

# Figurative expressions in Acehese pregnancy cultural taboos as a language of protection

Khalsiah<sup>1\*</sup>, Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf<sup>2</sup>, Cece Sobarna<sup>3</sup>, Diana Fauzia Sari<sup>2</sup>, Ima Indirayani<sup>4</sup>, Azkiya<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Program of Teacher Professional Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Malikussaleh, Lhokseumawe 24351, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, , Jalan T. Nyak Arief, Darussalam, Banda Aceh 23111, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran, Jl. Raya Bandung-Sumedang KM 21.Jatinangor, Sumedang 45363, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Medicine, Universitas.Syiah Kuala, Jalan T.Nyak Arief, Darussalam, Banda Aceh 23111, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

Cultural beliefs surrounding pregnancy are often communicated through figurative language, reflecting a society's values, fears, and protective instincts. This study investigates the figurative language used in Acehese cultural prohibitions related to pregnancy, focusing on figurative expressions in traditional taboos. Conducted in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, Indonesia, the research employs a qualitative methodology, analyzing data from 12 informants, including pregnant women, those who had been pregnant, and caregivers. Data was collected through structured interviews and analyzed using a conceptual framework for figurative language categorization. The findings reveal 34 pregnancy-related cultural prohibitions about dietary restrictions, life safety, gender roles, and spiritual beliefs. Metonymy was the most common figurative device, followed by hyperbole, personification, and, less frequently, simile, paradox, and synecdoche. For instance, metonymy links specific actions, such as eating certain foods or viewing accidents, to broader cultural and health outcomes, while hyperbole exaggerates the potential consequences of these actions. Personification attributes human-like qualities to spirits or supernatural forces, accenting the prohibitions' spiritual significance. The study reveals the complex relationship between Acehese society's cultural beliefs, language, and health practices. It illustrates how figurative language helps reinforce and communicate these traditional norms. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of language in preserving cultural continuity and shaping societal behavior.

**Keywords:** Acehese traditions; cultural prohibitions; figurative language; pregnancy

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## INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy cultural taboos have great significance in Acehese culture since they are seen as safeguarding the mother and the unborn child (Manan, 2021). These taboos are passed down through generations, deeply rooted in their culture (Aziz et al., 2020), and they reflect the Acehese community's approach to health and well-being. These taboos include various restrictions, each with a particular justification, many of which have symbolic connotations and are conventionally

followed by threats (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014). They involve following certain food restrictions, acting in specific ways, and depending on traditional leaders for guidance (Darmawati et al., 2020). Many of these cultural taboos are closely tied to the concept of where certain words, actions, or objects are avoided to prevent harm or misfortune during pregnancy (Tsegaye et al., 2020). They eventually form the community's perceptions and responses towards pregnancy.

\*Corresponding author  
Email: khalsiah@unimal.ac.id

In addition to taboo words, it is also interesting to look at common phrases, whose figurative meanings come from different cultural taboos (Khairullina et al., 2020). Since taboos are typically not openly discussed but are deeply internalized (Buşu, 2023), using figurative language, they are conveyed by words that link specific actions or behaviors with consequences that go beyond the literal. A community's understanding of figurative language is influenced by how they process information, their personal experiences, and their knowledge of social and cultural contexts (Colston & Katz, 2004). Through this lens, the taboos reflect not just practical concerns but also the interconnectedness of language, culture, and social norms (Adebileje, 2012; Khairullina et al., 2020), whilst combining the physical and spiritual worlds (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014).

### **Oral Tradition**

Oral traditions are essential for maintaining historical knowledge and cultural identity, particularly in communities with little or no written records (Vansina et al., 2006). In many societies, oral traditions play a crucial role in preserving cultural wisdom, values, and customs (Ramli et al., 2024). These traditions include storytelling, songs, myths, chants, and other forms of verbal expression (Sherzer, 2014) that are passed down from one generation to the next (Aziz et al., 2020). They are not only a means of entertainment but also serve as educational tools that encode moral lessons, historical knowledge, and community practices (Ojukwu & Chidiebere, 2020).

Oral traditions such as *kaba babarito* and *maota di lapau* are used by Minangkabau people to transmit genealogical, historical, and religious information (Primadesi, 2012). Similarly, proverbs are utilized in Acehnese culture to impart cultural values that offer guidance and teach civility, albeit newer generations are using them less frequently (Ibrahim & Usman, 2021; Mursyidin et al., 2020; Nasir, 2015). Oral literature, as part of the broader oral traditions, also functions as a life guide in Sabang, Aceh, passing along cultural norms and educational values about behavior, the natural world, and social relationships (Yulsafli & Erfinawati, 2022). For example, social and cultural qualities, including respect for elders, cooperation, and religious devotion, are passed down through the oral traditions of the Becirongengor village in Java, which include historical narratives, religious commemorations, and group rituals (Hasanah & Andari, 2020). These customs serve as historical documents, forms of amusement, and instruments for teaching and social cohesiveness.

### **Cultural Taboos**

Cultural taboos are culturally forbidden actions that have a variety of origins and purposes in communities all over the world. Their original

reasoning is occasionally lost due to inadequate transmission, and they frequently originate from a deterministic worldview that links tragedies to certain deeds (Hong, 2024). These constraints, which are embedded in cultural standards, can apply to a variety of facets of life. They have significantly influenced societies throughout history, affecting areas such as food, art, dress, sex, and death (Holden, 2000). Although some taboos might appear unreasonable, they often play key roles in preserving social order, safeguarding resources, and strengthening cultural identity within communities (Hong, 2024).

Cultural taboos have been studied for their effects on social dynamics and individual behavior. They play a crucial role in shaping moral frameworks and guiding behavior in societies. In Malay culture, for instance, *pantang larang* (taboos) are used to instill moral values and develop character in children, reflecting both local wisdom and Islamic principles (Yusuf et al., 2024). Likewise, among the Turko-Mongolic peoples of Inner Asia, food taboos are employed to promote social harmony, protect health, and maintain social structures (Sodnompilova, 2024). Such restrictions serve as enduring features of society, providing both spiritual and intellectual growth (Gushchina et al., 2019). The role of cultural taboos in moral development can be explained through identity theory, which suggests that individuals adjust their behavior to affirm their moral identities, shaped by cultural norms and situational contexts, and experience emotions like guilt and shame accordingly (Stets & Carter, 2012). As societies continue to change, maintaining and adapting these cultural practices is essential for nurturing morally responsible individuals in an increasingly globalized world (Yusuf et al., 2024).

In pregnancy, cultural taboos are common and differ across societies, influenced by socio-cultural traditions, health considerations, and ancestral values. In Ghana, expectant mothers are discouraged from consuming certain foods such as snails, rats, hot dishes, and animal lungs due to health concerns and respect for ancestral traditions (Arzoaquoi et al., 2015; Otoo et al., 2015). Likewise, in Indonesia, customs dictate avoiding outdoor activities at sunset, eating in doorways, or draping towels around the neck, practices rooted in beliefs about safety and protection (Firnanda & Andalas, 2022). In Côte d'Ivoire, dietary and behavioral restrictions are intended to enhance a child's physical appeal, lower risks of maternal and infant mortality, and prevent illnesses (Marcel et al., 2015). These cultural rules are upheld through reminders from family members, societal stigmatization, and community-enforced sanctions (Arzoaquoi et al., 2015). In essence, these cultural taboos are more than mere restrictions; they embody the moral and spiritual frameworks that guide individuals' behaviors in a society.

### **Figurative Language**

Figurative language encompasses a wide range of rhetorical devices that enhance communication by conveying meanings beyond the literal level. The primary forms include metonymy, repetition, personification, synecdoche, litotes, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, paradox, ellipsis, and allusion (Kennedy, 1983; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Perrine, 1977). Each of these forms offers unique ways to express ideas with greater impact. For example, metonymy involves substituting the name of one thing with something closely associated with it, such as “mud, stains that are tainting and tarnishing” representing an act of sinning in the phrase “This problem is indeed very bad. I already started doing it again, smearing myself with mud, stains that are tainting and tarnishing” (Harun et al., 2020, p. 398). Similarly, repetition is used to emphasize meaning or create the emotional effect, as seen in “Goodbye my friends, goodbye my family, goodbye my love” (Fata et al., 2018, p. 33).

Furthermore, figures of speech like personification and synecdoche also play key roles in figurative expression. Personification attributes human qualities to inanimate objects, such as in “The sun is smiling at us” (Murtadho & Amelia, 2022, p. 76). Synecdoche, on the other hand, uses a part of something to represent the whole, as demonstrated in the example “Till evening, I haven’t seen his nose,” where “his nose” refers to the entire person (Allo, 2015, p. 78). This figurative usage reflects a colloquial way of emphasizing a person’s complete absence or failure to appear. Litotes, a form of understatement, uses negation to convey an affirmative meaning, as in the example “His house is the result of our small business” (Murtadho & Amelia, 2022, p. 76), where calling the business “small” modestly underestimates the achievement of being able to afford a house from its profits. “invaluable”

In addition, other important figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, and hyperbole provide deeper layers of meaning. A metaphor draws a comparison between two dissimilar concepts to highlight their similarities, as seen in “Some professors are geniuses like a supercomputer” (Skalicky & Crossley, 2018, p. 11). A simile, which explicitly compares two different things using words like “like” or “as,” is exemplified by “She is like a flower” (Lonada & Martin, 2015, p. 16). Hyperbole, known for its exaggeration, serves to emphasize the speaker’s attitude, as in “This suitcase weighs a ton” (Ibáñez, 2014, p. 189). These forms of figurative language can both enhance the aesthetic quality of language and highlight emotional or conceptual contrasts.

Figurative language also includes paradox, ellipsis, allusion, oxymoron, irony, apostrophe, imagery, symbolism, satire, and sarcasm. A paradox presents two seemingly contradictory ideas that

challenge conventional understanding, such as “One must be cruel to be kind” (Ibáñez, 2014, p. 197). Ellipsis involves omitting parts of a sentence for efficiency, as seen in “I asked for a car, and he (asked for) a motorbike” (Fata et al., 2018, p. 35). Allusion refers to an indirect reference to widely known concepts, as in “This place is like Heaven” (Fata et al., 2018, p. 35). Apostrophe involves addressing an absent or deceased person or, in a weaker form, addressing inanimate objects personified, as seen in Shelley’s speaker addressing the wind as “thou breath of autumn’s being,” treating it as a conscious entity (Flannery, 2020, p. 5).

Croft and Cross (2000) defined imagery as language that enhances our understanding and perception by enabling us to see, hear, feel, and comprehend more vividly, such as in the image of “a giant seed of war” draws from both warfare and agriculture, evoking a sense of immense destruction brought about by war (Khan & Shaheen, 2021, p. 343). Symbolism in literature uses images, objects, or ideas to represent deeper meanings, as seen in *The Great Gatsby*, where colorful symbolism (i.e., green, white, red, yellow, blue and grey) reflects the disillusionment of the American Dream and social moral decay (Wang, 2011). Additionally, oxymoron, irony, and satire use juxtaposition, incongruity, and humor to provoke thought and critique society (Baldick, 2008; Ibáñez, 2014; Hamukwaya, 2016). Lastly, sarcasm, often used for ironic effect, offers criticism in a way that contradicts reality, as in “at least we have water” in a desert island comic (Skalicky & Crossley, 2018, p. 14). These diverse forms allow speakers and writers to express complex ideas creatively.

It is apparent that figurative language is a powerful tool used in various cultures to convey complex ideas, emotions, and beliefs through indirect means. These figures of speech are deeply rooted in cultural and societal experiences, making it challenging to create universally applicable phrases (Kabra et al., 2023). The figurative language of different cultures shows their unique views on emotions and reasoning (Niemeier, 2011). This kind of oral tradition is enforced through socialization processes, where older generations pass down knowledge to younger members through oral traditions (Ramli et al., 2024). This ensures the continuity of these taboos and their relevance in the context of changing societal conditions.

### **The Present Study**

Several studies have examined the figurative language associated with pregnancy cultural taboos. These studies investigate how societal norms and ideas regarding pregnancy are communicated through metaphors, euphemisms, and symbolic representations. For example, studies on pregnancy-related dietary taboos have found symbolic links

between particular meals and possible risks to the mother or fetus. Certain meals are seen to have negative effects in various cultures, and these ideas are frequently communicated through metaphorical language that reflects underlying cultural values and anxieties (Maggiulli et al., 2022). Furthermore, traditional beliefs and practices also impact pregnancy and childbirth, emphasizing how metaphorical language is used to impose taboos and direct behavior. These statements contain cultural wisdom that has been passed down through the years and help to convey warnings (Mulenga et al., 2018). The study by Hong (2024) has also looked at the cultural development and cognitive roots of taboos, indicating that figurative language contributes to the formation and maintenance of these restrictions. By portraying particular habits or foods as harmful or improper during pregnancy, metaphorical expressions have the power to change attitudes and behaviors. These studies, in turn, show how figurative language plays a crucial role in comprehending and passing along cultural taboos and restrictions around pregnancy, illustrating the relationship between language, culture, and social norms.

Despite several studies that have examined the role of oral traditions and cultural taboos in various societies, research specific to Acehnese pregnancy is limited. Previous research has explored pregnancy-related taboos in diverse cultural contexts, such as among the Ghanaians (Arzoaquoi et al., 2015; Otoo et al., 2015), Nigerians (Ekwochi et al., 2016), Namibians (Mulenga et al., 2018), Americans (Maggiulli et al., 2022), and in Indonesia, the studies on the Javanese in Malang (Firnanda et al., 2022) and Yogyakarta (Cukarso & Herbawani, 2020). These studies reveal how cultural taboos are closely tied to beliefs about health and spiritual protection. However, there is still a lack of focused analysis on the Acehnese context, where cultural taboos are influenced not only by local wisdom but also by Islamic teachings, creating a distinctive pattern of belief and practice. Building on the previous discussion, this article aims to explore Acehnese pregnancy taboos through the framework of figurative language. It is important to examine

how figurative language shapes the meaning and cultural significance of these practices. By doing so, it would reveal the deeper meanings embedded in each taboo and demonstrate how language serves as a tool for transmitting cultural wisdom and protecting societal values (Wildan et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2023). Consequently, the research question of this study is: How is figurative language used in Acehnese cultural taboos related to pregnancy?

## METHOD

### Design

To provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing language-related phenomena (Dörnyei, 2007), a qualitative approach was utilized. Employing linguistic methodologies, the study investigates these cultural taboos and their figurative expressions. This study was conducted in Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, Indonesia. Aceh Besar is a regency (*kabupaten*) in the Aceh Province of Indonesia, and it geographically surrounds Banda Aceh, the provincial capital. Meanwhile, Banda Aceh is administratively separate; it is a municipality (*kota*) with its own local government. These areas present diverse linguistic and cultural contexts that provide relevant data for analyzing the figurative representations of cultural taboos in Acehnese society.

### Informants

The research engaged 12 women from Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, including pregnant women, those who had been pregnant, and caregivers. These informants were purposively selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives, particularly their familiarity with cultural taboos related to pregnancy. Additionally, participation was contingent on informed consent, and at the time of data collection, only these 12 women consented to be interviewed. The women were from various areas within Banda Aceh, including Lhong Cut, Banda Raya, Lampaloh, Lueng Bata, Neusu Aceh, and Baiturrahman, and Aceh Besar, including Montasik, Sibreh, and Ingin Jaya in Aceh Besar.

**Table 1**  
*Informants of the Study*

No.	Name	Age	Status	Address
1	RA	32	Pregnant	Banda Aceh
2	NM	27	Pregnant	Banda Aceh
3	NU	32	Pregnant	Aceh Besar
4	VY	30	Pregnant	Aceh Besar
5	IT	31	Formerly pregnant	Banda Aceh
6	YO	38	Formerly pregnant	Banda Aceh
7	RO	42	Formerly pregnant	Aceh Besar
8	AR	25	Formerly pregnant	Aceh Besar
9	BA	63	Caregiver for pregnant women	Banda Aceh
10	RS	46	Caregiver for pregnant women	Banda Aceh
11	DA	56	Caregiver for pregnant women	Aceh Besar
12	SM	50	Caregiver for pregnant women	Aceh Besar

### Instrument and Procedure

Data collection was conducted through interviews (Briggs, 2007) using a structured question-and-answer format (Bungin, 2013). The questions asked were:

1. What traditional taboos are pregnant women advised to follow in your community?
2. Can you give examples of things that pregnant women are told not to do?
3. How are these taboos usually explained; are there special sayings or expressions used?
4. Can you share any traditional sayings or warnings related to pregnancy?
5. What reasons are usually given for following these taboos?
6. Are spirits, supernatural forces, or unseen dangers mentioned when explaining these taboos?
7. Have you heard any exaggerations about the dangers of breaking a taboo? If yes, can you give an example?
8. Which taboos did you personally follow during your pregnancy (or when caring for a pregnant woman)?
9. Can you share a story where someone followed or broke a pregnancy taboo, and what happened?
10. In your opinion, do young people today still believe and follow these traditional taboos?

These interviews were carried out at times and locations chosen based on the informants' availability and preferences across Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, with each session lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The interviews, recorded via mobile phone, took place in various settings such as the informants' homes, cafes, campuses, libraries, and other locations that were convenient for the informants.

### Data analysis

In analyzing the use of figurative language in Acehnese pregnancy cultural taboos, a qualitative data analysis technique (Dörnyei, 2007) was conducted by the researchers, immersing themselves in the interview transcripts (Gerson, 2020). Through conceptual organization, figurative expressions found in the cultural taboos were categorized based on the types of figurative language: metonymy, repetition, personification, synecdoche, litotes, metaphor, simile, hyperbole, paradox, ellipsis, allusion, oxymoron, irony, apostrophe, imagery, symbolism, satire, and sarcasm (Croff & Cross, 2000; Hamukwaya, 2016; Ibáñez, 2014; Kennedy, 1983; Skalicky & Crossley, 2018; Wang, 2011). The categorized data were then systematically presented in tables, followed by narrative explanations to highlight patterns, provide examples, and support

the interpretation of findings. The results were narrated to facilitate empirical discoveries and advance theoretical insights into the role of figurative language in cultural taboos related to pregnancy.

### FINDINGS

The interviews revealed 34 cultural pregnancy taboos in Acehnese society, covering dietary taboos, life safety, gender, time, place, and activity. These taboos encode ideas related to health, spirituality, and social order. They are associated with behavioral patterns and community norms. Adherence to these rules is linked to how Acehnese people conceptualize pregnancy within both traditional and health frameworks and contributes to the transmission of cultural practices across generations.

Furthermore, the results of this study show that out of 18 figurative language types incorporated into the Acehnese cultural pregnancy taboos, metonymy was the most frequently used (28 instances), followed by hyperbole (17 instances) in the prohibitory expressions. Personification appeared in 7 instances, while simile (3 instances), paradox (1 instance), and synecdoche (1 instance) were the least frequent. One taboo may contain more than one figurative language. A comprehensive summary of the findings is presented in the Appendix.

### The Most Commonly Used Figurative Language in Acehnese Pregnancy Cultural Taboos

Metonymy, which occurs in 28 occurrences across the data, is by far the most commonly used figurative language in Acehnese pregnancy cultural taboos. In these taboos, metonymy usually refers to the use of a particular activity, meal, or tangible item to symbolize more general outcomes associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and the health of the unborn child. For example, in data:

- (1) *Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuèt pajôh boh manok nyang gohlom jeuèt, euntreuk payah meulahérkan* [A pregnant woman should not eat undercooked eggs, or she will experience difficulty during labor]
- (2) *Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuèt kalön ureueng meupok atawa yang meudarah, seubab euntreuk jeut di teumamong* [A pregnant woman should not see accidents or anything bloody, or it may cause spirits to possess them]
- (3) *Ureueng mumèe hanjeut peukhem ureueng juléng, euntreuk lahée aneuk juléng* [A pregnant woman should not laugh at cross-eyed people, as it is believed that the baby might be born cross-eyed]

In (1), "undercooked eggs" refer literally to the food item whose consumption is believed to be

linked with labor difficulties. As a form of metonymy, this specific food item substitutes for a broader cultural concern about the safety and purity of foods during pregnancy. Likewise, in (2), metonymy connects seeing accidents or blood to spiritual possession, and personification gives spirits the ability to possess the woman. In (3), “cross-eyed people” refers literally to individuals with the physical trait of strabismus. In the cultural context, this term is used metonymically to represent the feared transmission of physical traits to the unborn child, linking the pregnant woman’s behavior (laughing at such people) with the possibility of the child being born with the same condition. These taboo examples strengthen the deeply ingrained cultural beliefs by directly connecting mystical and biological events that are said to occur with cultural perceptions surrounding pregnancy. See the Appendix for more examples of metonymy in the Acehnese pregnancy cultural taboos.

Hyperbole, which occurs in 17 taboos, comes next. To highlight the seriousness or dramatic intensity of the repercussions of particular behaviors during pregnancy, hyperbole is employed. For example, in data:

- (4) *Ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet pajôh boh aneuh, euntreuk rheut aneuk* [A pregnant woman should not eat pineapples or she will miscarry.]
- (5) *Ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet palét ija bak taku, euntreuk watèe lahée aneuk, bayi meupalét ngon taloe pusat droe* [A pregnant woman cannot hang a towel around her neck or during her labor her baby will be strangled by his or her own umbilical cord]
- (6) *Ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet pajôh boh keumbeu, eunteuk lahée aneuk keumbeu* [A pregnant woman should not eat conjoined fruit, or she will have twins]

In (4), exaggerations like the assertion that eating pineapples could result in miscarriage or that eating durian could cause stomach burns and miscarriage highlight how figurative language exacerbates anxieties and emphasizes how important it is to follow these cultural taboos. The hyperbole in (5) amplifies the risk, making it sound like hanging a towel could directly cause harm to the baby. In (6), while metonymy links eating conjoined fruit to having twins, hyperbole exaggerates the connection. The amplified character of these taboos emphasizes how they influence pregnant women’s conduct by making disobedience seem more dangerous. See the Appendix for more examples of hyperbole in the Acehnese pregnancy cultural taboos.

Personification is also important, showing up seven times. By giving non-human forces human characteristics, this figurative language frequently

attributes behaviors like harming or following spirits or other supernatural beings. For example, in data:

- (7) *Lintô ureueng ban lheu meulahérkan, hanjeut langsong peutamông makanan dari luwa u dalam rumoh, euntreuk jén ikôt i tamông lam rumoh* [The husband of a woman who has just given birth should not bring food from outside directly into the house, or else the spirits will come in]
- (8) *Ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet teubit watèe magrèb, euntreuk ji seutôt le jén* [A pregnant woman should not go out at sunset or they will be followed by ghosts]
- (9) *Ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet ngieng buleuen, euntreuk aneuk meuraheungr-aheung* [A pregnant woman should not look at the moon or the child will be absent-minded or confused]

In (7), while metonymy links bringing outside food with the arrival of spirits, personification gives spirits human-like agency in entering the house. Similarly, in (8), the embodiment of fear and the paranormal that emphasizes the spiritual aspect of these taboos is the warning given to pregnant women that if they leave the house at sunset, they might be pursued by ghosts. Here, personification suggests ghosts follow the woman, and hyperbole exaggerates the effect of going out at sunset. Furthermore, in (9), metonymy connects the act of looking at the moon with confusion in the child, and personification gives the moon influence over the child’s mind. By linking the physical well-being of the mother and child to unseen, potent forces, this symbolic usage lends a dimension of mysticism to the customs. See the Appendix for more examples of personifications in the Acehnese pregnancy cultural taboos.

#### **The least used figurative language in Acehnese pregnancy cultural taboos**

On the other end of the spectrum, the least frequently employed figurative languages are simile, paradox, and synecdoche. These figures of speech appear less often in the cultural taboos, possibly due to their more abstract or less direct nature in conveying traditional beliefs. Despite their rarity, when used, they add depth and complexity to how cultural taboos are expressed.

Simile appears in only three cases, using comparisons to highlight similarities between different elements. For example, the data are:

- (10) *Linto ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet eu bue, euntreuk di turôt bak aneuk* [The husband of a pregnant woman should not stare at monkeys, or their child will resemble them]
- (11) *Ureueng mumèe h’an jeuet kheun keu gop meuhi binatang, euntreuk aneuk nyang lahée meuhi binatang nyan* [A pregnant

woman is not allowed to call others by the name of a certain animal, or the child will be born resembling that animal]

- (12) *Ureueng mumèe ngon lintô h'an jeuèt seunang that meu'ën ngon binatang, euntreuk aneuk jih meuhi* [A pregnant woman and her husband should not be too affectionate with animals, as their children may resemble them]

In (10), the taboo highlights how metonymy connects seeing monkeys with a physical resemblance to the child, while simile further emphasizes this link by comparing the child's appearance to the monkeys. Similarly, in (11), metonymy ties calling someone by an animal name to the child resembling that animal, and simile once again reinforces this connection by directly comparing the child's appearance and the animal. Finally, in (12), metonymy suggests that being fond of certain animals will lead to the child resembling that animal, with simile once more drawing a clear comparison between the child and the animal. This relatively rare use of simile serves to evoke a clear, visual connection between the attributes of animals and humans, suggesting that certain physical traits could be passed on as a result of cultural taboos.

Paradox is found in just one taboo, which presents a self-contradictory situation. For example:

- (13) *Ureueng mumèe lheuëh meulahérkan h'an jeuèt teubit u luwa rhôh goh lom peuet plôh peuet uroe, meunyoe di kalôn lé ureueng agam laén, euntreuk désya* [A pregnant woman cannot go out of her house before her forty-four days are over, or if other men see her, she will sin.]

In (13), the paradox presents a belief that a woman's appearance outside the home within forty-four days postpartum is linked to sin, even though the action itself may not be inherently harmful or logical. Interviews with local informants confirm that visibility of the mother in public during this time is perceived as spiritually risky and socially inappropriate. This creates a subtle tension between societal expectations and natural behavior, highlighting the complex role of cultural practices, even when they may appear contradictory or challenging to justify in a contemporary context.

Synecdoche, the use of a part to represent a whole, is similarly rare, appearing only in one instance. For example:

- (14) *Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuèt pajôh teubèe, euntreuk watèe meulahérkan darah jih h'an di piyôh-piyôh* [A pregnant woman should not eat sugar cane or it will be difficult to stop the blood during labor]

In the case of (14), while metonymy links eating sugar cane to labor complications,

synecdoche uses "blood" to represent a broader medical issue during childbirth. This rare use of synecdoche highlights the potency of individual elements within the taboo system, although it does not occur frequently across the data.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal the profound role figurative language plays in conveying Acehese pregnancy cultural taboos. They reveal that metonymy and hyperbole are the most prevalent forms, indicating a tendency to use indirect and exaggerated expressions to convey cultural warnings and values. The presence of other forms, such as personification, simile, paradox, and synecdoche, though less frequent, demonstrates the richness and variety of figurative strategies employed. These patterns illustrate how figurative language functions as a communicative tool to reinforce societal norms, beliefs, and expectations surrounding pregnancy in Acehese culture.

Moreover, the prevalence of metonymy and hyperbole in these taboos reinforces the interconnection between the physical and supernatural territories that shape pregnancy-related behaviors (Khairullina et al., 2020; Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014). Through metonymy, specific actions or food items are not just connected to immediate consequences but are used as symbols of broader health, safety, and spiritual well-being. For example, certain foods, when consumed during pregnancy, are metaphorically tied to dire outcomes, reflecting the Acehese community's belief in the power of both physical and spiritual forces. This aligns with the findings of Yusuf and Yusuf (2014) and Manan (2021), who highlight how cultural taboos serve not only to protect but also to maintain a delicate balance between the material and spiritual worlds.

Hyperbole, as a rhetorical device, amplifies the significance of these taboos, exaggerating the consequences of violating them. This exaggeration serves to emphasize the seriousness with which the community views these taboos, further reinforcing the notion that failure to comply could lead to severe, even fatal, outcomes for the mother and child. This approach is consistent with Hong's (2024) study on the cognitive roots of taboos, where figurative language plays a central role in sustaining these restrictions and shaping societal attitudes toward pregnancy.

In contrast, the personification of spirits and non-human forces in Acehese pregnancy taboos introduces an element of mysticism and spiritual depth. By attributing human-like qualities to forces such as ghosts or spirits, these taboos emphasize that pregnancy and childbirth are not solely biological processes, but deeply spiritual ones as well (Yusuf et al., 2022). This reinforces the belief that the practices surrounding pregnancy are not just

precautionary measures for health but are rooted in the spiritual dimension of culture (Buşu, 2023; Khairullina et al., 2020). Such practices ensure the spiritual protection of both mother and child, signaling a holistic approach to health that transcends the physical.

The lesser use of simile, paradox, and synecdoche in Acehese pregnancy taboos suggests that these figurative forms are more reserved for specific, localized meanings that hold particular cultural relevance. Simile, which compares two distinct entities using "like" or "as", serves to highlight specific traits, such as the resemblance between animals and pregnant women, yet it is less dominant than metonymy and hyperbole. This use of figurative language is indicative of the deeply contextual nature of Acehese cultural practices. Similarly, paradox, which presents seemingly contradictory ideas, challenges conventional logic, stressing the value of tradition over rationality, a recurring theme in Acehese cultural beliefs (Yusuf & Yusuf, 2014). Synecdoche, while rare, underlines the power of individual elements (such as food) in shaping life events, symbolizing the larger cultural importance of these taboos.

The figurative language used in Acehese pregnancy cultural taboos thus provides crucial understandings into the community's cultural and spiritual values. It highlights how language, as a vehicle for cultural transmission, links the physical and spiritual worlds, guiding behavior and shaping social norms. This finding supports previous studies that emphasize the role of figurative language in understanding and transmitting cultural taboos (Adebileje, 2012; Maggiulli et al., 2022) and demonstrates how Acehese society employs language to control individual behavior during pregnancy. Eventually, the complex use of metaphor, hyperbole, and other figurative languages reflects a sophisticated system of beliefs where language, culture, and spiritual traditions are inseparably intertwined, guiding not only actions but also shaping the worldview of the Acehese people.

These findings also affirm the arguments in which the role of oral traditions and cultural taboos was discussed as a way of passing down moral and health-related guidance. As observed in Aziz et al. (2020) and Ramli et al. (2024), the continued transmission of these taboos through figurative language ensures the preservation of cultural wisdom, providing future generations with the tools to navigate both the physical and spiritual aspects of pregnancy.

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed that cultural taboos related to pregnancy in Acehese society are deeply connected with figurative language, reflecting the community's beliefs, values, and worldview. Among the 34

taboos identified, metonymy was the most frequently used figurative language, followed by hyperbole and personification. These linguistic expressions function not only to caution and guide pregnant women but also to reinforce societal norms and spiritual beliefs. The use of figurative language in these taboos highlights the Acehese people's approach to integrating cultural, mystical, and practical concerns about pregnancy and childbirth into a cohesive system of knowledge transmission.

Moreover, the study illustrates the role of figurative language in encoding symbolic meanings that link physical actions and objects to perceived outcomes during pregnancy. The frequent use of metonymy emphasizes tangible connections between actions and their consequences, while hyperbole intensifies the sense of urgency and risk associated with disregarding taboos. Simile, paradox, and synecdoche, though used less frequently, enrich the expressive depth of these taboos. This linguistic phenomenon shows the significance of cultural wisdom in shaping societal attitudes toward pregnancy, safeguarding maternal and infant well-being, and preserving Acehese heritage across generations.

This study is limited by its small sample size and focus on Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar, which may not capture broader regional variations. Expanding the sample size and geographic coverage in future research could reveal diverse cultural taboos and figurative language use. While qualitative interviews were employed, incorporating ethnographic or participatory methods could uncover additional insights. Comparative studies with other cultures and perspectives from healthcare professionals could also enhance understanding and highlight the universality or uniqueness of these practices.

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## APPENDIX

### The Types of Figurative Languages Used in the Acehnese Cultural Pregnancy Prohibitions

No.	Acehnese Cultural Prohibition Data	Figurative Language Used	Reasoning
1	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet jep ie èh, euntreuk bayi jih rayeuk</i> [A pregnant woman should not drink ice water, or the baby will grow too large]	Hyperbole, Metonymy	Hyperbole exaggerates the impact of drinking ice water, suggesting a larger baby, while metonymy connects the action (drinking ice water) to the result (baby's size).
2	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh teubèe, euntreuk watèe meulahérkan darah jih h'an di piyôh-piyôh</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat sugar cane, or it will be difficult to stop the bleeding during labor]	Metonymy, Synecdoche	Metonymy connects eating sugar cane to labor complications, while synecdoche uses "blood" to symbolize broader medical issues in childbirth.
3	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh boh manok nyang gohlom jeuet, euntreuk payah meulahérkan</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat undercooked eggs or she will experience difficulty during labor]	Metonymy	Metonymy connects the consumption of undercooked eggs with labor difficulties, implying that eating them leads to this outcome.
4	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh boh aneuh, euntreuk rheut aneuk</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat pineapples, or she will miscarry]	Metonymy, Hyperbole	Metonymy links eating pineapples to miscarriage, and hyperbole amplifies the severity of the consequences.
5	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh boh drien, euntreuk suum pruet ngon rheut aneuk</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat durian, or her stomach will burn and she will miscarry]	Hyperbole, Metonymy	Hyperbole exaggerates the intensity of discomfort (stomach burning), while metonymy links durian consumption to miscarriage.
6	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh tapé, euntreuk suum pruet ngon rheut aneuk</i> [A pregnant woman cannot eat tapé (a traditional fermented preparation of rice) or her stomach will become hot and cause a miscarriage]	Metonymy, Hyperbole	Metonymy associates eating tapé with miscarriage, and hyperbole emphasizes the severity of the physical reaction (hot stomach).
7	<i>Ureueng ban meulahérkan, hanjeut pajôh yang keueng-keueng, euntreuk bayi jeut cirét</i> [A woman who has just given birth should not eat spicy food or the baby will have diarrhea]	Hyperbole	Hyperbole exaggerates the effect of eating spicy food, implying that it directly causes the baby to suffer from diarrhea.
8	<i>Ureueng ban meulahérkan, hanjeut pajôh boh manok ngon boh pisang seubab jeut keu gatai atawa meunano</i> [A woman who has just given birth should not eat chicken eggs and bananas, or her skin will become itchy or develop sores]	Hyperbole, Metonymy	Hyperbole overstates the effect of these foods, while metonymy ties eating them to skin issues.
9	<i>Ureueng ban meulahérkan, h'an jeuet le pajôh bu, euntreuk rayeuk pruet</i> [A woman who has just given birth is forbidden to eat large portions of rice, or her stomach will become large]	Hyperbole, Metonymy	Hyperbole exaggerates the consequences of eating large portions, and metonymy links eating rice to body changes.
10	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet palét ija bak taku, euntreuk watèe lahée aneuk, bayi meupalét ngon taloe pusat droe</i> [A pregnant woman cannot hang a towel around her neck, or during her labor, her baby will be strangled by the umbilical cord]	Hyperbole	Hyperbole amplifies the risk, making it sound like hanging a towel could directly cause harm to the baby.
11	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet duek bak reunyeun, euntreuk payah meulahérkan</i> [A pregnant woman cannot sit on the stairs, or she will experience difficulty during labor]	Metonymy	Metonymy links the act of sitting on stairs to complications during labor.
12	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet gróp parék, euntreuk rheut aneuk</i> [A pregnant	Metonymy	Metonymy connects the simple act of stepping over a ditch with the drastic outcome of

	woman is prohibited from stepping over a ditch, or she will have a miscarriage]		miscarriage.
13	<i>Lintô ureueng ban lheu meulahérkan, hanjeut langsung peutamöng makanan dari luwa u dalam rumoh, euntreuk jén ikôt i tamöng lam rumoh</i> [The husband of a woman who has just given birth should not bring food from outside directly into the house, or it may invite spirits inside]	Metonymy, Personification	Metonymy links bringing outside food with the arrival of spirits, and personification gives spirits human-like agency in entering the house.
14	<i>Linto ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet eu bue, euntreuk di turôt bak anueuk</i> [The husband of a pregnant woman should not stare at monkeys, or their child will resemble them]	Metonymy, Simile	Metonymy links the act of staring at monkeys with a physical resemblance to the child, while simile compares the child's appearance to the monkeys.
15	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet manoe watee magrèb, euntreuk troh jén</i> [A pregnant woman should not bathe at maghrib, or it will invite ghosts]	Personification	Personification gives ghosts human-like behavior by suggesting they come in response to the bath at a specific time.
16	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet teubit watèe magrèb, entreuk ji seutôt le jén</i> [A pregnant woman should not go out at sunset, or she will be followed by ghosts]	Personification, Hyperbole	Personification suggests ghosts follow the woman, and hyperbole exaggerates the effect of going out at sunset.
17	<i>Ureueng mumèe lheu meulahérkan h'an jeuet teubit u luwa rhôh goh lom peuet plôh peuet uroe, meunyoe di kalôn lé ureueng agam laén euntreuk désya</i> [A woman who has just given birth cannot leave the house before her forty-four days are over; if other men see her, she will sin]	Paradox	Paradox presents a situation where the woman's mere appearance leads to sin, despite not necessarily being harmful or logical.
18	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet jak jiôh-jiôh, euntreuk di seutôt le jén</i> [A pregnant woman should not travel far, or she will be followed by ghosts]	Personification	Personification gives ghosts human-like qualities, suggesting they follow the woman during travel.
19	<i>Ureueng ban-ban mumèe h'an jeuet duek-duek mantong 'oh mumèe buleuen keu tujôh, euntreuk payah melahérkan</i> [A pregnant woman should not remain idle during the seventh month of pregnancy, or she will experience difficulty during labor]	Metonymy	Metonymy links the act of idle with labor complications.
20	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet éh bak alheueh, euntreuk urie jih meukeumat atawa h'antém di teubit watèe meulahérkan</i> [A pregnant woman should not sleep on the floor, or the baby's placenta will be difficult to detach or may not come out during labor]	Hyperbole, Metonymy	Hyperbole exaggerates the consequences of sleeping on the floor, while metonymy connects the act to the placenta's removal.
21	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet kalôn ureueng meupok atawa yang meudarah, seubab euntreuk jeut di teumamong</i> [A pregnant woman should not witness accidents or see anything bloody, or it may cause spirits to possess her]	Metonymy, Personification	Metonymy connects seeing accidents or blood to spiritual possession, and personification gives spirits the ability to possess the woman.
22	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet kalôn filem atau tontonan yang hana göt, euntreuk jeut di turôt bak aneuk</i> [A pregnant woman should not watch inappropriate movies or shows, or undesirable traits may be passed on to the child]	Metonymy	Metonymy links watching bad content to undesirable traits in the child.
23	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh breuh meuntah, euntreuk ulée bayi jih meukrak</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat	Hyperbole, Metonymy	Hyperbole exaggerates the effect of eating raw rice, and metonymy links this action to the baby's appearance.

	uncooked rice, or the baby's scalp will develop crusts.]		
24	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh krak bu, euntreuk kulèt aneuk nyan kutô</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat rice crust, or the baby's skin will become blemished]	Metonymy	Metonymy links the act of eating rice crust to a direct consequence on the baby's skin.
25	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet pajôh boh keumbeu, euntreuk lahée aneuk keumbeu</i> [A pregnant woman should not eat conjoined fruit, or she will give birth to twins]	Metonymy, Hyperbole	Metonymy links eating conjoined fruit to having twins, and hyperbole exaggerates the connection.
26	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet dong di keu pintô, euntreuk payah lahée</i> [A pregnant woman should not stand in front of the door, or she will experience difficulty during labor]	Metonymy	Metonymy connects standing in front of a door with complications during labor.
27	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet duek ateueh batèe, euntreuk brat bak meulahérkan</i> [A pregnant woman should not sit on stones, or she will experience difficulty during labor]	Metonymy	Metonymy associates sitting on stones with labor difficulties.
28	<i>Ureueng ban-ban mumèe h'an jeuet phok u ngon baci, euntreuk aneuk nyang lahée sumbéng</i> [A woman who has just become pregnant should not split coconuts with a machete or cleaver, or the child born may have a cleft lip]	Metonymy	Metonymy links the action of splitting coconuts with birth defects in the child.
29	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet duek ateueh alheuh, payah na lapèk, euntreuk watée meulahérkan meu ie badan jih</i> [A pregnant woman should not sit on the floor without a mat, or she will release excessive fluid during labor]	Hyperbole	Hyperbole exaggerates the effect of sitting on the floor without a mat, implying a direct consequence of fluid release.
30	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet kheun keu gop meuhi binatang, euntreuk aneuk nyang lahée meuhi binatang nyan</i> [A pregnant woman should not call other people by animal names, or the baby born will resemble that animal]	Metonymy, Simile	Metonymy connects calling someone by an animal name to a child resembling that animal, and simile compares the child's appearance to the animal.
31	<i>Watèe mumèe, ureueng inong ngon lintô h'an jeuet poh binatang, euntreuk aneuk nyang lahée cacat</i> [A husband and wife should not kill animals during the wife's pregnancy, or the baby will be born deformed]	Metonymy	Metonymy links killing animals to the birth of a deformed child.
32	<i>Ureueng mumèe h'an jeuet ngieng buleuen, euntreuk aneuk meuraheung-raheung</i> [A pregnant woman should not look at the moon, or the child will be absent-minded or confused]	Metonymy, Personification	Metonymy connects the act of looking at the moon with confusion in the child, and personification gives the moon influence over the child's mind.
33	<i>Ureueng mumèe hanjeut peukhem ureueng juléng, euntreuk lahée aneuk juléng</i> [A pregnant woman should not laugh at cross-eyed people, as it is believed that the baby might be born cross-eyed]	Metonymy	Metonymy links laughing at cross-eyed people to the physical trait being passed on to the child.
34	<i>Ureueng mumèe ngon lintô h'an jeuet seunang that meu'èn ngon binatang, euntreuk aneuk jih meuhi</i> [A pregnant woman and her husband should not be too affectionate with animals, as their children may resemble them]	Metonymy, Simile	Metonymy connects being happy with animals to resembling them, while simile makes the comparison between the child and the animal.