

# The Linguistic Representation of Bullying in the Animated Series "Our Family Life": A Semiotic Analytical Study

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**Abstract**—This study seeks to analyze the linguistic representation of bullying in the Jordanian animated series *Hayat Ailtna (Our Family Life)*, focusing on how dialogue in the local Jordanian dialect, alongside accompanying semiotic elements, shapes children's understanding of bullying discourse. The study is grounded in the premise that language in animated texts functions not merely as surface communication but as a symbolic tool for constructing authority and social relationships. To achieve these objectives, this study employs a combined interpretive analytical approach, drawing on both critical discourse analysis and social semiotic analysis. Dialogues and visual contexts from three selected episodes of the series were deconstructed, with vocabulary and expressions related to bullying systematically coded, and rhetorical styles and dialect carefully examined. The results indicate that bullying in the series is portrayed as a multidimensional and interactive discourse, encompassing behaviors from digital fabrication to subtle social exclusion and ideological verbal abuse. The study further highlights the role of spoken language in either reinforcing dominance or challenging aggressive behavior, underscoring the significance of animation as a cultural and educational medium that fosters behavioral and moral awareness among Arab children.

**Index Terms**—bullying, cartoon discourse, critical discourse analysis, semiotics, digital exclusion

## I. INTRODUCTION

Animation is a powerful medium in shaping the behavioral and linguistic awareness of children and adolescents, blending entertainment with educational guidance through engaging storytelling, visually appealing design, and symbolic sound effects. As bullying becomes increasingly prevalent in school and family settings, it is now understood not merely as overt aggressive behavior but as a linguistic and cultural discourse. This discourse encompasses everyday interactions and symbolic situations with psychological and semiotic dimensions that influence the dynamics of childhood relationships and the construction of self and other (Piotrowski & Vodanovich, 2020).

Educational and media research indicates that the language used in children's media—particularly cartoons—plays a significant role in reinforcing prevailing social concepts and patterns of thought. This is especially true when the language incorporates local dialects and culturally rich expressions imbued with emotional meaning. According to, analyzing cartoon dialogues offers a crucial lens for understanding how power, discrimination, belonging, and justice are represented in texts aimed at young audiences. This underscores the importance of studying bullying language as a reflection of social relations and the positioning of individuals within those dynamics.

In this context, the series *Hayat Ailtna (Our Family Life)* stands out as a distinguished Arab educational model addressing the issue of bullying. It utilizes dialogue in the local Jordanian dialect and features short stories that reflect school and family situations familiar to Arab children. This approach emphasizes the psychological and social tensions underlying various forms of bullying, including verbal, social, emotional, and electronic. The series is among the few Arab productions that employ language not merely as superficial communication but as a tool for behavioral and value analysis (Digitales Media, 2022).

Building on this foundation, the study operates on the premise that language used in the dialogues of *Our Family Life* transcends mere surface-level expression, constituting a symbolic and culturally embedded discourse. This discourse can be analyzed semiotically to uncover its deeper structural, psychological, and social functions. The research employs a comprehensive interpretive methodology, combining tools from critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis of

dialogue. Three selected episodes are examined, with dialogues deconstructed and transcribed; vocabulary and expressions related to bullying are systematically coded, and rhetorical styles and tones are analyzed to explore how the bully's authority is constructed, the victim's position is defined, and resistance or response mechanisms are articulated within a semantic system. The influence of this discourse extends to shaping children's perceptions and everyday behavioral norms.

Given the rarity of such initiatives in the Arabic-speaking world, the Jordanian animated series *Our Family Life* stands out as a unique artistic and educational endeavor. Presented in the Jordanian colloquial dialect, the series addresses all forms of bullying—verbal, psychological, social, and cyber—through dramatic scenes and authentic conversations that reflect Arab school and family realities. While bullying has been widely studied from psychological and educational perspectives, the linguistic representation of bullying in Arabic animated cartoons has yet to be thoroughly examined through interpretive and semiotic analysis, which can reveal how bullying discourse is constructed through idioms, dialects, vocabulary, tone, and character interactions.

This study is grounded in the assumption that the language used in the dialogues of *Our Family Life* extends beyond mere expression of attitudes, functioning as a symbolically and culturally charged discourse. Such discourse can be examined semiotically to uncover its underlying structures and its psychological and social motivations. The research employs a mixed interpretive methodology, integrating critical discourse analysis and semiotic examination of dialogic texts. The analysis of selected episodes involves transcription and coding of dialogue, identification of bullying-related vocabulary and expressions, and an exploration of argumentation strategies and dialect use.

Therefore, the central research questions are as follows:

- How does the dialogue in *Our Family Life*—in its words and tones and in its forms of argument in the local Jordanian dialect of Arabic—supplement the portrayal of childhood bullying?
- How effective is this linguistic representation in enhancing educational values and rejecting bullying among the Arab cultural group?

Theoretically, this study is grounded in the premise that language in animated cartoon dialogues functions not merely as a communication tool but as a complex semiotic and cultural medium that shapes children's perceptions of concepts related to aggression—such as bullying, victimhood, and confrontation. Consequently, analyzing the verbal and visual discourse in selected episodes of *Our Family Life* through this integrated framework provides valuable insights into how power dynamics and social relationships are negotiated within cartoons.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Previous Studies

In recent years, scholarly interest has grown in examining how cartoons depict the social issue of bullying, with particular attention to the linguistic and semantic strategies that shape, frame, and convey the discourse around bullying in ways that influence children's and adolescents' cultural understanding and behavioral responses. Research in this area adopts a range of methodological approaches, encompassing visual-narrative, linguistic-semiotic, and critical perspectives.

In this context, Park et al. (2019) investigated whether the visual design of animated characters influences children's emotional empathy. Their study compared three 3D animation styles—realistic, simplified, and iconic—and found that while visual form plays a role, it is not the decisive factor in eliciting emotional responses. Instead, narrative and dialogue emerged as the primary drivers of emotional impact. These findings align with the present study's assertion that language is central to how bullying is represented and addressed.

Smith et al. focus on the use of specific terms denoting bullying, noting that such words—for example, “bullying” in English and “ijime” in Japanese—may carry different semantic associations due to cultural variations (see Strick et al., 2016). Their research indicates that direct translation can dilute the nuanced understanding of bullying, and that interpreting portrayals of the issue requires both linguistic and semiotic analysis, particularly when examining Western media texts. The study also highlights the role of context, demonstrating how multicultural educational cartoons—and, in this case, the use of the Jordanian dialect—shape meaning-making and interpretation.

Supporting these findings, Sittichai and Smith (2015) compared representations of bullying in animated content from Thailand and the UK, revealing that sarcasm and linguistic exclusion are expressed similarly across cultures. Their study also demonstrated that children's responses were influenced as much by the context and tone of the dialogue as by the overall visual style.

In light of these studies, it is clear that in animated programs, language serves as more than just a performative element for entertainment; its semiotic and social functions significantly shape how children understand the world—including social relationships, aggression, and cultural identity. These findings support the methodological approach of the present article, which examines bullying language as a symbolic structure with both semiotic and pedagogical dimensions. This is exemplified in *Our Family Life*, the sole Arab production addressing this issue through locally grounded discourse tailored specifically for Arab children.

### B. The Animated Series "*Our Family Life*"

*Our Family Life* is one of the largest and most comprehensive digital initiatives in the Arab world, seamlessly combining entertainment with family-oriented and educational guidance. It is fully managed by the Digitales Media team,

a group of specialists in developing Arabic social and educational content. The project operates across multiple media platforms, with its flagship being the *Our Family Life* YouTube channel, which has garnered over 2 million subscribers and more than 609 million views to date. The project's website also attracts an average of 60,000 monthly visits, underscoring its wide reach and significant standing within the Arab family digital media landscape (Digitales Media, 2022).

The animated series *Abo Sanad's Family* serves as the project's central visual and interactive component. Featuring two-dimensional characters set against three-dimensional backgrounds, it achieves a distinctive hybrid aesthetic with strong visual appeal. The series has been commended for addressing timely and significant social topics, including parenting, family dynamics, mental health, bullying, and social interaction. These themes are presented through casual yet thoughtful and reflective conversations (Our Family Life, 2020).

The project stands out for its blend of entertainment and social engagement, tackling complex and sensitive topics such as harassment, grief, discrimination, and girls' education. These issues are explored through targeted awareness campaigns and short films. Its strength lies in a multidisciplinary team of editors and writers, including psychologists, educators, journalists, and early childhood specialists, whose deep understanding of the modern Arab family informs the creation of rich, relevant, and intellectually engaging content tailored to the region.

According to its creators, the project aims to support parents and families in their educational journey by equipping them with tools to foster healthy, confident, and meaningful conversations, particularly at a time when such dialogue is more crucial than ever. It represents a progressive Arab model of participatory educational digital media, combining storytelling, social analysis, and multimedia content to address pressing family and community issues.

The show employs a mixed-media animation style, combining realistic background images depicting everyday life in Jordan—such as schools, homes, and streets—with digitally illustrated characters featuring authentic Arab traits. This approach fosters a stronger visual and emotional connection with the audience while serving as an effective medium for delivering behavioral and educational messages. Produced in the colloquial Jordanian dialect, the series ensures that its language resonates naturally with its intended viewers. Each episode runs for 4–7 minutes and concludes with an “Awareness Details” segment, presenting factual insights designed to encourage young audiences to think critically about their surroundings.

The media series is a contemporary educational production that promotes core values such as respect, inclusion, and citizenship. It engages children not only through direct instruction but also by involving them in the process of developing ethical standards. The series has earned the support of both local and international educational and social organizations and has been incorporated into field-learning programs across several schools in Jordan as a complementary educational resource (UNICEF, 2022).

### C. Linguistic Representation of Bullying in Animated Media

Bullying is a multifaceted behavior that has significant negative effects on children's psychological well-being and social functioning. It is defined as aggressive behavior—or a pattern of behaviors—perpetrated by an individual or group against a child who is unable to defend themselves from the abuse (Olweus, 1993). Bullying manifests in various forms, including physical acts such as pushing and hitting; verbal acts such as mocking or insulting; social acts such as exclusion and defamation; and cyberbullying, which involves harassment and stalking via the Internet. UNESCO reports indicate that over one-third of students globally experience bullying at some stage of their development, with lasting psychological and behavioral consequences (UNESCO, 2019).

Psychological research often attributes bullying behavior to environments characterized by emotional instability, weak social bonds, or discrimination based on differences. Children who experience bullying frequently exhibit anxiety, low self-esteem, school avoidance, and various conduct disorders. Neuropsychological studies further reveal that prolonged exposure to bullying during childhood can lead to irreversible changes in brain function, notably hyperactivation of the amygdala in response to social threats (Rigby, 2017).

In this context, as with other visual media, animated content has been both praised as an educational tool capable of raising awareness about the dangers of bullying and criticized for potentially perpetuating and reinforcing bullying behaviors through careless portrayals. Language plays a central role in representing bullying, with dialogue often employing strong, mocking, and exaggeratedly sarcastic expressions that reflect cycles of discrimination and domination. Research suggests that children, as highly adept imitators, may internalize these aggressive speech patterns and incorporate them into their daily interactions.

Conversely, well-designed animated materials that are linguistically and educationally crafted can serve as powerful tools for modeling positive conflict resolution, emotional awareness, and resistance to bullying. For example, the Arthur episode “So Funny I Forgot to Laugh” addresses verbal bullying in a straightforward yet effective way, using humor to navigate the issue while ultimately promoting empathy and understanding among its young audience. Similarly, the film *Inside Out* offers an insightful exploration of emotional theory and regulation, illustrating how the suppression and denial of emotions impact behavior. This film has been incorporated into children's mental health curricula as a valuable resource (Pixar, 2015).

In the Arab region, animated campaigns such as *Our Children in Egypt* and *Lebanon* are employed to raise awareness and provide language that resonates with children's cultural contexts, fostering values of respect and empathy (UNICEF, 2019). In this regard, the language—comprising vocabulary, tone, and dialogic context—used in animated content plays

a crucial role in either promoting or undermining these values. Therefore, careful educational oversight is necessary to ensure that children are not exposed to language that could reinforce bullying behaviors.

By integrating visual narrative with a powerful use of color, animated media offer enhanced educational and therapeutic opportunities to foster emotional sensitivity and preventive moral values in children. This development cultivates a language of responsibility that empowers children to reject cyber violence and verbal aggression while encouraging positive social interactions.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a methodology specifically tailored to the medium under investigation, the Jordanian animated series *Our Family Life*, by combining interpretive-analytical, critical discourse, and semiotic approaches. The series is conceptualized as a visual, linguistic, and cultural text addressing bullying within realistic school settings. This integrated method analyzes cartoon discourse as a semiotic representation of social meaning, recognizing spoken language and local dialects as cultural tools that extend beyond mere cues. Instead, they function as expressive media that organize signs and meanings aimed at shaping individual identity.

This research draws upon the interpretive tradition as a flexible qualitative framework to analyze dialogic texts within their cultural and societal contexts, revealing the value-laden dimensions embedded in character discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is instrumental in uncovering patterns of power, discrimination, and the construction of bully and victim roles, with particular emphasis on the linguistic mechanisms that establish authority and representation in dialogue. This framework is further enriched by incorporating social semiotics, which examines verbal and non-verbal signs—such as intonation, gestures, and scene context—as meaning systems that reflect bullying dynamics rooted in local culture.

Three episodes of the series were selected based on their explicit or implicit portrayal of verbal, social, and psychological bullying, as well as the diversity of educational settings depicted, such as school, home, and digital environments. Qualitative textual analysis was conducted through manual transcription of dialogues, alongside detailed documentation of the language–semiotic framework for each scene, including factors such as location, speaker identity, vocal expression, and emotional tone.

The transcribed dialogues underwent detailed semiotic analysis, with bullying-related language—such as pressuring, ridiculing, excluding, marginalizing, verbal attacks, and threats—systematically coded. These coded instances were then categorized according to the argumentative structure of the dialogues, allowing for the identification of strategies of justification or resistance employed by the characters. Additionally, the analysis considered the Jordanian dialect as a cultural tool conveying implicit messages tied to societal values, traditions, and modes of thought.

These coding processes were documented using qualitative coding tables that captured differences among characters regarding vocabulary usage, frequency of bullying types, and their distribution across the episodes. This approach enabled the identification of semantic markers that illustrate how bullying discourse is constructed in the series—whether as enforced aggression or forms of resistance.

This methodology, combining interpretive and comparative approaches, aligns with the unique nature of animation as a hybrid expressive medium where text, image, and sound are intricately interwoven to address sensitive educational topics. As such, analysis must go beyond surface-level narrative to engage with the symbolic and cultural meanings embedded in the language used.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Episode (1)

Title: *Sally the Wronged* (*Our Family Life*, n.d.)

Duration: 6:14 minutes

Dialect: Local Jordanian Dialect

#### Scene One

(*Schoolyard – Morning*)

Both Sally and Maram are running for student council president.

Sally, accompanied by her friend, is preparing campaign signs and posters. She stands in front of her classmates and speaks enthusiastically:

Sally:

“I want to start my campaign with my own class — my family — and then continue with the rest of the classes.

The students are aware, even if people think they don’t know what’s best for them.

But we need to show them that we can make a real difference in our school.

We need the support of the teachers and parents — their role is important.

We have to organize activities that bring everyone together.

And in the end, even if people say the student council is just a headache...

I don't care, because it's the beginning of the change we all need."  
*(Maram stands off to the side, holding her phone and filming Sally as she speaks.)*

Maram's friend (whispering):

"What are you happy about? Why are you filming? Honestly... we're in danger!

Look at how the whole class is clapping nonstop!"

Maram (mockingly):

"Let her class — I mean her *family* — help her now!"

Her friend:

"What do you mean?"

Maram (with a wink and raised finger):

"You'll see..."

#### Scene Two

*(Inside Maram's class)*

Maram's friend:

"Did you send the video or not yet?"

Maram (holding her phone and smiling):

"Sent..."

#### Scene Three

*(Students' and teachers' phones begin receiving a doctored video with choppy audio and manipulated editing. It features cut segments of Sally's actual speech.)*

In the edited video, Sally is made to say:

"Honestly, students don't know what's best for them...

Parents' roles aren't important...

Teachers? A headache...

And me? I don't care."

#### Scene Four

*(In class – Break time)*

Student (to Sally, surprised):

"When did you say that?!"

Sally (shocked):

"Me?! I didn't say that! What's going on?!"

#### Scene Five

*(At Sally's house – Mothers' meeting)*

Sally's mother (angrily):

"The principal confirmed that a teacher was present while Sally spoke,  
and that she didn't say any of those things...

It's clear someone faked the video just to harm my daughter!"

#### Scene Six

*(On stage – Announcement of election results)*

Teacher:

"The winner of the student council presidency is... Maram!"

*(The principal suddenly intervenes and speaks with the teacher, then addresses the students.)*

Principal:

"Before announcing the results, there's something important we need to discuss...

As a school, we reject any form of bullying,

especially cyberbullying.

After reviewing the video that circulated about Sally,

and tracing its source...

We announce that Maram has decided to withdraw from the election,

because the video was fabricated and sent with the intent to damage her classmate's reputation and influence the vote.

Since there are no other candidates,

the new student council president is: Sally!"

*(The stage erupts in applause and celebration. Sally smiles with emotion.)*

Principal (continues):

"Appropriate action will be taken against anyone involved in producing and sharing the doctored video."

End of Episode – Awareness Message:  
 “Not everything we see or hear online is true.  
 Verify, think, and ask before you judge!”

Analysis:

TABLE 1  
 ANALYSIS OF EPISODE (1)

IScene	Interpretive Analysis	Critical Discourse Analysis	Semiotic Analysis
<b>Schoolyard</b>	Sally represents collective awareness and hope for change, in contrast to Maram’s sarcastic hints reflecting futility and value-based division.	Sally’s discourse is constructive and inclusive; Maram uses mockery and innuendo as early implicit strategies of undermining.	The colors of the banners and the camera movement toward Sally symbolize collective and symbolic support.
<b>Maram’s Video</b>	Sally’s words are reconstructed out of context, revealing the danger of semantic manipulation.	Fabrication is used as a discursive tool of dominance that distorts the original meaning and produces a false narrative against the victim.	The edited montage and choppy audio symbolize symbolic and media-based violence.
<b>Sally’s Reaction</b>	Her shock reflects a loss of control over self-representation; a rupture appears between the self and the projected image.	She appears as a victim of a dominant discourse, questioning the legitimacy of the information but lacking defensive tools in the moment of shock.	Sally’s facial expression and the surrounding silence intensify the sense of emotional isolation.
<b>Mother’s Response</b>	Family support emerges as part of a social resistance network; uncovering the truth contributes to reconstructing meaning.	The mother refutes the bullying discourse by restoring her daughter’s legitimacy through assertive, authoritative language.	Warm home lighting contrasts with the cold school scenes, symbolizing affection and support versus conflict.
<b>Stage and Ending</b>	Symbolic justice is achieved, and the context shifts from competition to recognition and moral triumph.	The principal’s discourse declares the institution’s stance against bullying and deconstructs the dominant discourse by revealing the truth on an official platform.	Use of the microphone, audience applause, and victory music indicate the recovery of a previously silenced voice.

The episode “Sally the Wronged” from the *Our Family Life* series offers a multi-layered depiction of cyberbullying, achieved through a dramatic structure that deconstructs the relationships between characters, symbols, and semantics. The analysis of this episode is grounded in a methodology that integrates interpretive analysis, critical discourse analysis, and semiotic analysis.

Initially, Sally is portrayed as a participatory student, embodying collective awareness, while Maram is depicted as a derisive figure of positional authority, embodying covert resistance to reformative values. Analysis of Maram’s narrative and discourse reveals how sarcasm and digital fabrication function as symbolic tools of ostracism and caricature, contributing to the construction of the Other.

The manipulated video montage serves as a tool to construct a fabricated narrative, repurposing Sally’s words within a new context that fuels media-driven acts of symbolic violence. Sally’s reaction highlights a stark disconnect between her true self and her digitized image. In contrast, the interventions of her mother and the headmaster redirect the narrative by introducing social and institutional support, demonstrating the potential for resistance and restoration of balance.

From a semiotic perspective, the episode employs specific visual and auditory elements—such as rising music, contrasting lighting, and audience applause—to signify the restoration of symbolic justice. Overall, the episode serves as a compelling example of how violence can be portrayed through language, culture, and cognition, highlighting the need for critical and interpretive engagement.

Episode (2)

Title: *Your Celebration Is Not Theirs* (Our Family Life, n.d.)

Duration: 4:25 minutes

Dialect: Local Jordanian Dialect

Scene One:

The episode opens with the "Sanad" family gathering to plan his birthday party. Sanad suggests inviting his school friends, and the family agrees to host the celebration at a nearby football field.

Sanad and his sister Sally begin designing invitation cards to hand out to his classmates.

Scene Two:

At school, Sanad begins distributing the invitations to classmates, including "Fares" and "Omar."

The three agree to divide the guests into two football teams for the party.

Sanad then remembers he forgot to invite "Karim." As he approaches to give him the card, Omar intervenes:

Omar: "Don't invite him. I can't stand him. He's new, and nobody knows him. If you invite him, Fares and I won't come."

Sanad hesitates, and ultimately decides not to invite Karim.

Scene Three:

Karim is sitting alone in the schoolyard, looking sad.

Sally approaches:

Sally: "Have you seen Sanad? He forgot his breakfast with me."

Karim (sadly): "Yeah, I saw him at the field. He was dividing them into teams for his birthday."

Sally: "Why aren't you with them?"

Karim: "I wasn't invited."

Scene Four:

At home, Sally confronts Sanad:

Sally: "Sanad, did you forget to give Karim the invitation card?"

Sanad: "No, I didn't forget. I just decided not to invite him... and how did you know he wasn't invited?"

Sally: "Seriously? You're inviting the whole class except him? Imagine how you'd feel if someone did that to you!"

Sanad: "He's new, and he doesn't like playing football. I thought it wouldn't matter to him."

Sally: "I saw him. It mattered a lot to him."

She continues: "Remember three years ago when Lama invited all the girls in class to her birthday except Runa and me? I still remember how upset I was."

Sanad: "But Omar and Fares said if I invite him, they won't come. And they're my friends."

Sally: "But it's not their birthday — it's yours. You decide who to invite."

Scene Five:

At the football field during the party, Sanad is standing with Omar and Fares. Suddenly, Karim arrives.

Omar (surprised): "What? Karim? You invited him?"

Sanad (smiling): "Yeah, I did. Imagine inviting the whole class and not him — how would he feel? Let's start the game!"

The scene cuts to a joyful moment of Sanad celebrating with his friends as he blows out his birthday candle.

Final Message:

"Your celebration... should bring joy to everyone, not just your close friends. Fair choices create lasting memories."

Analysis:

TABLE 2  
ANALYSIS OF EPISODE (2)

Scene	Interpretive Analysis	Critical Discourse Analysis	Semiotic Analysis
<b>Family Gathering</b>	The family represents a warm, supportive environment shaping a collective vision of joy. The "birthday" symbolizes belonging.	Inclusive discourse, with no sign of exclusion. The child is involved in planning and has a voice.	Warm lighting, cheerful music, and overall ambiance suggest intimacy and good intentions.
<b>Sanad–Omar Dialogue</b>	Reflects internal conflict between inclusivity and peer pressure, highlighting conditional belonging.	Omar uses implicit threat discourse: "If you invite him, we won't come" — a pressure tactic leading to an unfair decision.	Omar's body language (interrupting, intimidating), and tone of voice emphasize his attempt to assert control.
<b>Karim's Isolation</b>	"Not being invited" is interpreted as symbolic exclusion. Karim represents vulnerability in a setting that appears joyful externally.	There is no direct verbal attack, but deliberate neglect conveys a clear message of marginalization.	The shot of Karim sitting alone, with the camera pulling back and fading sound — visually and aurally emphasizes isolation and sadness.
<b>Sally Confronts Sanad</b>	Sally deconstructs Sanad's justifications from a personal and experiential perspective, reframing the issue in terms of justice and empathy.	Sally reclaims moral authority in the face of peer pressure, demonstrating how individuals can resist dominant peer narratives.	Close-up on Sally's face, serious tone, reference to past emotional memory — adds emotional weight to her argument.
<b>Party Resolution</b>	Sanad realigns his priorities and includes Karim in the celebration, reconstructing a new collective based on fairness, not favoritism.	The discourse shifts from peer-driven justification to independent moral decision-making.	Birthday candle scene, Karim's smile, and balanced character positioning in the final shot symbolize reconciliation and equity.

In the episode "Your Celebration Is Not Theirs," the subtle psychological dynamics of social bullying—manifested as indirect exclusion in child-friendly party settings—are explored. Employing interpretive, critical, and semiotic analyses, the episode highlights the contrast between public celebration and the private emotional pain caused by exclusion.

The power imbalance is portrayed through Omar, who, leveraging his social status, marginalizes the new student Karim. Sanad oscillates between submission and uncertainty until Sally initiates an ethical and interpretive dialogue that shifts the narrative focus toward themes of justice and empathy for the Other.

From a semiotic perspective, the episode reinforces its themes through visual cues—such as schoolyard isolation and the birthday candle—that convey complex meanings related to justice and inclusion. Ultimately, the series delivers a clear pedagogical message: "True joy is only complete when it is inclusive," a message conveyed through the dynamic interplay of ethical discourse and the aesthetic composition of the animated frame.

Episode (3)

Title: *Express With Respect* (Our Family Life, n.d.)

Duration: 6:19 minutes

Dialect: Local Jordanian Dialect

## Episode Summary

## Scene One:

Sally hands her parents a paper to sign while messaging on her phone. Suddenly, the mother's phone rings.

## Scene Two (Flashback to three days earlier):

It's Talent Show Day at school. After a student sings and another recites poetry, Maram performs a theatrical skit mimicking teachers in a humorous way. The audience laughs.

Sally, upset and blushing, exclaims:

"What nonsense is this?! Seriously? We weren't raised like this!"

## Scene Three:

In her room, Sally talks with classmates on the phone and encourages them to comment on Maram's social media post.

Sally writes:

"Are you seriously proud of what you did? We don't want you at our school. You deserve it. Let the whole school stand against you!"

## Scene Four (Return to the present):

The mother calls out angrily:

"Sally, what did you do? And what's this paper?! Maram's mother just told me Maram hasn't left the house in three days because of what happened."

Sally replies:

"But she was wrong! She mocked the teachers. We're not bullies, she started it!"

The mother responds:

"So if someone does something we don't like, this is how we respond? Imagine if all your friends wrote those same hurtful comments about you. How would you feel?"

The father interjects:

"I don't understand what's going on."

The mother hands him the paper:

"Read it."

The document turns out to be a dismissal letter for Maram.

Sanad says:

"Maram did that skit in front of the teachers and girls only. But you posted about her in front of the whole school!"

Sally responds angrily:

"Why do you care?"

Father:

"Sally, we didn't raise you like this. Express your opinion with respect, without hurting others. What you did is called cyberbullying — and that kind of bullying can destroy lives."

The mother asks Sally to make things right.

## Scene Five:

In the schoolyard, Sally approaches Maram:

Sally:

"What I did hurt you a lot. But I was really upset with what you did. I didn't know you got permission from the teachers, and they'd seen the script."

Maram:

"Yeah, every teacher saw the skit before I performed it, and everyone approved."

Sally:

"I'm really sorry for what I said. I should've talked to you directly instead of posting like that."

## Scene Six:

In front of classmates, teachers, and Maram, Sally speaks:

"On behalf of myself and my friends, we want to apologize for the way we expressed our opinion, which caused great harm to our classmate, Maram."

Maram replies:

"And I accept the apology. Sally and I have decided to start an initiative to teach people how to express their opinions with respect. That's why we launched the hashtag: #Express\_With\_Respect."

Analysis:

TABLE 3  
ANALYSIS OF EPISODE (3)

Scene	Interpretive Analysis	Critical Discourse Analysis	Semiotic Analysis
<b>Stage Performance</b>	The scene reveals a tension between artistic expression and “traditional upbringing,” where satire is interpreted as disrespect rather than legitimate expression.	Maram’s discourse is perceived as a violation of “acceptable conduct,” allowing for a retaliatory moral discourse to emerge.	Audience laughter, Sally’s angry reaction, and close-up shots highlight emotional rupture and immediate rejection.
<b>Sally’s Response</b>	Sally transitions from a frustrated observer to a digital aggressor, using harsh language under the guise of defending “values.”	Her discourse shifts from personal displeasure to collective exclusion via digital media.	Sally’s angry tone, her aggressive written comment, and phrases like “You deserve it” serve as markers of codified psychological violence.
<b>Family Dialogue</b>	The family deconstructs Sally’s position, restoring moral responsibility in place of emotional reactivity.	The father clearly names the act as “cyberbullying,” redefining the roles of aggressor and true victim.	The expulsion paper, the father’s silence, and intense dialogue contribute to the symbolic moment of recognizing wrongdoing.
<b>Reconciliation Scene</b>	Sally adopts a tone of apology and explanation, and the positive intent behind Maram’s action is revealed.	Mutual acknowledgment restores balance; Sally rebuilds her discourse through direct dialogue rather than mediated aggression.	The framing of both characters together, calm tone, and absence of music symbolize reconciliation and clarity.
<b>Initiative Launch</b>	The individual apology becomes a collective act, rebuilding the school community around the value of respectful expression.	A shared discourse reflects the transformation from digital retaliation to digital repair.	The hashtag #Express_With_Respect, shown against a backdrop of students and teachers, symbolizes the creation of a new school culture.

From interpretive, critical, and semiotic perspectives, the three episodes of *Our Family Life* function as polyphonic texts, where language operates not as a neutral medium but as an active agent shaping power dynamics and social relationships within the school environment. The series offers a compelling exploration of the performative nature of language—demonstrating how words can construct, exclude, or heal, depending on their context and intent.

The digital manipulation in *Sally the Wronged* employs language to construct a narrative against Sally, utilizing speech acts as tools of exclusion. In contrast, “*Your Celebration Is Not Theirs*” depicts symbolic exclusion through silence and omission, functioning as a form of negative rhetoric that marginalizes through refusal rather than direct confrontation.

Finally, “*Express with Respect*” examines how unchecked moral language can mask symbolic violence, transforming ethical concern into a guise for social aggression.

The language used across episodes blends colloquial Jordanian Arabic, rich in cultural nuance, with formal educational discourse. Rather than reflecting the traditional heteroglossic nature of diglossia, this linguistic mix semiotically situates speakers within a social class hierarchy. Phrases such as “We won’t come if you invite him” or “He is new... it doesn’t matter to him” reveal discursive strategies aimed at legitimizing exclusion or minimizing moral accountability—ways of speaking and acting in daily life that structurally contribute to the perpetuation of bullying dynamics.

From a semiotic perspective, visual framing elements—such as close-ups, facial expressions, lighting, and sound cues like silence and celebratory music—contribute to a multimodal system of meaning that extends beyond dialogue. Together, these elements create a layered portrayal of bullying, presenting it not as isolated incidents but as cultural discourses that require critical examination, collective engagement, and reimagining grounded in justice, empathy, and inclusion, fostering a digital childhood that can be truly cherished.

## V. CONCLUSION

An interpretive and critical semiotic analysis of the three episodes of *Our Family Life* reveals that language serves as a central mechanism for representing bullying through dialogic frameworks rich in symbolic meaning and communicative patterns. This portrayal frames bullying as a discursive interaction rather than an isolated behavioral act. The episodes depict a variety of bullying forms, including digital manipulation, covert social exclusion, and the instrumentalization of collective moral language against individuals. This diversity underscores that language is not a neutral tool but a vehicle of power, playing symbolic roles in the construction of education and culture.

Violence in Episode 2 (*Sally the Wronged*) is effectively illustrated through historical and visual metaphors, where speech is manipulated—edited, spliced, or interrupted—dismantling its original meaning and reshaping the message for a wider audience. The victim’s words are inverted, recasting her accusatory discourse to portray her as the aggressor. This highlights a key insight: children are more influenced by vocal intonation and delivery than by visual imagery, making the corruption of dialogue a particularly damaging form of abuse, even in the absence of physical violence. These findings align with Park et al. (2019), who demonstrated that narrative and linguistic elements evoke stronger emotional and cognitive engagement than visual details—evident here as Sally’s demeanor dramatically shifts following the spread of the altered video.

In *Your Celebration Is Not Theirs*, bullying manifests as subtle social exclusion, conveyed through polite language and excuses—for example, Sanad’s remark, “He’s new... I don’t think it even matters to him.” This softer form of exclusion reflects symbolic omission rather than overt insult. This aligns with Smith et al. (2016), who argue that, within certain

linguistic and cultural communities, exclusion can be more painful than physical aggression. The episode further illustrates how cartoon dialogue embodies cultural and ideological dimensions, expressed through language of affiliation and disaffiliation, evident when Sanad chooses loyalty to old friends over acceptance of a new peer.

In *Express with Respect*, bullying is portrayed as digital aggression cloaked in moral justification. Although Sally believes she is upholding school values, her online statements—such as “We don’t want you at our school”—are charged with exclusionary and accusatory language. Here, moral rhetoric is weaponized to enact collective symbolic violence. This episode exemplifies how irony and indignation can obscure the severity of aggression if their educational implications are not carefully examined. It further reinforces the idea that, for children, the tone and content of speech can have a greater impact than the visual depiction of aggression.

These findings demonstrate that *Our Family Life* conceptualizes bullying not merely as a behavioral issue but as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon. The use of the Jordanian vernacular dialect in the series serves as a symbolic medium imbued with emotional and social values. Within bullying contexts, this dialect functions both as a tool for ostracism and as a means for fostering empathy and correction, aligning with theoretical perspectives on language’s role in constructing and reshaping social meaning.

In contrast to previous studies, this analysis highlights *Our Family Life* as a rare Arabic series that deconstructs bullying by focusing on everyday speech acts and natural dialogic situations rather than overt moralizing. The episodes reveal that symbolic violence often arises not from explicit statements but from how messages are conveyed, through silence, justification, and the dynamics of who speaks and who remains unheard.

Amid increasing demand for culturally relevant educational materials that reflect children lived experiences, the findings demonstrate that *Our Family Life* offers an authentic linguistic portrayal of bullying. By emphasizing colloquial language and the Jordanian dialect, the series transcends conventional educational messaging to present a conceptual discourse model that critically deconstructs bullying, situating it within a broader pedagogical and cultural framework.

Further analysis of the episode reveals that language, through its expressions, tones, and argumentative styles, operates not merely as a narrative device but as a vital semiotic resource that signals dynamics of power, exclusion, and belonging. The language employed in the series prompts children’s critical awareness, encouraging them to question rather than simply imitate behaviors.

The study confirms that *Our Family Life* is one of the few Arabic animated productions that directly engages the Arab child’s conscience regarding bullying through dialogue animated in a style that blends cultural relevance with educational depth. Furthermore, the findings underscore the effectiveness of language as a semiotic and cultural medium in reinforcing ethical values and promoting behavioral awareness among children. This supports the core argument of the study and offers a valuable model for future research on the linguistic representation of learning behaviors in Arabic children’s animated media.

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