



The Impact of Internet Slang on Informal Communication Among Bruneian Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of internet slang on the informal communication of Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam. Using a quantitative research approach, a cross-sectional survey was administered to a total of 122 Gen Z respondents aged between 13 to 28. The survey helps to explore the internet slang usage patterns, its impact on communication clarity, social identity and senses of belonging, and to find out their opinions and attitudes toward internet slang. The findings reveal that internet slang is being integrated in daily conversations, with clipping, acronyms, and abbreviations being the most common types used. The usage of slang was mainly due to its efficiency, fun & engaging nature, and its ability to express emotions better. Additionally, it helps to create shared identity between peers and help to create sense of belonging. However, the results also highlight some challenges such as misunderstanding and misinterpretations. Overall, there is a mixed of opinions and attitudes toward internet slang which can be further investigated in future studies.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background Overview

Language is one of the world's phenomena that continues to evolve in response to social, cultural, and technological changes. One language feature of this evolution that is evident is the rise of internet slang, a form of expression that has become increasingly prevalent across digital platforms. The use of slang itself is not something new in today's era. Although slang was popular for many centuries ago, with the wide use of gadgets and social media, the spread and adoption of internet slang has accelerated. This is particularly occurring among Generation Z (Gen Z), being the digital natives who are active users of the internet. Hence, they can easily learn and adopt internet slang both in online spaces and their daily informal communication. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of internet slang on the informal communication among Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam, by considering both how it affects the communication clarity, and social identity and senses of belonging.

Slang has become more vibrant and adaptive form of informal communication that it has becoming more familiar especially among the Gen Z. It reflects how language is such a dynamic nature in society. Slang has become a somewhat important role in the way people, especially Gen Z communicate. This is due to how

slangs are often created and used to express share experiences, emotions and attitudes which are vary among regions and generations creating sense of identity and belonging withing a particular group (Student Lifestyle, 2023). Before the existent of mass media, the diffusion of slang only invaded the dominant culture slowly and were only transmitted through spoken discourse (Maurer, n.d.). In today's digital era, the use of slang is now rapidly disseminated across global platforms like TikTok, Twitter (X), Instagram, and messaging apps, making it one of the linguistic phenomena that will always be evolving. According to Manurung et al., 2022, slang help to enhances informal communication, particularly platforms like WhatsApp, where it reflects cultural and social dynamic.

There are different types of internet slang that have been created and used in different contexts. Some examples of internet slang that Gen Z often use includes "Lit", which means to describe something fun and exciting, "flex" which means to show off, "FOMO" which means Fear of missing out, "Spill the tea" which means to gossip about something, and the list goes on. The number of slang words are just so countless that it is possible for it to have its own dictionary. These kinds of slang words are often created and emerge, that have become integral part of communication in everyday life. The use of slang words is so widely used, as if it has become one of the most widely spoken languages in the world (Ainura et al., 2022). Due to its frequent use, it might impact the way people communicate with each other – either positively or negatively.

Gen Z grew up in an era where the use of internet started to rapidly grow and become part of their life, until they are often described as digital natives (McKinsey & Company, 2024). Hence, internet slang is not something unfamiliar for this generation. This group not only uses internet slang in online interactions, but they also have incorporated in in their offline, face-to-face informal conversations. The way Gen Z can easily learn and adapt to this linguistic form shows how language evolves and easily influence the generation especially with the rise of technology.

Therefore, this research is to examine the impact of internet slang focusing on informal communication among Gen Z. This is to understand how internet slang can affect the generation on the communication clarity, and their social identity and sense of belonging.

1.2 Problem Statement

The increasing use of internet slang among Gen Z raises concerns on how it can affect their informal communication. While slang can serve as social and expressive functions, the habits of applying internet slang in informal communication can potentially affect the proficiency of their usage in standard language such as eroding grammatical structure and vocabulary richness. For instance, studies by Kusyairi et al., (2024), Zulkhaeriyah et al., (2023) and Yousra & Karima (2023) shows that the usage of slang has negatively impacted their standard language.

Moreover, since slang can be varied across different groups or generations, it can lead to loss of clarity and cause miscommunication or misunderstanding among those groups. As noted by TERNA-ABAH & Nguemo (2016), the use of sang may unintentionally exclude individuals who are unfamiliar with certain expressions, creating bridge in their communication. Additionally, it may also lead to misunderstandings in cross-cultural communications, emphasizing the need for digital literacy and ethical considerations in language use (Naumi & Tiani, 2024). Although these issues have been studied in different countries, and other contexts, there is currently limited research examining the impact of the internet slang on informal communication in Brunei Darussalam.

1.3 Significance

The significance of this research is it can help to examine how internet slang shapes or reshape real-world communication habits. It offers insights into how the digital language influences the Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam. Additionally, this research can also provide valuable insights for professionals who are an expertise in linguistics and are interested in the Gen Z populations. Understanding the impact of internet slang on Gen Z can also bridge any study gaps that exists among the different researchers that have studied the same area. Moreover, this study is to gain deeper insights into how language evolves particularly in internet slang, to enhance communication or connect people, and reflect how Gen Z views it.

This research, hence, to examine the impact of internet slang on the informal communication among Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam, by considering both how it affects the communication clarity, and social identity and senses of belonging.

2. Literature Review

The widespread and increase use of slang has captured different researchers to explore more about the trends that evolves around slang. The emerging of different media platforms, the usage of slang has also embedded within those platforms and eventually practiced in daily conversations. This section explores the existing literature related to slang, focusing on its history, types and its influence on communication. Through this literature review, it aims to establish an understanding of the implications of internet slang on informal communication.

2.1 Historical overview of slang

The use of slang in communication is not something that is new nowadays. The term “Slang” itself was first documented in 1774, initially linked to the language of rogues and vagabonds in England, where slang is often served as means of communication within subcultures, allowing members to express identity and solidarity (Adams, 2023). The use of slang since it first appeared in the sixteenth century was also as a platform to make a joke, to hide the real meaning of the word as well as to express their ideas using new language other than the standard English (Aris S, 2015). According to Aris (2015) as well, each period from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century has its own use. For instance, in the sixteenth century, slang is used by a particular group such as criminals, thieves, and beggars. In the seventeenth century, it evolves to a more figurative language and to relate it immoral action. In the eighteenth century, slang is mostly used in comedy. It has continued to grow rapidly in society in their conversation in the nineteenth century and has become part of the language that is spoken by ordinary people in the twentieth century. This historical evolution of slang shows how dynamic and easily adaptable it is, seeing how it becomes a language that keeps on evolving century by century. Therefore, it is undeniable that the use of slang will always continue to grow and change nowadays, especially with the technological advancement and the rapid use of the internet and social media.

2.2 Slang usage in visual media

The usage of slang is not only being used in day-to-day communication, but it is also being adapted in visual media including movies and series. There are several analyses of movies and series that show how common the usage of slang is. In the movie analysis of ‘Fast and Furious 9’ that was done by Putri et al. (2023), the findings suggest that 30 slang words and phrases. The slang is classified into two types which includes society slang and public house slang where 24 words were from society slang and 6 words from the other. This study uses descriptive qualitative research where they use data from the movie script and then analyze slang words that are found by using dictionaries and theories related to slang.

Yulia and Ningsih (2024) also investigate the types and functions of slang words used in the Tv series ‘On My Block’ Season 4 where they also utilized descriptive qualitative methods to analyze the dialogues. In this research, a total of 105 slang words were identified which are categorized into five types, including fresh and creative (53 words), flippant (23 words), imitative (6 words), acronym (14 words), and clipping (9 words). The study also reveals that slang acts as various functions such as expressing impressions, revealing anger, and humiliating others. The results highlight the dynamic nature of slang in informal contexts among the characters.

Not only in an adult movie, an analysis of one of the kids’ movies entitled ‘Barbie’ was also done. The movie script analysis carried out by (Silalahi et al., 2024) also uses qualitative approach to examine the slang utilized by the characters from the movie, focusing on the social dynamics. In this research, they utilized Chapman’s (1988) classification of slang to differentiate between primary and secondary slang to analyze the identified slang expressions and assess the impact on the character interactions and relationships. The findings reveal that slang can help to narrate a story that can enhance the characters in reflecting the cultural diversity and identity of the characters. These studies also show how slang is more than just a linguistic tool but also serves as a tool for character development, social interaction, and storytelling across various media platforms.

2.3 The impact of slang usage

There are a lot of studies that has been conducted to find out the usage and impact of using slang. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the study has been carried out especially in recent years where the use of slang has become more common today.

A study by Marzuki and Mustapha (2023) focusses on the usage of TikTok slang among the Malaysian Generation Z. The study they carried out use an online questionnaire which are participated by 102 Malaysian Gen Z from the age of 10-25. The questionnaire was created using Google Form and it includes

sociodemographic and slang usage questions. The result of their research shows that 52% of the participants frequently use TikTok slang and social media is the main source of slang acquisition. They also find out that the participants prefer to use slang between their peers and the main reason for usage is for fun.

Kusyairi et al. (2024) has also carried out a study on the use of slang among Gen Z in Indonesia. For this study, the researchers are more focused on the qualitative research where they aim to understand Gen Z's language usage by examining their daily communication practices. In this study, they found out that Gen Z are struggling with a proper Indonesian language usage as the use of slang and abbreviations hinder their Indonesian language development. While the negative effects of slang include the decreased interest in standard Indonesia, they added that the positive effect of slang include creativity and ease of use.

Another study made by Zulkhaeriyah et al. (2023) also find a similar result from their research. In this study, they also utilized descriptive qualitative research by collecting data through documentation, listening, and note-taking. From their research, they found out that Indonesian language is gradually replaced by slang and frequently slang use threatens Indonesian language identity.

In Algeria, Yousra & Karim (2023), has adopted a mixed method approach to explore the impact of Arabis slang on Arabic standard language and to investigate gender as a social variable in slang usage among the students at the University Center Salhi Ahmed of Naama. The methodologies include questionnaires and recordings for the data collection. The findings of their research reveal that majority of the students actively use slang in daily conversation. The reason was to add a sense of flexibility, easy comprehension, coolness, or trendiness to their conversations. The also found out that male use more slang words than females. The research also showed that slang exerts a significant impact on the standard language.

Not only has slang influenced the standard language, but it also can be a form of exclusion. A study by TERNA-ABAH and Nguemo (2016), aims to find out the use of sang among Ahmadu Bello University undergraduates. The data was collected using questionnaires, interviews, and observations. 250 questionnaires were administered to the undergraduates, non-participatory observation gathered slang words and usage, and spontaneous interviews were conducted with 40 randomly selected students. The result shows slang is a powerful communication tool among undergraduates and 87.6% of the respondents use slang regularly and male students use it more than female students. The researchers also find out that the use of slang has excluded the lecturers, invigilators, and female students from the in-group communication. From these studies, it reveals that slang is not only a tool for fostering sense of belonging, creativity, and ease of interaction, but it also can affect negatively traditional language norms and create boundaries between social groups.

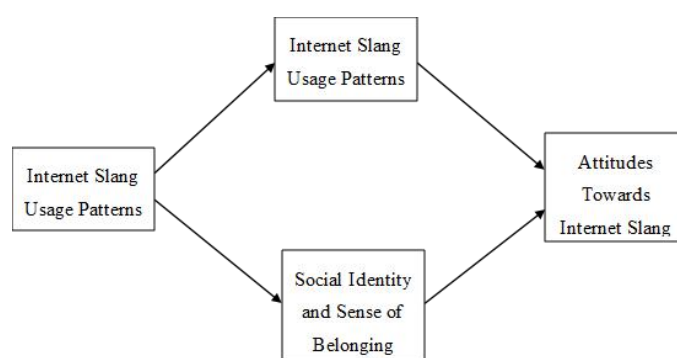


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

This study follows a conceptual framework (Fig. 1) based on a model by Swaen & George (2024) where they focus on how the variables related to each other. The conceptual framework above illustrates the objective of the research to find out the relationship between internet slang usage and its impact on informal communication among Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam. Firstly, it positions the internet slang usage patterns as the independent variable, which directly influences two mediating variables which are the communication clarity, and social identity and sense of belonging. Then, these mediating variables shape the attitudes of Gen Z towards internet slang, which is set as the dependent variable. From this framework, it can help to visualize how the use of internet slang may either enhance or hinder clarity in daily informal communication, and

whether it can create social identity and sense of belonging. These factors will then influence how Gen Z perceives internet slang overall.

3. Methodology

To assess the impact of internet slang on the informal communication of Gen Z, this study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design. Cross-sectional study was used to carry out the study because it can help to analyze gathered data from a group of people at a single moment or a short period (Wang & Cheng, 2020). Additionally, according to Wang and Cheng (2020), this type of study is also considered inexpensive and easy to conduct, and easy to understand on the characteristic within the population. Hence, the primary instrument to carry out the analysis is by designing an online survey for data collection. This instrument is appropriate as it allows a large data collection to be done at a short amount of time due to its efficiency and accessibility. The research design allows the quantification of the patterns and relationships across the population with the use of close-ended and Likert scale questions.

3.1 Participants and Sampling

Since the study focuses specifically on Gen Z, the target population are individuals who are born between 1997 and 2012. This age group (13-28 years old) is the best range representing the target group. The sampling method that is used is a stratified random sampling. This is to ensure representation across the key demographics such as age, gender, and background. According to Kallio (2024) using stratified random sampling is useful when particularly dealing with populations that have diverse subgroups. In this case, it is useful as the age distribution of the Gen Z population is divided into few ranges. For the number of samples, the sample size to carry out the analysis was set to a minimum of 100 participants. This number of participants is ideal as many statisticians consider the sample size of 100 is the minimum that is needed for meaningful results (Fox, 2024).

3.2 Methods

The data for this study was collected through a self-administered online questionnaire. The online survey was prepared using one of the online survey tools called Google Form. The survey comprised of both closed-ended and a five-point Likert scale questions ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. The Likert scale was used as it allowed the respondents to express various degrees of agreement or disagreement with the given statement. The survey was divided into 5 sections, where section 1 and section 2 comprised of close-ended questions, while section 3 to 5 comprised of Likert scale questions. This structured, multi-section survey allowed for a comprehensive examination of the slang usage and the perceptions of the respondents. By utilizing the Likert scale tool, the survey was able to capture the different responses, providing valuable quantitative data to understand the impact of internet slang in the Gen Z communication practices.

3.3 Data collection procedures and analysis

The online survey was distributed through few of online platforms to maximize reach and engagement. The distribution of survey was done for a period of over two weeks, to capture as much respondents as it can. The survey linked along with the description of the study’s purpose, was shared via Instagram stories, to invite other Instagram users to participate in the survey and encouraged them to share the link to others. Additionally, the survey link was also circulated through WhatsApp, both in personal chats and group chats. Through this channel, it helped to reach out to more respondents through friends, families, and colleagues. The survey link was also sent to Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) students via the institutional email.

Additionally, the respondents were presented an informed consent that clearly stated the objectives and purpose of the study and its voluntary nature in the beginning of the survey. The survey form stated that participation was completely voluntary, and that respondents had the right to discontinue the survey at any point. To ensure respondents’ privacy, no personal information was collected. This is to ensure anonymity and confidentiality in the data collection process. This is to ensure that the respondents felt comfortable and secure when sharing their responses.

After the data was collected, the next step is to analyze the data to address the research questions of the study. Firstly, descriptive statistical analysis was used to summarize the collected data, presenting them in terms of frequencies and percentages. Pie charts and bar charts were also presented to visually support and clarify the findings.

The data collected was also exported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This is particularly important for the Likert scale data. For the Likert-scale data, descriptive statistics such mean and standard deviation were also included to see the level of agreement or disagreement, and the variability of the answers. Additionally, Pearson's correlation was conducted to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the sections which were using Likert-scale. This is to provide insights on the relationship on how the opinions and attitudes of the respondents toward internet slang is affected by communication clarity and, social identity and sense of belonging.

The data analysis of each section of the survey was designed to answer the research questions. For section 2 (internet slang usage patterns), the frequency and percentage analysis help to identify the common usage patterns such as the types of slang they typically use, how often do they use it both in online and face-to-face interactions, reasons to use slang and others. This data answered research question (a) which is "What are the internet slang usage patterns among Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam?". For section 3 (communication clarity), it was analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess the perceived impact of internet slang on the communication clarity which answered research question (b) which is "How does the use of internet slang affect communication clarity in daily informal communication?". Whereas section 4 (social identity and sense of belonging) was examined to answer research question (c) which is "How does internet slang contribute to social identity and sense of belonging?". Lastly, section 5 (opinions and attitudes toward internet slang) were analyzed to present the perception of the respondents on internet slang and this answered research question (d) which is "what are the opinions and attitudes of Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam towards internet slang?"

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis focuses on descriptive statistics and finds out the relationship between the different variables, with the aim to identify the demographic profile of the respondents, the slang usage patterns, communication clarity, social identity and sense of belonging, and the respondents' opinions and attitudes toward internet slang. The findings are organized according to the key sections of the survey to provide insights into how internet slang usage practices shape the respondents' behaviour and attitudes towards it.

4.1 Demographic profile

There is a total of 122 respondents who have answered the survey. This section described the distribution of the different demographic profiles of the respondents. A frequency table was generated to describe the distribution of gender in the sample. Most respondents identified as female ($n = 66$), while 56 respondents identified as male.

4.1.1 Age

The age distribution reveals that most of the respondents fall within the 22-25 years age range, accumulating 47.5% ($n = 58$) of the total sample. This is followed by the 19-21 years age group at 26.2% ($n = 32$), and 26-28 years at 21.3% ($n = 26$). However, for the younger age groups, they are minimally represented with only 4.1% ($n = 5$) for the 13-15 years, and 0.8% ($n = 1$) for the 16-18 years. The results for the age distribution of the sample are presented in Figure 2.

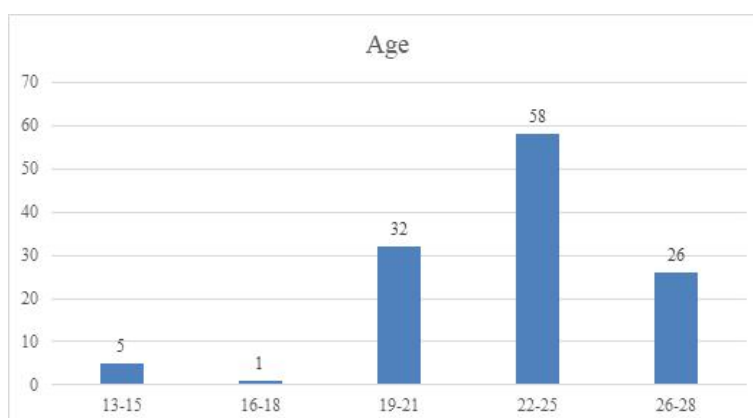


Figure 2. Bar chart of age frequency distribution

The result shows that the participants are more towards the older Gen Z. The limited number of the younger Gen Z among the participants may indicate there might be challenges in the survey accessibility among the

minors. Although not all age range are captured evenly, it still can support the study aim, as it still captures the experience of the Gen Z who are mature enough to critically reflect on the impact of internet slang. However, the under-representation of the younger Gen Z may limit the insights into how slang usage is during the teenage years.

4.1.2 Ethnicity

The ethnicity distribution chart indicates that majority of the respondents are Malay, compromising 88.5% (n= 108) of the total sample. This is followed by Chinese respondent with 6.6% (n= 8), and Indigenous respondents with 4.9% (n=6). The distribution of ethnicity is presented in Figure 3. From this result, it reflects the national demographic of Brunei Darussalam, where Malays form the dominant ethnic group. Although different ethnicities were not captured, it is still accepted since the study are not trying to do a comparative analysis on how different ethnic backgrounds might influence the use or perception of internet slang. Nonetheless, the result still allows the study to highlight how internet slang is used and understood within the dominant ethnicity of the country.

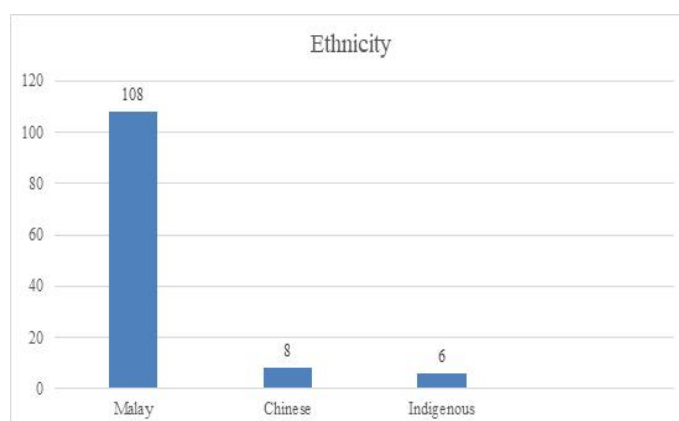


Figure 3. Bar chart of ethnicity frequency distribution

4.1.3 Education Level

For the education level, the result shows that majority of the respondents are pursuing or have completed undergraduate degrees. The undergraduate respondents accumulated 54.1% (n= 66) of the total respondents, followed by postgraduate respondents at 18.9% (n= 23), and those with a Higher National Diploma (HND) at 15.6% (n= 19). The remaining 11.5% (n= 14) of the respondents comes from other various education backgrounds such as secondary school, A Level, NTec, and HNTec.

4.1.4 Employment Status

The Employment status shows that 56.6% (n= 69), are currently studying full-time. This is followed by 31.1% (n= 38) who are employed, 6.6% (n= 8), and the other 5.7% (n= 7) identified under other categories such as interns, freelancers, and those who are studying and working at the same time.

4.1.5 Main social media or digital platform used

When were asked on what are the main social media or digital platforms that the respondents typically use, WhatsApp has become the most universally used platform among the respondents, where 100% of them are reporting on using it. This indicates that WhatsApp serves as the main platform of digital communication among Gen Z in Brunei. The main social media or digital platforms that the respondents use closely are Instagram and TikTok, with 84.4% (n= 103) and 77.9% (n= 95) respectively. YouTube is also considered as mostly used social media or digital platforms with 73.0% (n= 89) of the respondents are using it.

On the other hand, platforms like Twitter and Facebook show comparatively lower usage with only 32.0% (n= 39) and 17.2% (n= 21) using it respectively. These two platforms might be considered as outdated among Gen Z compared to WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. There are also other platforms with 10.7% (n= 13) that have been mentioned by the respondents which include Netflix, Telegram, Discord, Reddit, Snapchat and many more. The different platforms that were mentioned and used among these Gen Z reflects how dynamic and various modes of communication Gen Z use in the digital spaces. Figure 4 shows the frequency distribution of the main social media or digital platforms the respondents use.

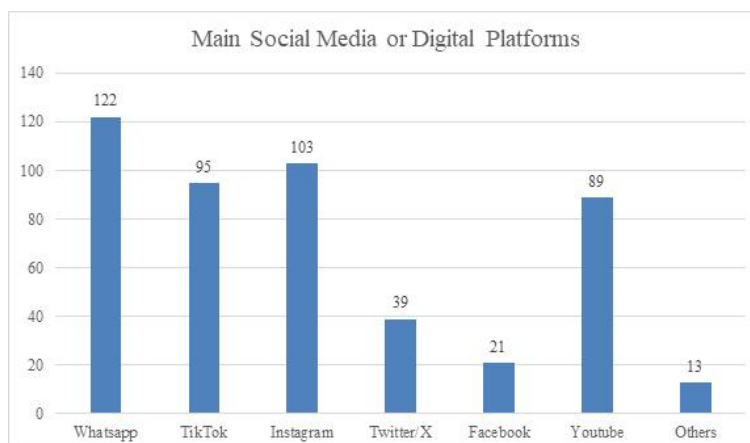


Figure 4. Bar chart of main social media or digital platforms used

4.1.6 Average daily time spent on social media or digital platforms

For the average time (in hours) the respondents use social or digital platforms, 34.4% (n= 42) of the respondents spend 3 to 4 hours daily, followed by 5 to 6 hours using it daily with 27.0% (n= 33), 8.2% (n= 10) spend 7 to 8 hours, and 17.2% (n= 21) more than 8 hours. Very few respondents reported only 1 to 2 hours usage which is 13.1% (n= 16), and no one reported using social or digital platforms for less than an hour per day. These findings highlight that these Gen Z individuals are deeply integrated with social or digital platforms in their daily routines with more than half of the respondents using it for 5 or more hours per day. Hence, the exposure to internet slang is likely high as the level of engagement on social or digital platforms is considerably high. Therefore, they can easily encounter or learn and even use internet slang across various platforms. The distribution of the average time (in hours) the respondents use social or digital platforms is presented in Figure 5.

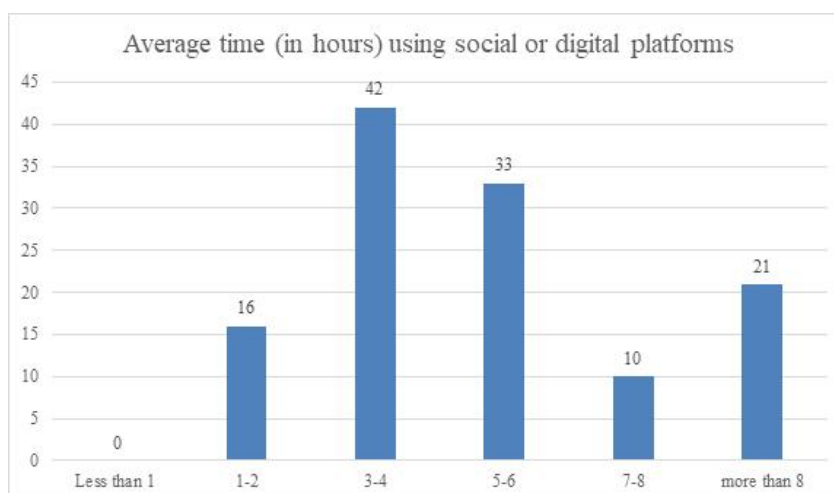


Figure 5. Bar chart of the average time (in hours) social or digital platforms used

In summary, the demographic profile of the respondents reflected the Gen Z respondent cohort, which is mostly between 19-25 years, with a strong representation of Malay ethnicity. Majority of the respondents were currently studying or pursuing higher education, who are active and digitally engaged in various platforms. Platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram, emerged as the most used social and digital platforms among these respondents, with them spending 3-6 hours or more daily on these platforms. Hence, this demographic helps to provide insights on the impact of internet slang.

4.2 Internet slang usage patterns

This section describes the respondents' internet slang usage patterns which include the type of slang they use, the frequency of internet slang they use both in digital and face-to-face conversations, how often they learn new slang, how they learn and pick up new slang, and what are the reasons they use internet slang.

4.2.1 Types of internet slang used

The result reveals that clipping is the most used type of internet slang among the respondents, with 87.7% (n= 107) selecting this category. Next is follow closely with acronyms and abbreviations with 74.6% (n= 91) respondents selecting it. For imitative and flippant type of slang, more than half of the respondents also use this type where it was used by 57.4% (n= 70) and 54.1% (n= 66) respondents respectively. Although fresh and creative slang is the least used type, it was still chosen by 43.4% (n= 53) of the respondents.

4.2.2 Frequency of slang in digital conversations

For the frequency of using internet slang in digital conversations, 49.2% (n= 60) of the respondents reported using internet slang sometimes. This indicates moderate but consistent usage. The frequency was followed by 23.0% (n= 28) who use it often, and 13.9% (n= 17) who use it very often. When these categories are combined, it is accumulated to a total of 86.1% (n= 105). This suggests that this percentage of respondents have incorporated slang into their digital communication at least occasionally. For the remaining, only 11.5% (n= 14) use internet slang rarely, and a mere 2.5% (n= 3) stated they never use it in digital conversations. Overall, the moderate to high internet slang usage, and low rate of non-usage suggest that although it is not always necessary used in every conversation, it can serve as a communicative tool when is appropriate.

4.2.3. Frequency of slang in face-to-face conversations

n face-to-face conversations, almost half of the respondents use internet slang sometimes with 47.5% (n= 58). 13.9% (n= 17) using it often, and 7.4% (n= 9) using it very often. The result shows a slight difference from the result of the frequency of internet slang usage in digital conversations where if these categories are accumulated, the total percentage is 68.8% (n= 84). This indicates that the number of respondents who use it at least occasionally in face-to-face conversations is slightly less than in digital conversations. However, the use of slang in face-to-face conversations is still being incorporated among most of the respondents. Meanwhile, 24.6% (n= 30) use it rarely in face-to-face conversations, and 6.6% (n=8) never do so. This suggests that very few of the respondents (31.2%, n= 38) are rather aware that internet slang is limited to digital conversations.

4.2.4 How often new internet slang is learned

Furthermore, the respondents were also asked how often they learn new internet slang. The result shows that majority of the respondents learn new internet slang rarely and monthly with 41.8% (n= 51) and 32.0% (n= 39). This suggests that although they are exposed to internet slang quite occasionally, it may not be something that may be a daily or even weekly event for most of the respondents. As a result, only a small percentage of the respondents learn new internet slang either weekly or daily with 18.0% (n= 22) and 8.2% (n=10) respectively.

Additionally, the question followed by on how they learned or picked up the internet slangs. The data shows that the most common ways that the respondents learn new slang are through social media platforms with 89.3% (n= 109) selecting it as one of their answers. Another option that majority of the respondents learned or picked up internet slang is through their friends both in-person and in online interaction with 87.7% (n= 107). These two major selections suggest that these respondents acquire slang heavily influenced by peer interactions and social media platforms.

Another considerably high influence is memes or viral videos, which were selected by 77.0% (n= 94) of the respondents. In contrast, sources such as music or movies and influencers or celebrities play a much smaller role in how the respondents learned or picked up internet slang. 1.6% (n= 2) of the respondents mentioned one other source on how they learned or picked up new slang, which is through family members

4.2.5. Reasons for using internet slang

In addition, when were asked the reasons the respondents use internet slang, the most common reason which more than half (59.8%, n= 73) of respondents picked is because it is fun and engaging. This suggest that entertainment value plays one of the key roles in how slang is used in informal conversations among these respondents. The next most selected reason is that internet slang is faster and more convenient which also accumulate more than half of the respondents which is 54.1% (n= 66). This reason suggests that internet slang can be beneficial for someone who prefers quick informal digital conversation.

Nevertheless, half (50.0%, n= 61) of the respondents stated that they don't really think about as to why they are using internet slang, implying that the use of internet slang among half of these respondents are often automatic or habitual. This shows how normal it is for them to use slang in the daily informal communication

routine. Additionally, among the 38.5% (n= 47) of the respondents, social motivation is what pushes them to use internet slang as the reason they use internet slang is to relate to their peers. A portion (12.3%, n= 15) of the respondents reported that they naturally speak that way. This indicates that for some individuals, internet slang has become part of their way of conversing suggesting that it is not just a mere digital expression, but also part of their identity. Overall, the data shows how internet slang is used for different reasons including social, emotional, and practical reasons.

From the internet slang usage patterns findings which answered the research question (a) on “What are the internet slang usage patterns among Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam?”, it reveals that internet slang is being integrated among the respondents’ daily communication. Types of internet slang like acronyms and clipping were particularly popular among these respondents, and they mostly learned it from friends and social media, and often through the exposure of memes and viral videos. The usage of internet slang among these respondents was considerably regular with most respondents reporting the use of it sometimes or often in digital conversations, and a little bit less regular in a face-to-face conversation. The integration of internet slang in their daily conversation was mainly due to fun and engaging nature, and how it is faster and more convenient for them.

4.3 Communication clarity

4.3.1 Descriptive statistics of communication clarity section data

Table 1 below shows descriptive statistics for the communication clarity section of the survey. It summarizes key information including the number of valid responses (N), minimum (min) and maximum (max) scores, mean values, and the standard deviations for each item. These descriptive statistics provide an overview of how the respondents perceive the communication clarity when using internet slang. This offers insight into the general trends of the responses in the section.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Communication Clarity Section Data

Item	Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
CC1	Internet slang makes my messages easier to understand for people my age (Gen Z).	122	1	5	3.43	1.044
CC2	Using internet slang makes my conversations faster and more efficient.	122	1	5	3.40	0.985
CC3	Internet slang helps me express emotions better than the standard language.	122	1	5	3.21	1.137
CC4	I sometimes struggle to understand internet slang used by others.	122	1	5	3.48	1.022
CC5	Using internet slang can sometimes cause misinterpretation in conversations.	122	1	5	3.86	0.894
CC6	Older people often misunderstand my slang.	122	1	5	4.11	0.969
CC7	I sometime have to explain what the slang means to others.	122	1	5	3.66	0.994

From the descriptive table above, for item CC1, the mean value is 3.43 which is slightly above being neutral. This suggests a moderate level of agreement with the item’s statement. The standard deviation value of the data, which is 1.044 indicates that there are diverse opinions on the statement. For item CC2, similarly there is also moderately agree on the statement, as the mean is 3.40. While the spread of the response for item CC2 is similar with its standard deviation value being 0.985. Item CC3 shows that the mean is only slightly above neutral, with the mean value of 3.21. But the value of the standard deviation is higher which is 1.137, implying that the responses are more varied.

Next, item CC4 with its mean value 3.48 shows that they are also moderately agreed with the statement, and the responses are quite varied, with the standard deviation being 1.022. Item CC5 shows a higher meaning with the value of 3.86, implying that there is a stronger agreement on the statement. The responses of statement CC5 have less variability, with the standard deviation value of 0.894. Next, being the highest means among the others, with the value 4.11 shows that the respondents clearly agree with the statement of item CC6. The standard deviation of item CC6 shows that the responses are quite consistent with the value 0.969. Lastly, item CC7 mean value is 3.66 indicating that the agreement to the statement is above average. The standard deviation of item CC7 is 0.994 indicating that there is a moderate variation in the responses.

The responses to these items suggest that there is a moderate spread of answers, where mostly clustered around the middle, and only with some strong opinion in few items. The detailed breakdown and discussion of the communication clarity data will be explained in the following.

4.3.2 Internet slang and message clarity among peers

Firstly, for the responses to the statement “internet slang makes my messages easier to understand people my age (Gen Z)”, it shows a moderately positive response, where 47.6% (n= 58) of the respondents agreeing with the statement with 32.0% (n=39) just agreeing with it and 15.6% (n= 19) were strongly agree. This suggests that almost half of the respondents view internet slang as a tool to make their messages easier to understand when they are communicating within their generational group (Gen Z).

On the other hand, only small percentage of the respondents did not agree with the statement. 6.6% (n= 8) disagreed with it, and 6.6% (n= 8) strongly disagreed with it. This suggests that this small portion of the respondents think that internet slang hinders the clarity of the messages they try to convey instead.

Nevertheless, 39.3% (n= 48) of the respondents felt neutral about it, indicating uncertainty. This may imply that although internet slang is used in their conversation, there might be some situations where their messages are hard to understand.

4.3.3 Internet slang and communication efficiency

Next, for the statement “using internet slang makes my conversations faster and more efficient”, 32.0% (n= 39) agreed, and 13.1% (n= 16) strongly agreed with it. This accumulated a total of 45.1% (n= 55) of the respondents view that internet slang does make their conversation faster and more efficient. Additionally, this also reflects one of the reasons that most off the respondents picked, which is because it is faster and more convenient.

However, a significant portion (41.8%, n= 51) of the respondents also chose neutral, suggesting that these respondents may also see it as inefficient when it comes to using internet slang. On the other hand, only 13.1% (n= 16) respondents expressed disagreement, with 8.2% (n= 10) disagreeing and 4.9% (n= 6) strongly disagree with the statement. This suggests that only few participants feel like internet slang slows down or complicates their conversation instead.

4.3.4 Internet slang and emotional expression

When it comes to expression emotions, 46.7% (n= 57) of the respondents agreed to the statement “internet slang helps me express emotions better than the standard language”, where 36.9% (n= 45) agreed and 9.8% (12) strongly agreed. This indicates that nearly half of the respondents perceive internet slang as an effective tool to help them express their emotions.

In contrast, 13.9% (n= 17) disagree and 10.7% (n= 13) strongly disagree with the statement. The 24.6% (n= 30) disagreement suggest that, although slang can help others express emotions better, this portion might find that standard language helps them to express emotions better compared to internet slang.

As for the neutral responses, with 28.7% (n=35), this suggests that these respondents may see both internet slang and standard language to help them express emotions depending on the situation without being biased towards either internet slang or standard language.

4.3.5 Difficulty understanding internet slang

Furthermore, the respondents were also asked to rate the statement “I sometimes struggle to understand internet slang used by others”. The responses reveal that half of the respondents agreed with the statement with 34.4% (n= 48) agreed and 15.6% (n= 32) strongly agreed. This indicates that they do encounter difficulty understanding internet slang at times despite it being widely used.

Unlike the respondents who disagreed with the statement, 12.3% (n= 15) think otherwise. This 12.3% respondents seem to be confident in understanding most internet slang used by others. The remaining respondents (37.7%, n= 46) chose neutral, suggesting that the understanding on internet slang used by others depends on different factors such context, exposure, or who they are communicating with. All in all, the response to this statement suggests that the usage of internet slang can sometimes act as a barrier to clarity, even within the same generation.

In addition to the struggle of understanding internet slang, respondents were asked further with the statement “Using internet slang can sometimes cause misinterpretation”. Majority of the respondents agreed with the statement with 39.9% (n= 48) agree and 26.2% (n= 32) strongly agree. Therefore, not only internet slang can

cause misunderstanding, but majority of the respondents also think that it can sometime cause misinterpretation in conversations. This suggests that internet slang can carry a significant risk of confusion especially if they are not familiar with what internet slang means.

Only a small minority of the respondents are aware of the challenges internet slang can present. 2.5% (n= 3) disagree and 1.6% (n= 2) strongly disagree with the statement. Hence, these minorities think that they never have any problems interpreting internet slang. For the respondents who chose neutral as their answer, which is 30.3% (n= 37) of them, it implies that these respondents might recognize the misinterpretation internet slang can cause but do not view it as a consistent issue.

Not only the respondents were asked on the use of slang within their peers, but the respondents were also asked on the statement “older people often misunderstand my slang”. The data reveals that a considerably high number of respondents have a problem when they use internet slang when conversing with older people. A total of 75.4% (n= 92) either agreed (32.0%, n= 39) or strongly agreed (43.4%, n= 53) with the statement. This shows how although Gen Z are familiar with the internet slangs, but it may not be suitable to integrate it when conversing with older people as it may not be readily understood by older individuals. This also shows that there is a generational gap when it comes to the use of internet slang.

Meanwhile, 17.7% (n= 21) remained neutral about it. This may be because they have never encountered the situation, or they might not have simply use internet slang other than their generational peers to form a strong opinion. Overall, this finding suggests that internet is only used among the same generation, and at times serve as a barrier when communicating with different age groups.

Lastly, when it comes to explaining internet slang to others, most of the respondents agreed (40.2%, n= 49) and strongly agreed (20.5%, n=25) with the statement “I sometime have to explain what the slang means to others”. This shows that internet slang is often considered as a language that is used in a specific context or group which may be familiar to some, but not everyone can understand it. Hence, there is a need to explain what internet slang means to others.

In contrast, there were only small proportion of those who disagreed with the statement. 12.3% (n= 15) disagreed and 1.6% (n= 2) strongly disagreed. This indicates that this small percentage of respondents might know when to use the internet slang on certain people or context so that they do not have to explain what it means. Unlike most of the respondents who agreed, who thinks that they often act as “interpreters” of the internet slang for those who are unfamiliar with the words. The other 25.4% (n= 31) were neutral about the statement, suggesting that they might only encounter this situation occasionally.

All in all, the findings on the impact of internet slang on communication clarity show a mixed perception. There are respondents who agreed that internet slang can improve speed and ease of communication, as well as help them express emotions better. However, there were many of the respondents who reported that the misinterpretations and misunderstandings internet slang can cause, where they often have the need to explain the internet slang they are using to others. These overall findings have helped to answered research question (b) which is on “How does the use if internet slang affect communication clarity in daily informal communication?”.

4.4 Social Identity and Sense of Belonging

4.4.1 Descriptive statistics of social identity and sense of belonging section data

The table below shows that descriptive statistics for the social identity and sense of belonging section of the survey. It summarizes key information including the number of valid responses (N), minimum (min) and maximum (max) scores, mean values, and the standard deviations for each item. These descriptive statistics provide an overview of how the respondents perceive social identity and sense of belonging when using internet slang. This offer insight into the general trends of the responses in the section.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of social identity and sense of belonging section data.

Item	Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
SI1	Using internet slang helps me part of a certain group or community.	122	1	5	3.07	1.089
SI2	The way I use slang reflects who I am.	122	1	5	2.70	1.104
SI3	I used different slang with different friend groups.	122	1	5	3.48	1.130
SI4	I feel left out if I don't understand new slang others are using.	122	1	5	3.52	1.268

Firstly, for item SI1 and SI2, the responses are closer to neutral with the mean value of 3.07 and 2.70 respectively. For item SI3, the mean value is 3.48 showing mild agreement to the statement. The highest mean for this section is item SI4 with the value of 3.52 with a stronger agreement out of all items. Almost all of the items, which are item SI1, SI2, and SI3, have a moderately various response to statement, with the standard deviation value of 1.089, 1.104, and 1.130 respectively. Item SI4 has a higher standard deviation indicating that there is considerably variability in the response. Altogether, there is a moderately range of opinions on this section. The detailed breakdown and discussion for the social identity and sense of belonging section data will be explained in the following.

4.4.2 Internet Slang and Group Belonging

Firstly, the first statement was asked on the statement “Using internet slang helps me feel part of a certain group or community”. The responses to this statement show that most of the respondents (38.5%, $n=47$) feel neutral about it. This suggest that these respondents might feel unsure about the internet slang’s role in fostering group identity. However, there are still number of respondents who are certain that the usage of internet slang does contribute to their sense of belonging. 23.8% ($n=29$) agreed and 9.8% ($n=12$) strongly agreed that using internet slang help them feel like they part of a group or community.

Nevertheless, 27.9% ($n=23$) disagreed and 9.0% ($n=11$) strongly disagreed on the statement. This shows that some of the respondents do not view internet slang as a tool for sense of belonging or make them feel like they are part of a group. The frequency distribution of the response to the statement “using internet slang helps me feel part of a certain group or community” is presented in Figure 6.

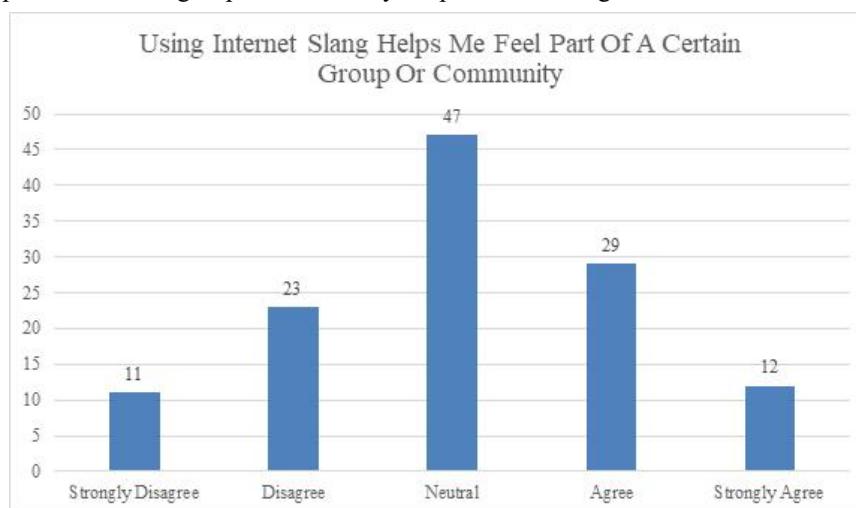


Figure 6. Distribution of responses to the statement “using internet slang helps me feel part of a certain group or community”

4.4.3 Internet slang and personal identity

In terms of personal identity, the responses to the statement “The way I use slang reflects who I am” show that majority of the respondents lean toward neutral or disagreement. Specifically, a total of 43.5% ($n=53$) disagreed with the statement in which 27.9% ($n=34$) disagreed and 15.6% ($n=19$) strongly disagreed with the idea that the way they use slang reflects their personal identity. For the neutral respondents, there are a total of 32.0% ($n=39$), indicating that many respondents feel uncertain whether internet slang plays a strong part in their personal identity.

Contrarily, only 19.7% ($n=24$) agreed and 4.6% ($n=6$) strongly agreed that their internet slang usage is a reflection of who they are. Therefore, this low agreement on the statement suggests that for most of the respondents, internet slang is viewed more just as a communication tool rather than as a element to reflect their personal identity. The frequency distribution of the response to the statement “The way I use slang reflects who I am” is presented in Figure 6.

4.4.4 Slang adaptation across friend groups

Next, for the slang adaptation across friend groups, the data shows that 57.36% ($n=70$) either agreed (39.3%, $n=48$) or strongly agreed (18.0%, $n=22$) that they use different slang with different friend groups. This suggest that these respondents are aware of the social context and able to adjust their language accordingly to their friend groups. This may reflect that their friend groups adapt different jokes, preferred slang or even formalities.

A proportion of 21.3% (n= 26) remained neutral about it, implying that these respondents may only do this occasionally or they do not have any significant difference in the usage of internet slang across their friend groups. Small group of the respondents who disagreed (15.6%, n= 19) or strongly disagreed (5.7%, n= 7) with the statement which shows that they use the same internet slang with different friend groups, indicating that they are consistent across social contexts when it comes to the use of internet slang.

4.5 Discussion

This chapter interprets and contextualizes the study's findings on internet slang usage among Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam, relating them to the research questions and integrating recent scholarship. The discussion is organized into patterns of slang usage, effects on communication clarity, social identity, and practical implications.

4.5.1 Patterns of internet slang usage

The data show that WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are the primary platforms for Gen Z in Brunei, with WhatsApp nearly ubiquitous. This pattern aligns with recent global trends (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2024), highlighting the centrality of mobile-first platforms for youth communication. The high frequency and duration of social media use—over half of respondents spending five or more hours daily—suggest that Gen Z is immersed in an environment where digital vernaculars thrive and evolve rapidly (Kemp, 2024).

Clipping, acronyms, and abbreviations are the most used slang forms, reflecting a preference for speed and efficiency in communication. Recent studies confirm that such strategies are widespread among digital natives, facilitating quick interaction and playful creativity (D'Onofrio & Bucholtz, 2023). The findings also indicate that internet slang is common not only online but also in face-to-face conversations, supporting research that digital speech patterns are increasingly integrated into offline language (Tagliamonte et al., 2022).

Internet slang acquisition is largely peer-driven, with memes and viral content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram playing a significant role. This underscores the participatory, collective aspects of digital language learning observed in recent scholarship (Nguyen, 2023).

4.5.2 Communication clarity and internet slang

The impact of internet slang on communication clarity is mixed. While many respondents feel slang enhances in-group communication and efficiency, a notable segment reports occasional misunderstandings, even among peers. This aligns with findings by Smith and Lee (2023), who observed that slang can both streamline and complicate digital exchanges, depending on context and shared knowledge.

The generational gap is particularly evident: most participants agree that older individuals often misunderstand internet slang. This confirms recent research showing that digital language innovation can reinforce age-based boundaries and sometimes hinder intergenerational communication (Cheng & Zhao, 2023).

Respondents also noted needing to explain slang to others, illustrating that while slang can foster group belonging, it may also exclude those outside the linguistic in-group. This dynamic is highlighted in Patel et al. (2024), who found that internet slang can simultaneously facilitate bonding and create barriers in diverse social settings.

4.5.3 Social Identity, Group Belonging, and Slang Adaptation

The relationship between internet slang and social identity among Gen Z in Brunei is complex. While some respondents see slang as a marker of group identity, many use it primarily for efficiency. This finding is consistent with recent work by Rahman and Liew (2024), who noted that digital slang has become so normalized among youth that it functions more as practical shorthand than a distinct identity signal.

However, over half of respondents adapt their slang depending on the group, supporting the argument that language use is context-sensitive and performative (Pang et al., 2023). This flexibility reflects a nuanced awareness of audience and social boundaries, as also observed in recent studies of youth digital communication (Ong, 2023).

4.5.4 Implications and Future Directions

In summary, the findings highlight the central role of internet slang in the communicative practices and social dynamics of Gen Z in Brunei. Slang fosters efficiency and in-group cohesion but can also present barriers, particularly across generations. Its normalization in both digital and offline contexts suggests a lasting impact on local language practices.

Future research should investigate how internet slang evolves with new platforms, its effects on formal language competence, and its role in broader cultural and educational contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study is done to investigate the impact of internet slang on the informal communication among Gen Z particularly in Brunei Darussalam. The study has focuses on how slang usage can affect their communication clarity, how it fosters social identity and sense of belonging, and their opinions and attitudes towards it. Based on the findings, it confirms that internet slang is being integrated in the daily informal communication of Gen Z in Brunei Darussalam, both in digital and face-to-face interactions. This shows how language, particularly in this case is internet slang, is an evolving form of language that can be shaped by technological advancement and spread through digital platforms. The use of slang is not only due to its popularity, but it also has other features that help to enhance conversations. All of these were demonstrated in the study, where the respondents, being the Gen Z has adapted internet slang across different digital platforms like WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram which serves as social tool and enhances communication due to its efficiency and convenience. However, the study also revealed the downside of slang usage especially if excessively used. This includes the misunderstanding and misinterpretation it can cause, and how there is a need to explain the internet slang terms to others, reducing communication clarity. The respondents were also aware of how internet slang can potentially damage the quality of the standard language. Therefore, it affects how the respondents view internet slang, where if internet slang can improve communication clarity and foster social identity and sense of belonging, the opinions and attitudes towards internet slang will be more positive. All in all, these findings imply the dual nature of internet slang, where it can foster efficiency, convenience, and connections, while at the same time it can be challenging for some others. Hence, there is a need for a balance of usage in communication depending on the context.

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