

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PHRASES: GEN Z LANGUAGE PRACTICES AS COPING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Gen Z's creative use of language as a narrative technique to express socially unacceptable thoughts and emotions. Through an analysis of Gen Z's social media phraseology, this study explains how this generation employs humorous yet socially acceptable jargon to relieve mental burden and cope with stress and uncertainty. Sigmund Freud's Relief theory of humor is employed to critically examine certain phraseology of Gen Z with key themes of stress, mental well-being, and uncertainty. Research results highlight that the digital generation's humorous expressions are not just fleeting internet trends but psychologically rich and socially rooted linguistic practices. In light of the analysis, humour is a key tool through which the digital generation discharges emotional tension. While a vast body of contemporary research addresses digital discourse, the creative use of language, and the conduct of the digital generation independently, the specific perspective of creative Gen Z phraseology as a coping strategy remains under-examined. This study addresses this gap by analyzing Gen Z phraseology through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

Key Words

Humour, Gen Z, Phrases, Mental Well-being, Uncertainty, Social Media

Introduction

Language operates as a fluid system, persistently reshaping and adapting to ongoing changes in society and culture. Each individual inherits unique features of a certain time period and the generation it belongs to. Similarly, each successive generation develops distinct modes of articulation for mediation and for expressing notions, states, and experiences. In the contemporary era, social media has become the principal communicative arena, and its use is most evident among youth. This ascendancy of digital media not only shapes the conversational content but also the language itself, generating novel lexical items, phrases, idiomatic expressions and ways of emotional articulation. Generation Z, often shortened to Gen Z, is distinguished by an exceptional range of names, such as Zoomers, Switchers, Gen Tech, iGeneration, Online Generation, "Always Clicking," and many more (Dolot, 2018). Gen Z is the most complicated to define, given its age range. However, Merriam-Webster defines this generation as people born between 1997 and 2012, and the Oxford Dictionary defines them as born in the late 1990s and early 2020s. According to experts, this generation is capable of being adaptive both in real and virtual worlds (Dolot, 2018).

Oxford English Dictionary defines a phrase as “a small group of words standing together as a conceptual unit, typically forming a component of a clause”. However, Gen Z phrases are informal expressions used to convey emotions, attitudes, or social meaning in everyday digital communication. These phrases emerging from social media platforms, online communities and memes are markers of identity and collective understanding, combining humour, irony and affective meaning. Such expressions are socially grounded in everyday digital life and spread rapidly through viral trends and sharing, in the form of captions or hashtags. Gen Z phrases differ significantly from traditional idiomatic language, which uses formal, full-length sentences that follow conventional norms. While Gen Z phrases are concise and fragmentary, they are mostly circulated on digital platforms, which shift rapidly with trends.

In this digital age, online platforms have become a prominent space for individuals and groups to negotiate their identity through language (Khan et al., 2024). Gen Z shares a common identity through the mutual use of certain phraseology and language markers, such as abbreviations, hashtags, emojis, slang, code-switching, and platform-specific dynamics, which are particular characteristics of this generation. Through shared phraseology, they build connections to express emotions which are difficult to negotiate directly. Their repeated, widely circulated jargon helps digital individuals frame mental challenges and stress as shared and helps them prepare for uncertainty. Language, emotion and psychology are deeply connected domains. Emotional experiences are shaped and constructed by language. Technological advancements have enabled the analysis of language through a psychological and emotional lens (Ghobain et al., 2024). Gen Z uses language and communication as tools to cope with emotional and psychological feelings, such as stress and everyday uncertainty in this fast-paced world. Through language and shared phraseology, they open up about their struggles rather than dealing with them in isolation, but in a more socially acceptable and humorous way. Thus, language is a shared means for Gen Z to express themselves and relate to each other for everyday survival. Similarly, the interaction between an individual's inner world and their complex social environment influences psychological impact, where "psychology" refers to an individual's inner world, such as their will, emotions, beliefs, and attitudes. With improvements in affective communicative abilities, iGeneration encounters distinct social and psychological realities.

Today, Gen Z confronts unprecedented existential constraints. Their progress is usually bound up with academic pressure, economic crises, and intense comparisons, which naturally place them in a position of acute stress. Moreover, future uncertainty adds to psychological burnout. As this generation grows up, their focus on mental health is increasing. They are discussing openly, even joking, about the emotional problems like "job burnout" and "career anxiety" which were taboo topics in the past. This has resulted in a new era of language discovery and application, greatly raising its social value and standing as a vital resource. Personal problems that used to be hidden are now being openly and even humorously released in similar ways that are socially acceptable and even funny. These techniques indirectly develop a collective way of coping, thus old personal struggles are now shared generational issues. This informal and lively way of expressing mental health and emotional issues in a simple and approachable manner is both appealing and practical, allowing for a deeper understanding of language.

A huge body of research sheds light on the attributes and working mechanisms of Gen Z. The specific jargon of this digital generation has also been a focus of stylistic and sociolinguistic studies. However, the psychological and coping functions of Gen Z phraseology are an ignored domain. By addressing this gap, the study helps deepen understanding of the contemporary

language that presents emotions and various aspects of life in an aesthetic way. The collaboration between linguistics and psychology reveals the mechanisms underlying mental health in spoken language patterns. Through in-depth research on the construction of self-awareness, cultivation of resilience and expression of emotions among young people in the digital age, we have gained a deeper understanding of the intertwined effects of their intrinsic motivation for self-growth within a socio-cultural context and the external social environment. This in-depth understanding of widespread expressions not only promotes deeper integration of intergenerational interactions but also cultivates empathy in the process. Simultaneously, it lays a solid foundation for future interpersonal understanding. By deeply interpreting the expression patterns of Generation Z, we can not only more intuitively perceive their expression of excitement as an important manifestation of their mental health, but also demonstrate its function in coping with stress, showing it as a necessary choice in the face of uncertainty, and to explore verbal expression as a source to stimulate emotions and promote psychological communication.

Objectives:

1. To determine the most common Gen Z phrases in online communication for expressing feelings of stress, doubt, and other emotions.
2. To evaluate how Gen Z vocabulary functions as a linguistic tool for coping with stress and fostering mental health.
3. To explore the effect of Gen Z phrases on the construction of selfhood and identity in online communication.

Research Questions

1. What kind of Gen Z expressions are most commonly used to convey emotions such as stress, doubt, and mood in online communication?
2. In what ways do such linguistic expressions represent Generation Z's language, based on coping mechanisms with stress and mental health issues?
3. How does the use of Gen Z language facilitate the formation of selfhood and identity in online communication?

Literature Review:

The informal, colloquial, and technology-driven language of Gen Z has been the focus of several recent studies. A lot of research has been conducted to understand the patterns and differences in Gen Z language compared to other generations across various social media platforms. Sunday (2025) has examined the unique features of Gen Z's language and word choice to express a community-conscious style. It elucidates that although the digitally influenced language of Gen Z is casual, positive and engaging, it subverts traditional expectations and labels, displaying a resilient mindset. Conny (2024) also points out that these digital natives are transforming language through a mix of short, molded forms and conventional terms. He has investigated notable changes in Gen Z's lingo, particularly on Instagram, with the goal of recognizing the linguistic shifts that are altering communicative patterns in the digital environment. Ugoala (2024) reveals emerging

forms of language structures on Tiktok. It highlights that the non-rigid, creative use of language by Gen Z asserts an innate human ability to create new forms. Putri et. al. (2025) further demonstrate the significant influence of social media language on Gen Z's identity construction.

Language is not merely a medium for communicating ideas and messages, but also a social and psychological tool. The social and psychological value of language has been a topic of interest in a number of studies. As Sirbu (2015) posits in his paper, the shared communicative vernacular of a society is the most certain proof of the sustenance of a social group. Hence, when a community exists, the need for communication triggers a need for language, and over time, this need becomes stronger. Hence, Gen Z sustains a form of community on digital media, which necessitates the development of a specific lingo to communicate shared perspectives. Similarly, Holtgraves and Kashima (2008) highlight the significant impact of language in maintaining social cognition. It states that for meaningful interactions, language could be construed productively. Tylen et. al. (2010) present language as a tool for interacting minds. This metaphor envisions language as an instrument that enables flexible forms of social collaboration and mutual participation. Language is operated in a number of ways to facilitate mutual mediation, profiling and reengagement.

Generation Z, a digital-native generation, is thought to develop its linguistic patterns through the language used on platforms such as Tiktok and Instagram. Generation Z prefers original, informal, and expressive language (Tagliamonte, 2016), as language change occurs rapidly in digital media (Androutsopoulos, 2014). In addition to stylistic markers, such practices serve to construct and signal social identity based on the collective experience of one's generation.

Previous research in discourse psychology has highlighted the prominence of language use (such as verbalization) in managing stress and emotions, as shown in studies by Pennebaker (1997) and Lazarus & Folkman (1984) that demonstrate the effect of emotional verbalization on emotional coping. Adopting this view, more recent work has suggested that Gen Z's use of ironic, humorous, and self-deprecating language serves as a linguistic coping mechanism to externalize emotions and reaffirm shared social bonds (Zappavigna, 2012). Digital phraseology can therefore be understood as a collective resource for the public expression of affect rather than informal discourse. More recently, research has focused on the link between online language and mental health. The use of social media to locate peer support and discuss mental health through indirect language has been examined by Naslund et al. (2016). Humour and truncation are often used in Gen Z language to be transparent about one's emotional state, reduce stigma, and foster group resilience. It is also recommended to assist identity-based negotiation and demonstrate emotional empathy. Thus, Gen Z has received sufficient attention in linguistic research. Some studies examine the characteristics, while others focus on language practices in the digital era, such as identity construction and language as a social tool. While a little research has been conducted to elaborate on the connection between language and psychology, the specific construct of language as a coping mechanism remains under-theorized.

Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive content analysis to examine how Gen Z's language use on social media not only reflects their creativity but also their psychological standpoints. A qualitative approach is most suitable for the study, which aims to uncover the psychological and emotional experiences and struggles of youth enveloped in language.

Sigmund Freud's "Relief theory of humour" has been employed as an analytical tool to demonstrate how Gen Z phrases act as a coping mechanism for uncertainty, stress and mental wellness. The theory emerges from Sigmund Freud's work "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905), which was later refined in his humour essay in 1927. In this theory, humour is not merely recognized as an artistic behavior to create laughter and amusement. In fact, Freud addresses it as a psychological strategy to handle repressed emotions, which stay hidden due to social undesirability. In his psychoanalytical model, humour operates as a safety valve, enabling the expression of socially restrained emotions by channelising them into humorous discourse.

The data for this study is based on a collection of phrases widely used by adults, particularly Gen Z, across various social media platforms, including Twitter, Instagram, and Tiktok. The data is carefully and systematically curated and consists of only those phrases that clearly address Gen Z's modern lingo and its use as a coping mechanism.

Each phrase is systematically analysed. Analysis begins with a literal description and identification of creative aspects, then moves to linguistic and discursive practices. Then, the core analysis is presented, which highlights the psychological struggles of Gen Z through the lens of Relief theory. This systematic approach helps understand how Gen Z employs language to release pent-up energy and as a tool to cope with distress and uncertainty.

Data Analysis

1. Delulu is the Solulu

It is a rhyming informal phrase which means to stay optimistic in conditions of uncertainty. The term *delulu* stands for 'delusion' and *solulu* for 'solution'. This playful use of words makes it catchy. The phrase affirms that blind self-belief, implausible optimism and trust in your dreams are the keys to staying persistent with unrealistic goals. It is widely used in everyday online discourse and communication. Through the lens of language practices, this phrase deliberately departs from the standard form. Its intentional phonological alteration makes it notable and gives a frisky touch. Thereby, it highlights the process of reframing conventional psychological states into subtler and lighter forms. From a discursive orientation, this phrase operates as a mitigation strategy. Rather than directly facing failures, uncertainty, and setbacks, it frames unfeasible hope as something lighter and humorous. It motivates adults to indirectly admit the harsh realities and emotional weaknesses. The subtle formulation of this playful phrase corresponds with Freud's theory, operationalising as a temporary respite from adversity. Through its metric tone, it reframes emotional distress into a culturally acceptable form. Through elucidation of Gen Z's strategic use of inventive lexicon, it navigates psychological strain and unpredictability into a joyful tone, which allows users to open up internal pressure in an appreciative way.

2. Stressed, Depressed, but Well Dressed

It is another rhythmic, widely used phrase in captions and videos on social media. It is commonly found as a slogan on teen clothes, like hoodies and shirts, and on notebooks. It reveals the contrast between inner turmoil and outer presentation, while highlighting the importance of being well-dressed. This flowy expression illuminates that the youth employs appearance as an armour while confronting inner conflicts. Dressings are often used for protection. The internal rhythm of the

phrase makes it a flowy utterance while compressing the hefty emotions like stress and depression. It directs focus toward demeanour and juxtaposes the negative mental states, stress and depression, with a socially valued state, i.e., being well dressed. As Freud argues that a moment of “comic relief” in a serious situation can provide a sudden energy that can be released through laughter, this phrase provides comic relief towards the end. This phrase operates as a coping mechanism, suggesting that no matter what runs inside, outward appearance must be maintained, as good dressing provides a sense of self-worth. It also provides a way to manage inner turmoil without engaging in detailed confrontation, as being well-dressed is considered a symbol of a happy, satisfactory life. In light of Freud’s theory, this phrase or being well-dressed may not diminish the depression, but it provides a temporary outlet for emotional discharge. This phrase highlights that modern colloquial discourse is not merely expressive but also therapeutic.

3. No thoughts, just vibes

It is a minimalist expression that suggests focusing on pure feelings and negates rational overload by experiencing things as they are, rather than indulging in any analysis. It is used to highlight a calm, peaceful state of mind and positive energy, while emphasizing mood over substance. In terms of linguistic expression, this phrase is minimal and excludes elements that have been necessary in formal mood, thus fostering the modern lexicon of Generation Z. From a communicative point of view, it marks a shift away from rationality, prioritising vibes over thoughts. The casual, light tone makes the phrase socially acceptable, allowing the speaker to express mental burnout without emotional admission. Moreover, this phrase operates as a linguistic coping mechanism that regularises mental dispassion as a form of self-preservation. This phrase necessarily works in moments of distress when overthinking can increase mental stress, as Freud suggests that humour enables the release of tension and reduces mental effort. This phrase conveys humour and mental withdrawal as a socially acceptable legitimate choice.

4. Catch flights, not feelings

It is a popular media phrase commonly found in captions. It has emerged from the notion that some people would rather travel multiple places and prioritise self-discovery and new experiences rather than getting attached. Adventurous youth particularly avoid relations that might distract from personal growth and later turn complicated. This striking imperative prioritises adventure, movement and freedom over emotional investment, as the contrast between flights and feelings establishes a clear value preference. Linguistically, this phrase functions as a boundary marker, allowing the speaker to express detachment in a subtle, more socially acceptable way rather than revealing fear of emotional dependence. The imperative tone not only allows individuals to distance themselves from social and emotional commitments but also legitimises emotional disengagement as self-care and lifestyle principle. This phrase reframes distressing experiences to release tension. This contrast between flights and feelings allows young users to avoid emotionally unstable situations and prioritise emotional well-being.

5. Fake it till you make it

It is an aphorism that has been escalated and appropriated within Gen Z discourse. The psychology behind this phrase is the idea of acting and pretending to be confident and successful when you don’t align with that goal. This phrase gives motivation that this outward behaviour will eventually

become real. This phrase is backed by the idea of stopping manifesting and starting to practice your ideal self, as the term ‘fake’ fosters deliberate performance of competence and points toward eventual success. Functionally, as a coping strategy, it converts internal uncertainty and vulnerability into external confident performance. It helps speakers to remain socially functional when experiencing stress. It encourages youth in social, academic and professional contexts where performance-related anxiety is commonly faced. Freud suggests that relief takes place when emotional energy is redirected rather than expressed. Hence, this compressed phrase facilitates the expression of insecurities such as self-doubt, anxiety, and internal pressure in a simple, practical way. This phrase illustrates Gen Z’s creativity and how they turn insecurity into motivation.

6. Mentally on airplane mode

This phrase is metaphorical and draws on the technical term “airplane mode,” which blocks all signals, creating isolation. It is frequently used on social media to describe emotional withdrawal. This phrase is used to highlight a state of zero brain activity and deliberate shunning of social media to hinder the constant activity demanded by the modern world, similar to airplane mode on a cell phone. Borrowing an expression from smart technology and extending it cognitively directly aligns with iGeneration’s linguistic characteristics. This phrase helps express temporary disconnection due to mental burnout and fatigue while being physically active. So linguistically, it allows users to set boundaries without projecting social hostility. This phrase serves as a coping mechanism, highlighting disconnection as a necessary response to burnout rather than imposing an unnecessary cognitive burden. It gives speakers a chance to reset through temporary disconnection and suspending emotional labour. When grounded in Sigmund Freud’s relief theory, the term ‘airplane mode’ mitigates social distancing and removes any offence, thereby emphasising the release from an undue burden. Hence, this metaphor makes mental discharge more manageable and socially acceptable.

7. Can’t Adult today

It is a colloquial expression that means you want to temporarily regress to a carefree day from childhood, without adult responsibilities. It is used by both millennials and Gen Z who temporarily want to avoid exhaustive responsibilities like everyday chores, bills, budgeting, and managing complex relationships. This phrase works gently to mitigate the impact of the adjective ‘*responsible*,’ which is commonly associated with adults. This shows that speakers’ setbacks from duties are momentary rather than chronic. This phrase serves as a coping mechanism, expressing mental fatigue in an acceptable, funny way. It provides a way to escape temporarily, offering relief without any guilt. As Freud argues that humour allows individuals to reveal hidden exhaustion without offence, this phrase allows users to release stress caused by social expectations in an acceptable way. It legitimises a short break to reset adult energy, rather than burning out in secret, which drains all energy and diminishes interest. Overall, this phrase highlights how this technical generation uses language creatively to tackle the responsibilities and social stigma attached to these roles without drawing social hostility and without the inner guilt associated with laziness and delaying work.

8. Coping and hoping

It is a concise but rhythmic expression constantly used on social media. This phrase conveys optimism and highlights a dual approach: proactive management in the present and a bright outlook in times of adversity. This phrase is action-oriented and energised with its focus on action rather than planning and procrastination. From a communicative perspective, the coordination between coping and hoping signals that users are handling challenges proactively while having a positive outlook for the future rather than openly negotiating stress and anxiety associated with challenges. This phrase suggests that not giving up and keep moving with persistence is itself a big deal, particularly in times of uncertainty. This communicative perspective bolsters psychological welfare by acknowledging enduring efforts. It enables release of tension by converting emotional struggles and challenges into something manageable and casual. This analysis highlights linguistic functions and creativity as sustainable tools to support mental wellness.

9. It is what it is

“It is what it is” is a phrase that is very frequently used by Gen Z on social media as a caption to convey the feelings of acceptance, resignation, and emotional distancing when caught up in situations that are beyond human control. From one point of view, it means the situation cannot be changed, so one has to accept the way it is. From another point of view, the phrase represents Gen Z’s attitude towards the uncertain, unstable state of affairs and the experience of repeated disappointment in school, the economy, and their private lives. From a linguistic point of view, it is informal, repetitive and tautological, which altogether go against the notion of expressive language as no explanation or emotional detail is given. The simplicity of the phrase allows complex emotions such as frustration, helplessness, or disappointment to be conveyed by a single, neutral statement that indicates the speaker's attitude rather than emotional depth. Freud believed that humour allows people to let go of repressed feelings that cause tension, thereby relieving them emotionally and physically. As a strategy for seeking help, “It is what it is” fosters good mental health through emotional regulation and acceptance. In other words, the phrase is a showcase of how Generation Z, through almost minimalist language, seeks ways to navigate the world and the stress and pressure their lives are filled with.

10. You're tired of everything

The expression "You're tired of everything" is a very common social media caption. It reflects emotional exhaustion or simply "burnout," as well as mental fatigue, which are results of stress caused by either studies and social expectations or continuous online engagement. People typically do not clarify their problems in detail, but just use this short phrase to express their feeling of being overwhelmed. At the same time, the phrase serves as an acknowledgement of being tired "out loud," while still maintaining a certain emotional detachment. Using Sigmund Freud's theory of humour, this phrase could be analysed as a mental defence mechanism. While "You're tired of everything" may seem like an emotional irony, it is actually a mental one. Saying bluntly that you are exhausted lessens the need to put on a good or positive front. “You’re tired of everything” is one way people can support their mental health. It is a good way to regulate one's emotions, as it acknowledges being tired. The message here is that it is not your fault if you get tired all the time.

If a sentence like this is shared on the internet, it can help people come together because it gives them a reason to admit their tiredness and be okay with it. Therefore, Gen Z's use of minimal language here is a good example of how they effectively manage stress and break the stigma of emotional fatigue through the internet.

11. Calm over chaos

Gen Z is quite popular on social media for their distinctive way of expressing their emotions. "Calm over chaos" or "Choosing calm over chaos" are their favourite expressions when they want to tell the world that they have chosen to prioritise their emotions and maintain their inner peace. Such a decision means refraining from getting involved in situations that would only add to stress or make one a target of conflict or emotional overload. Therefore, it encourages one to be in perfect harmony with oneself and to be self-controlled and mentally clear. These sayings show that a person is mature, can set limits, and wishes for peace and stability, even though the world is very unpredictable. From the perspective of Sigmund Freud's theory of humour, Calm over chaos can be seen as a very mild defence mechanism. In its role as a coping tool, Calm over chaos may be viewed as a supporter of emotional health. In fact an invitation to one's own self, regulation, mindfulness, and setting of proper limits. Also, it helps to alleviate tension, stop engaging in negative thoughts, and put one's mental health first. By such a reframing, the threatening stimulus is considered avoidable rather than inevitable, which in fact reflects stress and time consciousness. Moreover, it is a manifestation of Gen Z's transformation toward purposeful living and emotional sustainability, which can be observed everywhere in online spaces today.

12. I choose a soft life

Gen Z members widely use the term "soft life " or use captions for their photos and videos on social networking sites with "I choose a soft life" to represent their willingness for a life that is simple, emotionally comfortable, and less stressful. This idea is a way to turn away from a life of constant work, struggle and survival mode. Thus this phrase, far from glorifying the difficulties, promotes rest, kindness, and living with purpose. Linguistically, the phrase shifts the perception of success from productivity to peace. This phrase, when analysed through the lens of Sigmund Freud's Relief Theory of Humour, can be explained as a mental release of tension that has built up over time. Even though "I choose a soft life" is not a joke in a traditional sense, it still comes with a somewhat comedic relief. By making this statement, people alleviate the internal stress that comes from the societal demands of perseverance, self-sacrifice, and harshness. Such a decrease in psychological discomfort is consistent with Freud's conception of relief as the result of the mental tension being changed into a different linguistic form. This phrase is used to address life's challenges in a calm manner: "I choose a soft life." It reinforces the crucial need to maintain mental health by prioritising self-care and clarifying your limits. Thus, the phrase serves as a stress-relieving coping mechanism, opens space for vulnerability, and supports the development of sustainable mental health in the digital world.

13. Not worth my energy

Gen Z members often use "Not worth my energy" or "Not my energy" as their social media captions to show their emotional disengagement and boundaries making. When a person does not want to invest any more time, attention or emotional labour in a problem, person or event that

causes them stress or negativity, this is how it expresses itself. Instead of giving a detailed account of the conflict or explaining complex feelings, those who use such expressions let their withdrawal be known in a simple and socially acceptable manner. Linguistically, this illustrates a transition toward self-preservation and emotional selectivity in online interactions. Sigmund Freud's Relief Theory of Humour, as a psychological mechanism, explains the above expression as the release of accumulated psychological tension. The easygoing way of avoiding stressful situations, perhaps, is a means of reducing the emotional burden. This corresponds to Freud's idea that humour is a source of relief, as it allows the expression of emotions without feeling too much of a burden. As a method of self-care, "Not my energy" acts as a positive mental health factor by encouraging emotional boundaries, setting and thus lowering stress levels. It enables individuals to disengage from the negative without refusing and feeling guilty and without even offering a ground for it. In this way, it helps Gen Z manage burnout, social overload, and incessant demands for engagement. The phrase contributes to psychological rest by acknowledging the fast-paced digital environments in which one can participate selectively and conserve emotional energy.

14. Vibe check passed

"Vibe check passed" is widely used by Gen Z as a social media caption. On the surface, it indicates that a situation, person, or moment is emotionally or socially acceptable. As a culture, the phrase reflects Gen Z's focus on emotional atmosphere, intuition, and personal comfort in relationships. Instead of revealing one's feelings straight away, the phrase captures the feeling of safety, approval, or emotional comfort in a short evaluative statement. Hence, it serves as a pictorial or verbal shortcut that conveys emotional agreement without providing a detailed justification. From the perspective of Freud's Relief Theory of Humour, "Vibe check passed" is a very thinly disguised psychological defence mechanism. Freud considered that humour is a mode of releasing repressed emotional tension. Although the phrase sounds playful, its humour lies in the irony of referring to emotional state assessments as "tests. The kind of playfulness described here serves to ease one's anxiety as it turns quite challenging social and emotional decisions into a simple, casual remark. The fun element provides a way to let feelings out without showing vulnerability or distress directly. Being a coping mechanism, "Vibe check passed" contributes to mental health by helping to maintain emotional boundaries and self-awareness. It gives the users a chance to locate their positive emotional surroundings and steer clear of the negative ones. In that regard, it becomes a source of strength, helps with emotional regulation, and understanding among members of the Gen Z digital culture.

15. Main character energy

The phrase "Main character energy" is popularly used by Gen Z as a social media caption to indicate confidence, self-importance, and personal power in daily life. Literally, it means one should treat oneself as the main character of one's story. From a cultural standpoint, it is a form of digital self-narration influenced by movies, gaming, and influencer culture. In terms of language, the phrase is very casual, figurative and a bit over the top, borrowing narrative vocabulary and exaggeration to make a nice-sounding expression. This similarity with Freud's idea linguistically illustrates that talking about one's feelings in a certain way relieves internal pressure. As a coping mechanism, the phrase supports mental wellness by encouraging self-praise and helping a person regulate emotions. The phrase assists in coping with feelings of being judged, experiencing confusion regarding one's identity and social anxiety. The playful overstatement of one's

significance introduces an element of irony, helping users hide their insecurity, anxiety or doubt behind the confident person's words. Giving a movie plot-like treatment to everyday life, the phrase makes worry and comparison just a funny, light, empowering joke, and thus, without the direct showing of weakness, it grants emotional relief. As a mental health phenomenon, "Main character energy" promotes a sense of self-worth and helps to manage one's emotions.

16. Too glam to give a damn

The phrase "Too glam to give a damn" is a prominent example of how Gen Z frames their projected confidence, emotional detachment and self-assurance. The phrase literally means that an individual's personality, style and self-esteem are more important to them than any external criticism or stress of life. In a cultural interpretation, the phrase echoes influencer culture, aesthetic performance and ironic confidence online. It also packs a considerable amount of phonetic, semantic and pragmatic features, such as rhyme and informal slang, thus making it catchy and easy to remember. According to Sigmund Freud's Relief Theory of Humour, the phrase serves as a means of releasing psychological tension. Freud stated that humour provides a safe avenue for the expression of stressed and suppressed feelings. The over-the-top self-confidence in "Too glam to give a damn" is a kind of irony in which the insecurity is hidden behind the style and bravado. The users, by jokingly dismissing the pressure, free their anxiety without admitting any distress or vulnerability. This funny exaggeration changes emotional distress into a mode of socially acceptable self-presentation. In this way, it allows one to release emotions without confrontation. As an instrumental factor in mental health, it practically facilitates emotional wellness by helping set emotional boundaries and practice self-protection. It opens up ways for the user to detach themselves from the world of judgments, negativity and comparison culture. When communicated online, it encourages collective coping by normalising confidence as a defence against stress.

17. Be yourself unapologetically

The term "Be you", "Be yourself" or "Be yourself unapologetically" is the statement most widely used by Gen Z when they add captions on social media for their photos or posts for promoting authenticity, self-acceptance and emotional confidence. Taken literally, it simply tells one to be himself and not hide his identity from anyone. In terms of culture, this expression is an answer to the pressure that people have to deal with on digital platforms. From a language point of view, the phrase is quite easy, straightforward and colloquial. Its encouraging voice compresses the emotional tension stuff such as insecurity, self-doubt and fear of rejection into a short positive statement that quite simply expresses one's position and not intricate emotions. This similarity with Freud's idea is that, linguistically, talking about one's feelings in a certain way relieves internal pressure. As a coping mechanism, the phrase supports mental wellness by encouraging self-praise and helping a person regulate emotions. The phrase assists in coping with feelings of being judged, social anxiety and experiencing confusion regarding one's identity. Hence, the phrase depicts how Gen Z cleverly uses everyday words to manage their psychological pressure, reduce stigma and maintain their emotional resilience in the present digital culture.

18. Built different

The phrase “Built different” is predominantly used by Gen Z as a social media caption to indicate their uniqueness, resilience and self-distinction. Literally, it means that a person is made differently from the rest; it can generally be interpreted as a person being very strong or having an exceptional ability to cope with difficult situations. By portraying their struggle as exceptional toughness, the users transform the feeling of anxiety into an empowering language, which makes it possible to release the tension without openly admitting that they are weak. As a psychological tool, “built different” promotes good mental health by strengthening a person's self-esteem, beliefs and emotional resilience. It is a way of dealing with academic pressure, comparisons with others and life's uncertainties by turning difficult times into evidence of one's strength. Besides that, the phrase, when used online, also serves as a tool for collective coping, as others who see it can identify with and share the experience of coming through tough situations. Therefore the phrase demonstrates how Gen Z utilises highly stylised language to manage psychological pressure and sustain an emotionally resilient state while online in today's fast-paced digital culture.

Findings

The detailed discussion of how Gen Z uses language on Instagram and Tiktok shows that humour is, in the first place, linguistically and emotionally charged and only superficially a stylistic choice. At the phrase level many expressions refer to states of exhaustion, emotional overload or resignation, yet these states are reinterpreted through humour, irony or exaggeration. This conversion accords with Freud's Relief Theory of Humour, which holds that humour can effectively help us lift emotional repression and release the tension that has accumulated. The phrases under discussion mostly convince that the emotional solution of the problem is embedded in the playful or ironic expression of it. Instead of confronting stress directly, Gen Z users feel vague distress, which implies that humour acts as a safeguard against emotional vulnerability in very public digital platforms. It allows them to maintain emotional regulation even as they express their emotions. Results indicate that humour, in this case, is a factor that reconciles the emotional experience with public self-presentation. Moreover, the examination discloses that semantic compression plays a pivotal role in the success of Gen Z expressions. Therefore, the results show that an economy of language boosts humour's psychological role in rapid digital interactions. Perhaps the most popular form of humour is that of self-deprecating humour. The speaker is the butt of the joke and, as such, ridicules their emotions, unproductiveness or ability to cope with particular situations with complete frankness and playful contentment. It is in this vein that Freud wrote that through humour, the release of tension is made possible in a good manner.

Another significant revelation was the understanding of the humorous phrase 'circulation' as a collective experience, which turned the individual's feeling of relief into an emotional experience shared. Different people returning to the same comforting expressions over and over again and using them in various contexts demonstrates that relief can be a personal experience arising from social synergetic interaction. The younger generation has created a communal language through humour to share their emotional furnace, thereby greatly increasing their feeling of togetherness and mutual understanding. This collaborative side moves Freud's idea of relief further beyond the individual psyche and shows the double functionality of humour in digital spaces at both psychological and social levels. However, the findings do not merely confirm that self-deprecating

humor is emotionally soothing but also reveal that such humor almost unconsciously builds a facade of the weariness and stress, which are the emotional and mental strains of the constant human exposure in worldwide life to the local and global problems that come in many forms and hence, can be "normal life" that may be laughed off and will most likely not be considered seriously. In brief, the findings have confirmed that the development of Gen Z's way of expressing themselves, their language and emotions, and the social environment, is a highly complex process in which humour is the major tool of current English usage.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore Gen Z's language and expressions as the newest edition of digital conversation through Freud's Relief Theory of Humour. The communication texts were from Instagram and Tiktok. The study results reveal that Gen Z's humorous expressions are not only short-lived internet viral trends but emotionally significant and socially profoundly rooted linguistic practices. Findings reveal that humour is the main tool through which young people of Gen Z release emotional tension, calm their anxiety and cope with their academic, social and emotional lives, which are constantly under public scrutiny in the digital world. By expressing the concept of emotional pain in humorous, ironic terms, members of Gen Z can indirectly reveal their vulnerabilities while still being socially accepted. This is exactly what Freud meant when he said that humour can briefly lift the veil of repression and transform discomfort into pleasure or amusement. The research reveals that Gen Z's language is a kind of code that transforms their feelings of anxiety, tiredness and frustration into short, witty captions, thus helping them to emotionally regulate without divulging themselves. Therefore, it is argued that humour, in a psychological sense, is a defence mechanism and a communicative method that simultaneously serves the purposes of emotional release, the continuation of social bonding and self-presentation. From a linguistic perspective, the paper underscores the importance of semantic compression and linguistic creativity in contemporary English usage by identifying both. The language of Gen Z nutshell a wide range of human emotions into a few short and catchy phrases that inevitably become 'fodder' for social media. Such a compression raises the relief aspect of humour considerably, as it not only permits a rapid discharge of emotions but also fosters collective recognition of mutual struggles through successful mutual understanding. The language play of exaggeration, informality and irony in English reflects linguistic economy, shaped by digital communication and thus focused on efficiency and emotionality rather than grammatical correctness. Moreover, the paper highlights a major contradiction in the dark humour of the Gen Z community. On the one hand, the use of self-irony and coping provides quick emotional relief; on the other hand, the frequent use of such expressions might make people insensitive to the notion of chronic stress and fatigue. Simply, even though the trapped feelings are the source of humour, the deep pain can be ignored or disguised within it.

This finding, in a way supports Freud's theory by suggesting laughter as a form of stress relief in the online world. The laughter not only let the tension go, but also hides the persisting inner psychological stress thus pointing out that humor has the double, two faced nature. Humour acts as a healing remedy and at the same time a potential source of emotional alienation. The fact that Instagram and Tiktok captions have gained such explosive popularity means that, at the present level of development, the most common emotional relief is shared through the common language rather than through sharing of feelings. Such typical utterances thus serve as social tokens through which members of Generation Z can recognise themselves as a group collectively experiencing stress, insecurity and emotional exhaustion. This study makes a contribution to the fields of

linguistics, discourse analysis and SLA (Second Language Acquisition), with a particular focus on the English language, digital humour and phraseology influenced by broader psychological and social processes. Among other things, it shows how modern digital language use is being seen as a window into new linguistic creativity and emotional artistry.

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