

## “Dissecting the Poisoned Honey”: A Feminist Critique of Sexism in Pakistani Colloquial Jokes

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### Abstract

This study provides a feminist critique of gender-related Facebook humor in Pakistan. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis has been used to provide the theoretical framework to the research because it aims at critiquing discourses which sustain patriarchal social order and privilege men over women by associating them with powerful social position and making women powerless. The popularity of the jokes is set as the criterion for the selection of jokes. Content analysis is used to develop thematic categories of the selected Facebook jokes on the basis of targeted characters, traits, and hobbies associated with them. The popularity of the jokes was determined on the basis of likes, shares and smileys. The sample was collected from the timelines of 4812 Facebook friends in a period of 6 months. As many as 200 jokes were shortlisted containing gendered humor and were included in the discussion. However, there were trivial, absence and / or rephrased jokes too that were discarded. Further, the collection was in three languages, English, Urdu and Punjabi. The researchers thematically transcribed them in English and the screenshots / original versions were appended as figures in the end. The study reveals that women are mocked at more than men. A large number of stereotypical traits are associated with women and they are ridiculed because of them. Men are also depicted and presented stereotypically but much less in frequency than women. The study recommends awareness of gender bias and discrimination in popular Facebook jokes and sets it a target of the study.

**Keywords:** Gender, Facebook, jokes, attitude, behavior

### 1. Introduction

In the form of the Internet, humour has found a major source for its construction and circulation generally and humor about femininity and masculinity particularly (Shifman, 2007). As the critical examination of the jokes allows us to have a glance at rampant stereotypes, ideologies, and cultural codes, the analysis of hilarity assists us to develop a viewpoint about present-day stereotypes and perceptions of tremendously

thrilling domains such as sexuality and gender (Billig, 2005). Reading gender humor online and circulating it by means of Facebook has attracted internet users, and it offers a huge opportunity for academic research.

To ridicule implies to “make fun bitter in taste for the one who is targeted as it degrades his respect and devalues his self-esteem” (Wooten, 2006, p. 188). Humor contains the aspect of healthy comedy and casts positive effects but ridicule has been differentiated from simple mirth as “derisive joking” and “one type of belittling humor” (Janes & Olson, 2000, p. 474). Studies disclose many socio-psychological facets of humor. Above all, considerable are the several interpersonal and group roles of humor such as “imposing social norms and exercising social control” with reference to gender (Martin, 2007, p. 150).

Ridicule is mostly believed as an informal tool while discussing its social control (Chriss, 2007), comparing it with other RSA (Repressive State Apparatus) tools as police, governmental agencies, and law enforcement activities. This informal face has mostly presented ridicule as an undervalued or demoted variety. This does not mean that ridicule cannot perform untraditional functions vis-à-vis hegemonic gender norms. It is a reality that festive outlooks towards gender humor inspire, or are supported in thought-provoking feminist research on gender-based humour (Bing & Heller, 2003; Bing, 2004; Crawford, 2003).

The American humorist E. B. White famously joked, “Analyzing humor is like dissecting a frog. Few people are interested and the frog dies of it” (quoted in Gulas & Weinberger, 2006, p. 139). It is a fact that the critique can be bitter but still necessary if a certain humorous text metes out harm, for instance, by targeting a certain group. So, holding humor in serious perspective demonstrates itself in the act of critique. Gender-based ridicule is critiqued to depict and develop alteration in the societal setup underlying such humor, and is deliberated to harmonize other serious pro-gender-equality activities. The purpose, however, is not to promote a social setup without humor but one in which humor will serve more constructive and unbiased roles.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

- What are the traits and habits associated with men and women in Facebook humor?
- How does Facebook humor treat gender differences and gender inequalities?

## 2. Literature Review

Many scholars, within gender studies literature, consider humor and ridicule as teasing and penalizing agents that facilitate perpetuating hegemonic gender order. One division often addressed by these “hegemonic tools” is the male who does not execute accepted maleness. Kahn (2009) comments that such men mostly “suffer from humiliation and harassment” and “name-calling” (p. 4). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) focus on the self-regulating behavior which is an outcome of gendered ridiculing femininity and masculinity in different perspectives. Ridicule is hardly ever sanctioned as a social repressive apparatus while discussing tools of social agents to control deviance from leading gender norms.

Schippers (2007) highlights the role of “stigma” and “social sanctions,” in terms of constituting the standard content of both femininities and masculinities. For him, the standard content means the characteristics of both genders such as “men [being] authoritative and physically strong and women [being] compliant and physically vulnerable” (p. 90).

Femininity and masculinity are innately linked with each other, although there is a contrast in their meaning (Connell, 2005, p. 43). West and Zimmerman (1987) hold social agents accountable for attitudes and reactions while “doing gender,” in diversified ways (p. 135). They ascertain, “To ‘do’ gender is not necessary to always live up to normative notions of femininity or masculinity; it is to engage in behavior at the risk of gender assessment” (p. 136). Ridicule threatens to penalize any breach of traditional feminine and masculine norms. In conventional settings, gender-based humor points at women, married men, homosexuals, and effeminate men– the castigatory product can happen through the disparagement of certain gender-deviations.

Such examples insist on hegemonic gender norms to be understood or gotten, and tend to protect stereotypical norms. Like subjects in Janes and Olson (2000) who regulated and controlled their attitudes upon observing other people being derided on videos, the viewers of the examples of humor are prone to undergo “jeer pressure” and thus supervise and hold back their gender particular attitude, fearing similar reprimand through laughter-as-punishment. McCann, Plummer and Minichiello (2010) while addressing a meticulous case of homophobic jester among a community of males and the castigatory outcomes of such humor opine, “there is no need to use ‘poofster-bashing’ to police peers’ behavior: the threat of being laughed at or aligned with the poofsters was sufficient to keep other men at a distance from the gay soldiers” (p. 515). As humor carries the disciplinary potential, it is suitable to find out the corrective and self-

regulatory role of humor based on gender within a society's conventional humor. It is expected that such humor will mirror the customary concept of gender.

Abedinifard (2016) notifies the corrective influence of ridicule, as a form or aspect of humour, vis-à-vis gender norms in Anglo-American mainstream gender humor. He amalgamates social psychologist Michael Billig's theory of ridicule as a universal reinforcer of the social order, along with the concept of gender order as sketched in Raewyn Connell's gender hierarchy model. The discussion facilitates a revisiting of mainstream gender humor, particularly when it sets out ridicule to aim non-hegemonic gendered practices, subjectivities and performances. Such commonplace humor tackles and safeguards the basic essentials of gender order of a society.

El-Nasher and Nayef (2014) focus on highlighting the stereotypical formats of the depiction of women in sexist internet jokes in Egyptian society. The paper explains how the language is utilized and maneuvered to serve upholding the status quo of gender inequality and masculine hegemony in the Egyptian society. It deals with four themes: women in the public and private spheres; women and language; women as sex objects and lastly the image drawn by the comparison of Egyptian women with non-Egyptian women. By employing van Dijk's (2003) strategies of ideological discourse, the work reveals that there has been a general explicit or implicit separation of the world in all the themes. Always, there were always two descriptions presented: A constructive picture of the knowledgeable, superior, rational men, and an unconstructive picture of the ignorant, talkative women who are not fit for the public sphere.

Laineste (2014) carries out a study of female related jokes in Estonian folklore ranging from the 1960s to 2010. The joke telling is considered as male practice primarily. This practice has deeply affected the stereotypes of gender in jokes and aggravated their intensity and misogynistic practices. The work explains the background, the features of the subjects (e.g., main role), and also the change thereof during the time of socialism and post-socialism. The inclinations in putting the women either in private environs (home) or in the unrestricted (outdoor) places bring common beliefs into light that deal with appropriate background for a woman in addition to people accompanying woman in those particular locations. The portrayal of gender roles is described in their societal perspective.

Another analysis is drawn by Shifman and Lemish (2014) regarding popular humor about gender on internet. The focus is on the points in which such kind of humor engages feminist, post-feminist and sexist ideologies. An amount of 150 exceedingly popular visual and verbal humorous posts is collected from eight different English based websites. The analysis revealed that both women and men although are ridiculed to the

same extent, the gender manifestation of traditional stereotypical ideology still dominantly exists, together with the materialization of new post-feminist depictions. The post-feminist, essentialist thesis of gender differences is discovered to be foremost, whereas feminist humor regarding gender discrimination is secondary. The study contextualizes these outcomes and discusses that a black lash version of post feminism has been communicated. Lastly, the findings are argued in context with elevated hopes for the Internet to be indulged in empowerment of women and the transition of gender-based relations.

Bemiller and Schneider (2010) have analyzed 153 jokes and declared them to be gender-biased. They applied ‘doing gender’ as theoretical perspective and perpetuated that gender-biased jokes are tools which men utilize as a means of gender performance as well as a tool that ensures the subjugation of females. They have come to the conclusion that gender-biased humor is presented under the cloak of benign amusement and entertainment, women folk must be conscious about their role in perpetuating these stereotypes by adding a laugh from their own side and then sharing it with their gender fellows. As Quinn (2000) has proposed that when a joke is left unchallenged it results in perpetuating in female subjugation and subordination.

Two main classes of jokes about women have been analyzed by Schafer (2001)—as avengers and as whores—with reference to unconscious and conscious intrapsychic and intergender clashes. The special focus is given to interrelated matters of supremacy, self-esteem, and mutual exploitation. The effectiveness of such kind of jokes is linked with the Ernst Kris’ theory of the comic that states that jokes let a short-term remastering of partly mastered worries. Such anxieties, in this framework, are relevant particularly to relations between the sexes and gender identity. The critical examination of the set of jokes, although mainly concentrated on the stature of females as avengers and whores, frequently and not surprisingly fetch in the notions of the power of women and men overstated, unconscious alarms of its destructive and controlling latent.

Bennett (2016) investigates the features of jokes based on gendered class about “chavs” and explains “the critical problem of cynical irony” (p. 43). Bennett carries out the study regarding the “ideological significance of cynical or ‘blank’ irony”, and suggests that mocking irony has ideological implication in postmodern times. Pérez and Greene (2016) discuss the rhetoric of humour in terms of connotation of rape related jokes. They unpack the one particular instance of a rape joke and argue that “[h]umor controversies can simultaneously reveal and obscure relations of power as well as the rhetorical/political nature of jokes” (p. 34).

The critical review that is given above points out that references in the theoretical literature to the punitive function of gendered derision are made merely in passing, further, where such depths are found in the empirical research, they stay restricted to specific cases.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

The study is guided by Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), which, according to Lazar (2005) focus how gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in people’s social and personal identities in texts and talk. The central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order – relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group, and disadvantage, exclude, and disempower women as a social group. Gender has been accomplished through active, iterative and ongoing practices through discourse (Lazar, 2004; West, Lazar, & Kramarae, 1997).

In CDA, where there is an understanding of social practices as reflected in and constituted by discourse (Fairclough, 1992), a feminist perspective reminds that many social practices, far from being neutral, are in fact gendered in some way.

## **3. Methods**

The data generated for the study is organized and analyzed through the technique of content analysis on the ground that it is useful in providing an overview of a new phenomenon, such as gender-related Facebook humor. However, as described below, the characteristics of Facebook and the nature of humorous texts pose a double challenge to content analysis of online humor. Accordingly, we designed sampling and coding strategies that address these challenges.

### **3.1 Sampling**

Sampling the Facebook is the main challenge for researchers using web-based content analysis, as the enormous size and mutability of the Internet complicate the development of scientifically random samples (McMillan, 2000). Therefore, it was decided not to generate a random sample of Facebook jokes about gender, but rather to sample highly popular jokes. Since humor reflects social perceptions, it was assumed that popular comic texts might provide us with more direct and concise access to valuable data about prevalent perceptions of gender. Indeed, studying highly popular media

content has been widely used in research about ‘old media’ such as television or cinema (Worth, Cin, & Sargent, 2006).

The popularity of the jokes was determined on the basis of likes, shares and smileys. The sample was collected from the timelines of Facebook friends and it took about 6 months to search the timelines of 4812 Facebook friends of the researchers. As many as 200 jokes were shortlisted containing gendered humor and were included in the discussion. However, there were trivial, absence and / or rephrased jokes too that were discarded. Further, the collection was in three languages, English, Urdu and Punjabi. The researchers thematically transcribed them in English and the screenshots / original versions were appended as figures in the end.

### 3.2 Coding scheme and definitions

Our codebook draws on two sources: works on gender stereotyping and gender representation in other media (Gallager, 2006); and scholarship on the social dynamics of humor (Gruner, 1997). Surprisingly, we could not find content-analysis based studies of gender jokes. Thus, this study appears to be the first attempt to develop a comprehensive codebook for studying contemporary humor on gender. The codebook included variables, each one related to our research questions: 1) Target of mockery – The scorned person/group ridiculed or portrayed as stupid or in some manner flawed; 2) Theme – The dominance of a gender theme; 3) Habits/hobbies – Activities or interests outside one's regular occupation and engaged in primarily for pleasure; 4) Traits – Personality and behavioral traits.

### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

Based on the codebook, the data contained reference to life events and experiences of men and women. The apparent purpose would be to please and to make others laugh but the sample had ample material to determine how gender was perceived, reinforced and perpetuated. For instance, cartoon characters pretending to be lovers goes on: *Girl: Love me from morning till evening and from evening till morning. Boy: O selfish! When will I sleep then?* (figure 1). Here, the girl is shown as an impatient beloved who loves to be admired all the time while the boy is answering her in a ridiculing tone by calling her with a demeaning title *kameeni* that also corresponds with stupid or ignorant in the context. Besides, the female character is shown indifferent to other worldly affairs where men are supposed to be engaged. It also fits into a gender-segregated social structure where men earn and women wait for them at home. While examining the pattern of ridiculing women, she is shown self-centered and preoccupied with herself. At one place, a figure displays a dialogue as follows, *Wife to her husband: What do you like more about me, my beauty or my intelligence? Husband: I like your*

*habit of kidding more.* The wife is depicted as a person who gets satisfaction in her applause and appreciation. She is portrayed as a victim of self-deception. She has neither beauty nor intelligence. Husband is performing the role of an eye-opener by clearing her misconception and overestimation of herself by ridiculing her (figure 2).

Ridicule of women's preoccupation with her appearance does not stop here. An estimate of their hard work is given in a statement, *Girls are very hard working. You can estimate it from the fact that only 12 out of 100 are naturally beautiful while the rest are by their hard work.* Girls' preference for their appearance implies their ignorance of inner beauty and character (Figure 3). These attributes are the outcome of lack of intelligence and irrationality in the behavior of women which is reflected in a dialogue during a fight between a husband and a wife, *Husband: Begum we should solve this issue by using our minds not by fighting. Wife: Yes. Yes. So that you can win* (Figure 4). This post implies that women are senseless, irrational fighters who are unable to use their minds to solve even some domestic issue. *Wife: Suppose if I understand and follow whatever you say? Husband (falling while laughing). Wife: What happened? Husband: I am unable to suppose even.* This post shows that wives do not understand and follow what their husbands say and want. They are stubborn creatures and husbands are not even able to imagine that their wives would follow and understand whatever they say (Figure 5). Women's lack of appreciating the situation is also reflected when she drives the wrong way and when warned by her husband, she assumes herself to be on the right side while all the rest driving the wrong way (Figure 6).

An interestingly funny image (figure 7) shared on Facebook shows two women characters. One of them is at a weight machine and astonished to see the high weight indication while the other woman, who is fat, is shown as the cause of this increased weight. Many stereotypical traits of women are portrayed in this ridiculous image. Their concern for physical beauty and fitness and their jealous and avenging natures are also presented here. The hate for the persons of the same gender is also prevalent as a woman cannot bear another woman who is smarter and more beautiful. She will do anything to distort her attributes by snatching her pride.

In another instance, a woman is shown overtly stupid when she asserts herself and bombards her husband. The translated version of figure 8 reveals, *after thundering on her husband for 15 minutes the wife uttered. "I want to finish this quarrel but your silent hooliganism has been making the home a hell"*. Here, the wife has been portrayed as a quarreling and nagging person who is even not ready to take responsibility for the bad atmosphere of the house created by her own temperament. Further, she is blaming her husband for being quiet during her verbal assault. On the other hand, husband is portrayed as indifferently silent person who has nothing to say even in his defense. The

quarrelsome nature of women is associated with their loquacious nature in three images (figure 9, 10 & 11) declaring, *Silence is a jewel of a woman but she wears it only when she is asleep*. Figure 10 and 11 are male and female birds that reinforce the statement. Silence is an attribute which is traditionally considered valuable for both men and women. This satirical statement has humorously associated silence as a jewelry item for females. Additionally, it is asserted that women keep talking all the time when they are awake and they don't bother to wear this jewel. They are silent only when they are enjoying sound sleep. In the other picture, men and women are compared with two flocks of sparrows where women are portrayed as shouting and men as reverent and silent. In another humorous post, it is asserted that if a woman is silent one should check her pulse to see if she is alive. Yet another post reads: *'In which month women speak less?'* and the answer is *'February'*. It means women speak less only in a month which has lesser number of days.

The talkative nature and quarrelsome approach to life make women poisonous that is a theme of a joke (figure 12) wherein a man witnesses a snake sitting beside his wife and says, *Bite her... bite her* to which the snake replies, *What bite? I have come here to get easyload of poison from her*. Here, easyload implies ready feeding taken from feeding money to a cellular phone from a company's outlet. She is dragged to the extent of Satan's sister (figure 13) where a furious wife during a fight addresses her husband and says, *Get lost, it would have been better if I had married Satan instead of marrying you* and the instant reply she gets is, *God forbid! Can sister and brother get married?* As the country has witnessed terrorism and explosions after 9/11, people are familiar to the use of war terms in jokes. Women are also associated with explosive devices and the Taliban. In figure 14, when a police inspector inquires, *A news is received that there is explosive material at your home*, the man admits but says, *Sir the news is correct but she has gone to her mother's house at present*. Thus, the wife is compared to some destructive material or weapon like a bomb. In another joke (figure 15), a character Pappu declares, *Wives are also like Taaliban*. When asked to justify, he says, *Neither an operation can be done against them nor can be negotiations*. In a sense, wives are compared to terrorists and unmanageable creatures. No solution can work with them.

Such associations allow women to be marked for violence in their behavior. In a conversation between a police and lady (figure 16) reads, *Police: Lady, you are very brave. You have beaten this dacoit to death. Woman (trembling): I did not know it's a dacoit, I thought my husband has come home late*. This has a visible-effects on the mindset of husbands and they take due care to avoid their anger. For instance, when a doctor warns (figure 17), *Some old malady is destroying your health and peace*. The patient warns, *Speak in a low tone. She is sitting outside*. Here, in another way, a wife is compared to an old and incurable disease which is the cause of unrest and unhealthy life.

In another episode (figure 18), a patient informs, *I am suffering from a strange disease. I cannot listen to whatever my wife speaks* to which the doctor replies, *It is not a disease. It's a blessing of God on you.* As the doctor and patient both are males, they share the same experience of have to bear the talkative nature of wives so the doctor has attributed his inability to listen to wife as a blessing. In the other post, it is said that women misunderstand that they are punishing their husbands while being silent and not talking to them. It is suggested in many posts that men are unhappy with their married lives that they want to get rid of their wives by hook or by crook (figure 20).

The collected data also portrays women as avengers (figure 21). They know that they are the cause of suffering in their husbands' lives and they want to torture them by being part of their lives. This is self-mocking when read, *Lawyer to a lady: I advise you after knowing about your marital situation that you should demand a divorce from your husband. Wife (smilingly): I have spent 19 years with this hooligan and you want that I make him happy by taking a divorce?* In another post having a similar theme (figure 22), a friend asks another, *Why is the life of women so long, happy and free of tension? Friend: Because a woman has no wife.* This post implicitly holds wives responsible for short, sad and full of worries lives of husbands. Women are also termed as the cause of fire everywhere. Indirectly it refers to trouble causing and problem creating nature of women. A poster contains a question and an answer (figure 23), *Why people drop their wife or girlfriend outside the fuel stations? Because it is written, 'Keep inflammable items away from the pump'.* A very dangerous attribute is found associated with females in a post (figure 24) that they suck blood like vampires. When a woman asks, *You didn't tell before marriage that you smoke? Man: You suck blood, did you tell?* The fire theme is reinforced in another way when a teacher asks, *In which department women cannot work? Student: Fire brigade Teacher: Why? Student: Because women's duty is to ignite fire not to extinguish it.* Here again, woman has been portrayed as the cause of all the fires (wars, troubles, problems) of the world. This fierce attitude turns men into dumb driven cattles as admitted by a woman (figure 26), *A good husband is like a split AC. No matter how hot and noisy outside but silent and cool while inside the home.* Another joke runs the same way (figure 27), *Assistant: Sir why do you depute only married men in your office? Boss: Because they are used to bear an insult and they do not hurry to go home.* This post presents married men as people who can pocket any insult easily as they are insulted often by their wives and because of unrest created by their wives they do not want to go home.

There were several posts that pointed to a stereotypical characteristic of girls i.e., materialistic and love for wealth and property. She is shown to have preference for material gains than emotional offerings. Greed is shown as one of her traits. In figure 28, *Pappu to his girlfriend: Darling! where should I write your name, on my hand or my*

heart? Girlfriend (after thinking): *Why do you write here and there? If you love me truly then write my name on your property papers.* On another banner is written a quote and has been termed truth worth a million dollar (figure 29), *wife is cute when she is mute and husband is honey when he gives money.* Thus, the wife is termed cute not on the basis of her looks but on her quality of remaining quiet and a husband is loveable when he can offer money. A materialistic interpretation of relationship is further elaborated through female choice for unnecessary spending. women are shown crazy for shopping (figure 30) and if not conscious and in her senses, give her a news of sales package on any item and she would be restored in no time. In a thematically similar banner, the two big problems faced by women are reflected in a generic manner. It says (figure 31), *Every woman has to face two big problems daily while opening her wardrobe: i) there is no room for more clothes; ii) they have nothing to wear.* Aimless shopping and lack of decision power are two attributes reinforced in this post.

Loyalty in love and relationship is seen important in all cultures. However, women are also made fun of for being disloyal. This is true to men also but women are targeted more. In a conversation between two girls (figure 32), the one says, *Nowadays boys are not trustworthy. I would not see the face of this dog again.* Second girl: *What happened? Have you seen her with some other girl?* First girl: *He has seen me with another boy though he told me that he is going to Pindi. Liar. Cheater.* The girls are portrayed as unfaithful and treacherous creatures. They would not remain sincere in the absence of their lover and would blame him for not telling some trivial point truthfully. However, men are no less disloyal as one post (figure 33) reveals, *Pakistani men have so big hearts that even after giving place to all the women of the world there will be room for 70 heavenly ladies (promised in the life hereafter in Islam).* Pakistani men are mocked at in this post as they are not loyal and faithful. They have soft corners for all the women of the world. This is also reflected in their desire to remarry any time. When a doctor warns an 80 years old man (figure 34), *Marrying a young girl in this age can cause death.* The old man replies, *I do not care if she dies of it.* Men's wish to marry at old age and their confidence in their physical powers are derided in this post.

An analysis of the collected data revealed other important stereotypical aspects of men's lives in relation to female. The data makes fun of and mocks timid behavior of men in relation to their wives. A post contains a statement presented as a universal truth and declares, *A wise man thinks a lot before taking a decision, consults his heart and mind, judge his conditions, considers arguments, looks at positive and negative aspects, consults his parents and siblings and in the end, does whatever his wife asks him to do.* Here the authority of husbands' is challenged by saying that they follow whatever is wished and advised by their wives. Likewise, husbands are termed coward if they lacked the ability to counter their life partners. Such men include those who attribute all qualities

of aggression and initiative to their wives and personally lack them. For instance, in figure 36, an interview question relates to qualities of an army commando and the interviewee replies with a very simple answer, *Sir..., can my wife apply?* This points to lack of power and assertion for the otherwise obedient husbands who ensure ample space to their wives in the decision-making process in all spheres of activity.

## 5. Discussion

This research aimed to find out how men and women are represented in Facebook derisive jokes. What are the traits associated with both of them? What gender differences are focused? Taking theoretical help from Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005), this study has conducted a content analysis of the selected sample. Only some of the representative jokes are described in detail here while leaving others to construct a cohesive background for jokes reiterating similar thematic units.

The concern of FCDA, according to Lazar (2005), is on how the ideology of gender and the relations of gender power are negotiated, (re)produced, and challenged in social relations, in depictions of social practices, and in the personal and social distinctiveness of people in talk and texts. The main focus of feminist critical discourse analysts is with evaluating discourses which maintain a patriarchal social order – relationships of authority and power that methodically license men as a social group, and disempower, exclude, and disadvantage women as a social group. Gender has been constructed with the help of iterative, active and continuing practices throughout discourse (Lazar, 2004; West, Lazar, & Kramarae, 1997).

“Gender relationality” is a central concept of FCDA which implies that masculinity and femininity are naturally relational since they discover meaning in disparity to each other (Connell, 2005, p. 43). So, in the present the study, we have gathered and included sample from jokes targeting men and women both.

In this study, there are many main constituents of sexist humor identified. First, the jokes at Facebook are seemed to be specified or general. Women are directly addressed in the general sexist jokes and disparaged as a unified collective identity. Specified sexist jokes ridicule some groups of women like ‘wives’, and characterized them by an overstatement of traditional stereotypes of womanhood. Second, women are targeted comparatively more than men in such humorous posts. Third, sexist humor makes use of conventional stereotypes where females are depicted as illogical, reliant, stupid, and distressing sexual objects. Fourth, sexist humor not only confirms that women and men possess unlike traits, in doing so it points out that there is a perceptible ladder stature that females are lower and inferior to their male court parts. Fifth, there is a juxtaposition of ‘us’ (men) and ‘them’(women), where men are the norms. Sixth, men are

also being stereotyped and mocked at especially as husbands. Seventh, marriage is the most dominant target of these sexist Facebook jokes. Eighth, the context of Facebook humor is the planet of spare time and spending rather than that of work or politics. Finally, a demarcation of private field for women and public field for men is made. Women's domestic roles are added with a new dimension by their seemingly fresh influence as consumers, and their self-rule and individual distinctiveness are frequently confirmed through buying choices.

Therefore, the jokes of Facebook are likely to represent women as customer minded on the way to self-ornamentation. The male dominant viewpoint in gender-related humor has been regularly examined by various authors most often from the point of view of feminism (Crawford, 2003; Shifman & Lemish, 2014; Bing, 2007). Under the disguise of benign amusement, such humour, facilitates tolerance of sexism and discriminatory behavior among men (Woodzicka & Ford, 2010). Women are portrayed mostly in private spheres of activity and indulged in petty matters and insignificant activities like useless chat and gup-shup. The outcome of these works has displayed that gender depiction is rooted in deep constructions of masculinity and femininity which are based on hierarchical and binary oppositions (Nussbaum, 2010). Men are recognized with 'doing' in the public field that is the world of profession. On the other hand, women are linked with 'appearing' / 'being' in the private fields hence they are assessed on the grounds of their look and sexual attraction (Lemish, 2008). Overall, they are distinguished as dependent, unrealistic, vulnerable, and poignant.

Shopping is shown as the main craze of every woman that the news of sale at some shop can become a treatment of an unconscious lady where every other effort to cure her has gone wasted. Shopping is presented as the way which leads straight to their hearts. If a man wants to win her emotionally, he must buy her something precious. They are desirous of buying clothes and at the same time they pretend that they have nothing to wear. They are always confused and undecided about the choice of dress to be worn on some special occasion.

They talk too much and talk uselessly. The quantity of time spent by women on talk is too higher than males and the quality of topics discussed by them too low as compared to those of their counterparts. They like to indulge in long phone calls and the topics of their discussions are always trivial, petty matters and especially other females and their personal affairs.

Ferguson and Ford (2004) discussed that an individual's laughter that comes as a response to any joke is basically an indication of agreement with the idea communicated by the comic. Lyman (1987) has found out a link between antagonistic behaviors and

attitudes and sexist jokes appreciation. Besides this, when a person observes a joke with detrimental undertones as humorous, he or she is more expected to dismiss the discrimination and admit it only as a kind endeavor at entertainment.

So, in the studied Facebook jokes, women are shown as irrational and mindless creatures, unable to perform some constructive tasks. They are always concerned about their physical beauty and appearance. They want to be the apple of the eye of every man around them. No mention is there of any task or career-oriented woman in the data collected. The only outdoor activity they are shown involved is driving, of which they are depicted as incapable to be proficient drivers as it is a male domain.

As far as the characteristics associated with women are concerned, in these Facebook jokes, they are mostly stereotypical and in line with their representation in other electronic and print media. (Shifman & Lemish, 2014). Nayef and El-Nasher (2014) has found a constructive picture of the knowledgeable, superior, rational men, and a depressing image of the ignorant, talkative women who are weak for the public sphere.

Similarly, our study has explored even more serious and frequent mention of gender bias with multiple stereotypes in Facebook jokes. Unlike the analysis of the set of jokes by Schafer (2001), who keep focus on the stature of woman as avenger and whore, women are typified in these Facebook jokes as self-centered, selfish, quarrelsome, jealous, negative, materialistic, destructive, disloyal, unmanageable, stubborn, reason of every tension and trouble, violent, and cruel persons.

According to Freud (1905), humor and aggression are very closely related, as humor allows us to display our aggression in a socially acceptable way. It views women as inferior and less competent adults than men and suggests that women constantly use their sexual power to manipulate and gain control over men. Kane, Suls and Tedeschi (1977) have proposed that ridicule can be an instrument that can be used to both challenge and perpetuate stereotypes. During our analysis a single joke explicitly declared the wife as having a suspicious mind, a detective ability and a killer instinct. Additionally, wives are presented as merciless, bloodsuckers, poisonous, and reason for every tension and problem that men have to face. They are even compared with Satan and a malady for their obnoxious effects. Such apparently banal humor talks to and guards the basic components of the gender order of the culture and society in which the humor flows (Abedinifard, 2016).

In this funny smog world, ‘old’ arguments about gender disparities are outmoded by funny, celebratory texts regarding differentiation between males and females, portrayed as essentialist: universal, obvious, natural, and consequently assumedly perpetual. So, while such kind of humor may appear to have a healing effect on the face

of it and give delight to humble female internet users sharing these jokes about themselves with one another, it may in detail be a novel way to uphold a traditional outlook of what is formulated as the never-resolvable ‘war of the sexes.’ We discuss, then, that such type of humor facilitates to accept and rationalize differentiation between males and females and therefore share a part to the internalization of this ideology.

The major shift characterized in Internet humor is not only associated with feminine stereotypes, but also to masculine ones. At the present time, beside customary ridicule of women, men are being laughed at and stereotyped as well. This ridicule inclined to focus on the depiction of males as social beings, motivated by the SBS (sex, booze, and sports) trinity (Lemish & Lahav, 2004). Derisive joking is used as an informal disciplinary tool (Chriss, 2007) in difference to such prescribed instruments as police and law enforcement activities. Goffman (1956) asserted that the apprehension of the failure of face contributes a pivotal role in averting the collapse of social order. So, the pressure of face is also working as a control policy that reasons conformity to customs.

As far as the interests and habits of men are concerned, they are more interested in politics, sports, and current affairs. Moreover, they want to get rid of their wives by hook or by crook. Many jokes have targeted this theme in one way or the other. Additionally, a strong desire on the part of husbands is to keep their wives silent and reverent at any cost. They are shown to be struggling to get a chance to give vent to their emotions and viewpoints.

Ridicule is capable of (terrorize to) penalizing any violation of traditional gender customs. The person embattled in the instances of humor is expected to undergo “jeer pressure” and thus supervise and hold back their gendered attitude, fearing like castigation through laughter-as-punishment (Janes & Olson, 2000).

Marriage is a common target for these Facebook derisive jokes. The key function of these derisive jokes seems to be ideological buttress of patriarchal status quo in Pakistani society. Many jokes have targeted non-hegemonic masculinities by referring towards husbands who do not assert their power as the head of the homes, who comply with the wishes and orders of their wives and who remain silent when their wives are indulged in long-windedness. It is portrayed in many examples that it is the man who has to contract with the outwardly never-ending disaster involved in being wedded to a low-grade human being who can just be tagged as a “malady”. Gender domination is built through the abjection of non-dominant gender identities.

A patriarchal gender order involves a specific arrangement of social relationships between males and females, one “that advantages men, as a group, over women, as a group; and that privileges men who possess or demonstrate certain characteristics over

those who do not” (Buchbinder, 2013, p. 69). Men are presented as flirts and prone to be indulged in extramarital relations. They are also shown desirous of having the company of more than one female. It is ridiculed about men that they are pious because of women: in this world for the fear of wife and in the other world for the love of heavenly women. The qualities of a good husband are satirically compared with those of a split AC which is hot and noisy outside but cool and calm inside the home.

Henpeck husbands are also confronted with the loss of face by ridiculing their submission for their wives. Such instances of gender humor not only sketch on dominant gender norms to be, or understood, but they are also inclined to protect those traditions. Bolton and Nardi, for example, note that non-hegemonic gender performances subject men and women to “insults” and “vicious jokes” (1998, p. 412). Furthermore, it appears that people are actively engaged in the diffusion of sexiest content over Facebook when they like, discuss, forward or share such jokes on their walls. This work proposes that larger contribution by Facebook clients may engage them, unintentionally, in acting as means of the hegemonic arrangement through the sharing of such kinds of humor.

## **6. Conclusion**

The most unjustified gender infringements on women rights can be easily tolerated and accepted as mere jokes. After all, those who cannot take a joke are dull and lack any sense of humour. Pakistani society is both mirthful and endocentric, and jokes are one of the weapons it uses to express beliefs that cannot be openly said in the serious mode of discourse. The paper investigated the stereotypical images of women in this widely popular 'not-so-innocent' discursive mode – jokes. It is through reproducing such negative representations of women that patriarchal societies promote and maintain the unjustified masculine hegemony.

Furthermore, these gender jokes may be assumed to approve certain allotments of power and claims of honesty; they do so by bearing or denouncing breaches of ethical and physical lines and by fostering contented, arrogant, resentful, scornful, and self-abasing behaviors. Bemiller and Schneider (2010) had rightfully concluded that since sexist jokes are presented beneath the appearance of kind amusement, females, and males who come across such jokes must formulate the choice to either defy the sexism or defend it by laughing. Leaving the joke without challenge would result in the women sharing to their own submissiveness being discursively constructed.

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## Appendix A

### Figures











