the father of Jake, and we can imagine how a child use swearwords on his father.

### 4.2.2 Express surprised or shocked

*FB : Yo, what the **fuck**, dude*

*FB : Holy **shit**! Yo, Johnny, what happened, man?*

Frankie showed expression of shock over what had happened at Johnny’s house. This is an example of swearwords that was not only to swear or curse someone, but also used as an everyday expression such as being startled.

### 4.2.3 To shock

*FB : Come here, you little **fucker**.*

Frankie suddenly appeared and gave an action that seemed dangerous for Zack and of course he was shocked and ran. The next example that swearwords was not only used for cursing, swearing, and as an expression, but also to make other people feel shocked or even threatened

### 4.2.4 To insult someone

*JT : You want **shit** to do?*

Johnny made Elvis a laughingstock to his gang. Johnny used swearwords in this context for the purpose of degrading and harassing Elvis.

### 4.2.5 To indicate friendship or to assert identity in a group

*FB : I'm **fuckin**g high, dawg*

*FB : Yeah, dance, **bitch**.*

The phrase of swearwords that Frankie used herein implies no rudeness but it is meaningful to demonstrate the relation of friendship. It looks very clear as Frankie used swearwords here, none of the crew were offended or angry. They even just laughed and gave Frankie a toast.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

As the findings the writer is very sure with the theories that have been defined by the experts were indeed proven true. Swearwords have several categories and the examples could be found in this movie. For instance *epithets derived from tabooed bodily organ are cock, dick, ass, balls, and pussy*. For instance *epithets derived from bodily effluvia is shit*. For instance *epithets derived from sexual behaviours are fuck and bitch*. For instance *dysphemistic epithets that pick on real physical characteristics that are treated as though they are abnormalities are short and midget*. For instance *imprecations and epithets invoking mental subnormality or derangement are fag, faggot, homo, gay, queers, crazy, maniac, idiot, nuts, insane, stupid, and moron*. Furthermore is the reason why they use swearwords also have been proven by the theory from the experts. In general, people know that when someone uses swearwords then the reason is like *to curse or to insult*. However after studying and understanding the theories from the experts, the writer found out that swearwords has other purposes like *to express frustration or anger, express surprised or shocked, to shock, and to indicate friendship or to assert identity in a group*.

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