



Article Title

Exploring Gendering, Jeering, and COVID-19: A Feminist Critique of Social Media Humor

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Abstract:

This study aims to shed light on the stereotypical gender identities presented in the online humor regarding Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Pakistan. To uncover gender stereotypes, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis provided a theoretical background for this study. The data consisted of 42 posts from social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) that were collected through purposive quota sampling during the lockdown period in Pakistan. These posts were divided into twelve thematic categories. A culturematic content analysis of the posted jokes revealed that Corona related social media humor is unanimously dedicated to creating a face-threatening image of females, especially wives. This article argues that wives are being constructed as callous, impatient, and materialistic beings through corona joke-posts. The study provides an insight into how jokes are ascribing gender identities of women, especially wives in a destructive persona. Such consistent negative representation of identities may result in severe emotional and psychological effects on both genders and increased marital conflicts. The study suggests that there should be balanced and positive discourses on media and other institutions to foster positive attitudes towards gender and marital identities in Pakistani society in specific and the world over in general.

Keywords: Social media, Online Humor, Jokes, Gender, Stereotype, Representation.

Introduction: COVID-19 and Gendered Humor

Laughable materials about the pandemic started to spread widely on social media not long after the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak had underway. Some of them jokingly critiqued detrimental practices (carelessness of not following SOPs) or offered scathing criticism of how politicians handle the pandemic. Others made light-hearted fun of various

aspects of the pandemic experience, like as living in quarantine. The creativity that characterizes COVID-19 humor is expressed in multimodal fashions, such as memes, cartoon strips, and clips.

The rise of humor on COVID-19 takes place within the boundaries of disaster jokes, i.e., the kind of jokes that stem from difficult situations depicting tragedies and concomitant or background crises in a playful way (Ellis, 2001; Kuipers, 2002). The emotional response to humor (i.e., appreciation) is largely affected by its specific content, both in the negative dimension of being the aversive and the positive dimension of being funny (Ruch, 1992).

In this study, we focused on disaster jokes, i.e., COVID-19 humor and gender, which is how gender is portrayed in different funny posts and jokes. Thus, the novelty of this study lies not only in the focus on COVID-19 humor, but also in its consideration of the concurrent role of different layers of individual variation in the appreciation of disaster humor. Through a feminist qualitative analysis of Pakistani gender-related COVID-19 posts, this paper elucidates ‘gender inequality and masculine hegemony’ (Nayef & El-Nashar, 2014, p. 70). The purpose of the study is also to highlight the existing societal issues regarding marriage and the utility of humor in staging them lightly. This research provides a better understanding of gender and humor and its emotional correlations, both positive and negative, allowing for real-time estimation of these effects during the emergency from a nationwide perspective. This study provides, on a more practical level, hints on the pros and drawbacks of adopting disaster comedy accounting for audience heterogeneity, possible relevance in guiding hereafter social communication practices, and media discourse during COVID-19 pandemic. Against this backdrop, the current study focuses on the nature of gender depiction in humorous posts regarding COVID-19. This study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. How has gender been portrayed in the COVID-19 related social media memes?
2. How do these memes reinforce the patriarchal tendencies in Pakistani society?

COVID-19 Humor and Gender Stereotypes:

The subject of COVID-19 has become increasingly relevant to our lives in the last couple of years, so is the research dealing with different aspects of it. However, its role in reinforcing gender-related bias during the pandemic has been mostly ignored. The vocabulary of COVID-19, which is rife with dread and fear, is discussed by Rafi (2020). His research examines how the terminology used to report COVID-19 contributed to the spread of panic and the ensuing rise in anti-Chinese sentiment. The results of his study show that the virus has encouraged strange linguistic patterns concerning society and the public domain that produce a discourse of fear. The discussion of fear presents out-group threat and in-group vulnerability that culminates as Sinophobia and nationalism.

Humor in general is considered a multi-disciplinary field. It has been studied from a range of different perspectives, including linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and literature (Attardo, 2008). The joke is a subtype of humor containing the story of stupidity and inferiority. There is no humorous activity, which is exclusively the domain of either women or men, however, joking style still plays a part in social typification. Similarly, studies in humorous behaviors of males and females have become more sophisticated and the theoretical conception of gender has also changed in social and cultural studies. People are not using jokes just for fun; they have associated agendas towards constructing different identities, including gender.

Humor is a universally recognized and practiced social phenomenon characterized by ironical statements and satire on individuals and groups. In that, it is the mirror of societal realities and is shaped by any society's values, beliefs, ideologies, customs, and culture. When we laugh at someone, it invokes the superiority theory of humor, which is socially dangerous, harmful, and detrimental to the targeted groups and individuals. Communication that is humorous is crucial to the creation of normativity and normalcy (Zijdervelt, 1976). Humor influences norms by defying them and generating unique viewpoints. It develops fresh, uncommon viewpoints on the target of humour and expresses creative power, sovereignty, and the right to step in. Women have a harder time accepting such overt displays of subjectivity and their capacity to define normality (Kotthoff, 2006). Nayef and El-Nasher (2014) argue that humor plays a vital role in producing gender stereotypes in the Egyptian context. They also throw light how these jokes portray stereotypical positive representation of men as knowledgeable, sensible, brave, and rational creatures. On the contrary, Egyptian women have been painted as illogical, dependent, and ignorant.

Berger (1995) contends that jokes also reveal the identity of a society where it is situated. The use of memes across different settings is indicative of how individuals make sense of their surroundings and how they use different coping mechanisms such as humor during crisis times. In tragic circumstances, it is not uncommon to see an upsurge in the generation of disaster jokes, which humorously depict different institutes, especially gender, marriage, education, and politics. Many of such jokes also appeared during COVID-19 outbreak and became viral on social media. However, there has not been much attention given to social and emotional impacts of disaster jokes (Bischetti, Canal, & Bambini, 2020).

Sometimes explicitly, sometimes subtly, gender has an impact on humour. A particular style of femininity and/or masculinity can be stylised in some comedic actions. Stereotypes in amusing material can highlight gender issues in a positive or subversive way (Kotthoff, 2006). Ali and Khan (2012) point out that gender discrimination is presented in the media through funny and derogatory cartoons in the Pakistani context. In general, the media is gender-biased and fails to present women's diverse personalities and positive role in the changing world.

Women are portrayed as foolish, emotionally dependent, victimized, and having no human values. Mustafa and Ali (2017) in their discourse analytic study of Punjabi proverbs concerning gender representation also came up with similar findings.

In systematic understanding of humor and its effects, Oring (2010) chalks out three theories of humor: superiority, incongruity, and release theory. The superiority theory deals with the foolish depiction of others; in it, humor results from different aggressive motives that express superiority and hatred towards others. The Incongruity theory depicts the exaggerated and inappropriate role of others. Whereas, according to release theory, humor primarily releases psychic energy. For the present study, the theories of superiority and incongruity provide theoretical support, when we see a face-saving image of males and a face-threatening image of females portrayed in COVID-19 and gender-focused jokes.

FCDA and Linguo Cultural Approach: Methodological Framework for the Study

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis by Lazar (2005) provides the theoretical lens to examine gendered identities presented in the gender-related COVID-19 humorous posts. FCDA deals with the interrelationship between gender, power, and ideology. Lazar has rightly analyzed that gendered relations and ideology concerning power are constructed and discussed through text and talk. The central motive of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is to throw light on such discourses that affirm the social order of patriarchy, where women are excluded from the social order regarding power. A second theory employed to conduct a culturematic analysis is the lingua-cultural Approach (Petrova, 2019). This approach uses linguistic evidence from folklore (proverbs, idioms, cultural keywords, and jokes) to establish behavioral tendencies and preferences held by different speech communities. In this approach, the cultural text is minimized to a 'cultureme' (one single significant element, word or phrase that a joke remarks at and assesses as positive or negative by attaching a positive or negative sign to it). It relies on 'semantic densities' based on the recurrence of an idea or theme to determine the related social significance and centrality.

A vocal name and a numerical plus (+) or minus (-) sign have been assigned to the cultureme. The question, "What does this joke show as positive or negative?" leads to the creation of this moniker. The acquired cultureme consists of a sign that coordinates a component of Pakistani linguo-culture, whose essence is vocally given by its name, and a positive or negative evaluation added to it by this culture, denoted by the plus or minus (+ or -) signs. The joke's message, which revealed the setting of its primary cultureme, was used to determine whether the cultureme was assessed as positive or negative. The researchers asked themselves, "What does this (joke) encourage us to do / to be, or not to do / not to be?" in order to ascertain what the message would have been. The key first step that has been made to describe the joke-related cultureme and message is to define non-literal jokes and then explain how they work, for

instance, by breaking down the surface structure of the figurative sentences into their inner structures. The tendency of the amusing message has confirmed the favorable or unfavorable signal of the cultureme.

These posts can be used to distinguish between three types of verbal hostility: relational, social, and indirect. In the first place, indirect aggression occurs when the target (man or woman) is condemned by covert as well as overt attempts to justify societal sadness, such as by discussing, excluding or ignoring the target. Contrary to indirect aggression, relational aggression is more steadfast in its assessment as a threat to terminate a connection or the spread of untrue information. Social aggression, on the other hand, aims to harm a person's societal standing or self-respect, or both. It might manifest in overt ways like verbal or nonverbal aggression, or it can take more covert forms like gossip and social rejection.

Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani Corona Jokes:

The present study is based on the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005) that deals with the social inequality among genders and suggests that discourse studies should be driven by gender rationality where there be an equal focus on the representation of both men and women. Taking that into account, this study analyzes social media gender jokes about both genders to get a wholesome picture of the phenomenon. It focuses on the interrelationship of gender as presented by Lazar (2005). The 'culturematic' content analysis of selected COVID-19 related social media humorous posts shows both genders' constructed images through humor in the contemporary health crisis. In the context of the current study, the culturematic content analysis deduces the themes presented in Pakistani gender-related COVID-19 humorous posts.

Culturematic Semantic Density:

This section provides a frequency-based analysis of the semantic density revealed through culturematic analysis of core concepts in the semantic domain of gender and corona related humor. The analysis is arranged in descending order, starting from the cultureme showing the highest semantic density.

Culturematic Semantic Density of the Pakistani Corona Related Jokes:

| Sr. | Culturemes | Semantic Density |
|------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | Reinforcement of Gender Roles through Corona Jokes | 11 - |
| 2 | Wives are Cruel Partners | 6 - |
| 3 | Women's Affected Appearances | 6 - |
| 4 | Corona is a Festival for Women | 5 - |
| 5 | Wife Equals Corona | 4 - |
| 6 | Women Love Gossip/Backbiting | 2 - |
| 7 | Women Violate Lockdown | 2 - |
| 8 | Women Shows Tantrums | 1 - |

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 9 | Women Responsible for this Lockdown | 1- |
| 10 | Men Wish to Get Rid of their Wives | 1 - |
| 11 | Men Wish to Have Multiple Women | 1 - |
| 12 | Son-in- Laws Show Tantrum | 1 - |

In other words, taking into account the "semantic density" implied separating out quantity from quality. The semantic density also served as a gauge for cultural centrality and relative importance. The semantic density of various culturemes and messages has been noted using the Linguo-Culturology Approach as a guide. There have been many other jokes with the same theme that all contributed to its structure. In these jokes, the sub-themes that contributed to the main theme were arranged in the order of priority, so that some jokes appeared to be dominant while others were located on the edges of the thematic field. It is significant to highlight that the data, findings, and conclusions have been more trustworthy and dependable the larger the corpora studied. The elicited quantitative evidence became genuinely authentic and dependable when the culturematic analysis was done using the extensive corpus of Pakistani jokes about gender in jokes connected to Covid. This revealed the hierarchy of values and anti-values held by the Pakistani population, among whom these jokes originated and are still popular, in a clear, consistent, and persuasive way. While the ancillary themes and culturemes had been introduced as a necessary complement to the primary features, the dominant themes and culturemes constituted the "cultural constants" of the Pakistani linguo-culture.

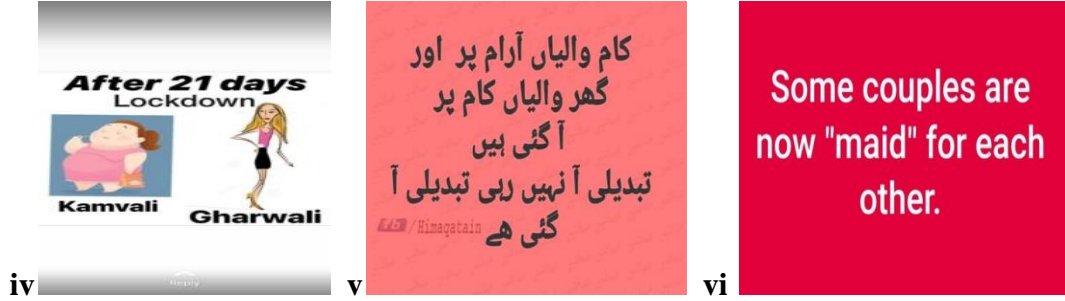
A total of 42 COVID-19 humorous posts, targeting both genders, have been collected from social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) from 15 March 2020 to 15 October 2020. The data have been categorized and arranged into 12 sub themes based on the characters that are mocked and their traits. Finally selected representative COVID-19 related humorous posts have been translated into English to give a glimpse of almost all the stereotypes regarding gender presented explicitly or implicitly in the categorized data.

Cultureme: Reinforcement of Gender Roles through Corona Jokes (11-)

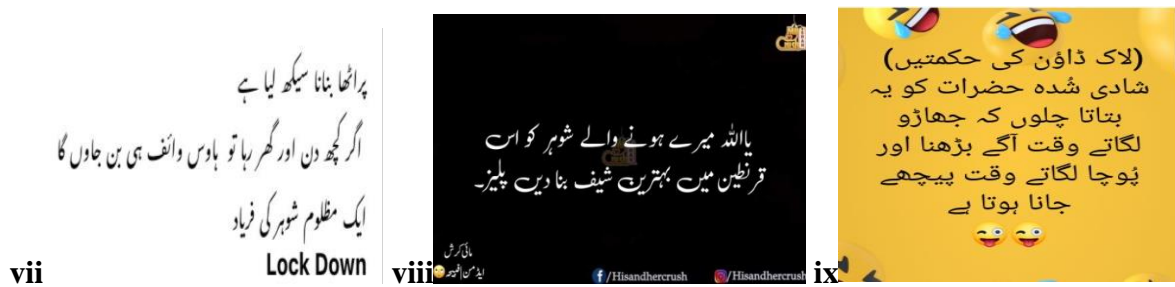


In the first post, three pictures have been copy pasted with no difference at all and the caption depicts that there is no change for women before, during and after quarantine. All they have to do is to prepare food for the family single handedly. The second post has reiterated the same

theme by using the verb 'cook' four times. The third post is depicting a cartoonish depiction of a mom versus other family members where she is busy in the routine domestic chores while the other members are just laying around. All these posts refer to the increased cooking phenomenon by females during these days of restricted movement. These reinforce the traditional role of gender, where women are domesticated.



The fourth post is a pictorial depiction of the future of maids and their owners where the maid has gained a lot of weight because of no physical activity, while housewives have got smarter because of the increased physical exertion. The fifth post again compares maids with the housewives who have reversed their roles due to COVID related restrictions of movement. Housewives have become maids, and maids are staying at homes. The sixth post is using the homonyms made/maid where the meaning refers towards the absence of house helpers and the husband and wives have to do the housework themselves. These three posts (iv-vi) refer to the effects females have to bear due to the absence of maids. Even the cooperation some males extend during their stay at home has been mocked by using the phrase 'maid for each other,' which is a distorted shape of 'made for each other'. The general implication of this cultureme is that the domestication and its reinforcement through the COVID related jokes is very much active through humorous discourses.



In the seventh post, the poor husband proclaims that "I have learnt how to make 'paratha' (oiled bread) and soon I will become a housewife, somehow if I stay at home a few more days." The eighth post is voicing the wish of an unmarried girl, "O Allah, please make my husband learn how to be the best chef during quarantine." The ninth post is an advice by a man for other husbands that how they can mop the floor in an efficient manner by following his instruction of moving back and forth. These mocking posts about the house chores performed by husbands reinforce that these are not masculine jobs. So, when a man cooperates with his wife, he is

being jeered at by his peers through such posts.

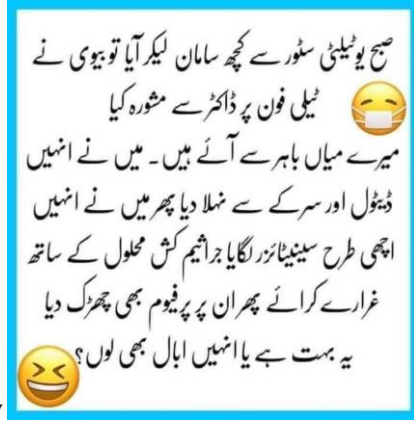


- i. The man thinks: All the businesses are closed. How will I cope with the expenditures?
- ii. The wife thinks: I will make him clean the cobwebs tomorrow.
- iii. The threat by a wife: clean these dishes; otherwise, I will tell the police that my husband has been coughing for the last three days.

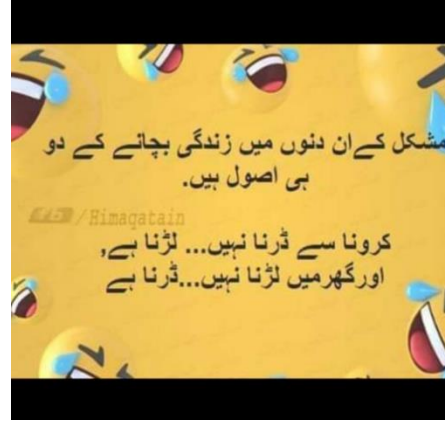
Cultureme: Wives are Cruel Partners (6 -)



- i. The situation at home, the wife beats. The situation outside, the police beats to stay at home.
- ii. The government has handed over husbands to their wives on seven days' remand.
- iii. Be good to your spouse. Remember! right now, they could poison you, and it would be counted as a COVID death.



iv






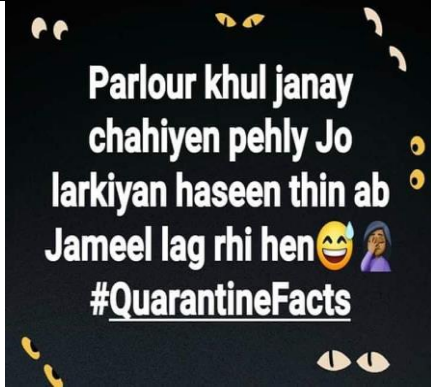
v

- iv. The wife consulted a doctor about her husband, who returned after doing groceries. She says, my husband has come from outside, I made him bathe with Dettol and vinegar, and then applied sanitizer, made him do gargles with an antiseptic and then applied perfume. Is it enough, or should I boil him too?
- v. There are only two ways to cope with these difficult times: Not being afraid of Corona but fighting with it, not fighting with the wife, but being afraid of her.

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| <p>گھروں پر بی تشریف رکھیں چائے بیگم سے بنے یا نہ بنے ، دل کرے یا نہ کرے ، بیگم سے چک چک سے گریز کیجئے کیوں کہ آپ پہلے ہی ڈینجر زون میں ہیں ،</p> <p>سنا ہے پیوٹن نے سڑکوں پر شیر چھوڑ دئے ہیں اور یہاں بر گھر میں شیرنی موجود ہے جسے ماسی کے حصے کا کام بھی خود کرنا پڑ رہا ہے لہذا فضول شوخیوں سے گریز کریں ، خطرہ صرف باہر نہیں اندر بھی ہے ۔ 😊</p> | <p>vi. Stay at home, you like or not, you agree with your wife or not. Abstain from an argument with your wife as you are in the danger zone already. It is said that Putin has loosened lions on the roads, and here a 'lioness' is present in every home who is doing the chores of the maids too. So, beware of being extra-confident as the danger is not outside only, but inside too.</p> |
|--|---|

These posts are constructing the image of wives as some cruel and callous creatures who are taking advantage of the current pandemic situation and treating their husbands in a cold-hearted manner instead of being kind towards them. In a post, the wife is equated with a policeman with a stick in her hand and both are trying to stop men from violating their policies. The second post clearly mentions the word 'remand' which is socially known as the punitive measures used by the police to make people confess their crimes. These posts are construing homes as 'danger zones' where a lioness is roaming freely, and men cannot survive by coming into a conflict with her.

Cultureme: Women's Affected Appearances (6 -)

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|  | <p>i. This post presents the four stages of quarantine, which have transformed the appearance of females from a beautiful and decent look to a socially depreciable fat lady.</p> |
|  | <p>ii. The female has been presented as a male actor (villain) with a mustache and ugly looks just because the parlors are closed.</p> |
|  | <p>iii. Men are getting fairer due to their stay at home, and their wives are getting darker due to the closure of (cosmetic) shops.</p> |
|  | <p>iv. The parlors should be opened now as the most beautiful girls resemble rustic men.</p> |

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| | <p>v. After lockdown, the most rushed places would be beauty parlors. Archeology Department.</p> |
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| | <p>vi. It is the best time to get married as the parlors are closed. So no one can cheat, and only original products are available.</p> |
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All the six posts above show that women are not only beauty conscious, but they also fake it. Since during Corona, there are limited options for them to get dolled up, so it is the best time for men to marry women. They can avoid deception and fakeness. The effect of closure of cosmetic shops and beauty parlors is that women are available in their true colors. The reality is that, most of them are least appealing without their cosmetic self. Once the COVID restrictions are lifted, they all will rush to them, as this is the way they keep them look pretty.

Cultureme: Corona is a Festival for Women (5 -)



i. Wife: I am angry with you.

Husband: Why so?

Wife: You have not bought me the suit for the lockdown.

Husband faints.

ii. The woman has been presented with a giant bag when she goes out shopping after the lockdown opens.

- iii. This post has photographed a woman wearing all the items she has ordered online during her stay at home during the lockdown.



Both the posts (iv and v) highlight that women have a passion for using their fashion sense no matter what circumstances. In this culture, the female gender has once again been stereotyped for their passion for shopping, color matching, fashion and celebrations to the extent that even a global pandemic is unable to curb their desires.

Culture: Wife Equals Corona (4 -)



- i. We will soon learn to live with the virus; after all, we live with our wives too.
- ii. There is no difference between wife and Corona; the person himself brings them home.
- iii. The husband goes to the washroom, and the wife checks his phone and finds the name 'Corona' in the contact list. Out of curiosity, she dials that contact and her own phone rings in the kitchen. Now the husband is in the washroom and is not coming out and saying, 'I am quarantined.'

All these posts are painting women/wives as bad as Corona virus. They are being compared with COVID. By creating various parallels with Corona, wives are being depicted as a virus. This although humorously but belittles women. These jokes are building men as superior who have to bear women as their wives.



This post has taken two controversial figures from Pakistani politics and entertainment domains. The female has been termed 'corona', while the male has been named 'sanitizer.'


This post is referring to a famous scuffle between a female activist of *OratMarch* (Woman March) and a writer on the issue of feminism and freedom. The post is creating a negative image of the female activist by giving her the title 'Corona' while a positive and a remedial image of the male interlocutor by giving him the title 'Sanitizer'.

Cultureme: Women Love Gossip/Backbiting (2 -)




The first post depicts two women laying on the floor at the entrance doors across the street and having a talk, and the caption says, 'When social distancing is necessary, but gossip is important.' The second post presents four women of different ages and social backgrounds who are discussing something. The caption says, 'Due to Corona, women cannot gather, a severe shortage of backbiting in the country.' Both the posts have reinforced the stereotype of 'uselessly talkative' nature of females.

Cultureme: Women Violate Lockdown (2 -)

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| <p>Government: Only go outside for emergencies</p> <p>People's emergencies:</p>  | <p>i. The woman in this post is shown being outside in an emergency, which is getting some 'donuts'.</p> <p>The female gender is depicted as non-serious and illogical, who endangers their lives for petty things.</p> |
| <p>مرد و زن کو مارکیٹس بند کروانے میں فعال کردار ادا کرنے پر مبارکباد۔ (خواتین کی کوششوں کے تو کیا کہئے)</p> | <p>ii. It is a satirical post about the people who went shopping, and the government had to shut down markets forcefully. And, women have a special role in achieving that lock down.</p> |

Cultureme: Women Show Tantrums (1 -)

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| <p>شوہر: تم ماسک کیوں نہیں پہنتی؟ بیوی: پھر آپ کو پتا کیسے چلے گا کہ میں منہ بنا کر کھڑی رہتی ہوں۔</p>  | <p>Husband: Why don't you wear a mask? Wife: How will you know then; I am in a bad mood? A wife is depicted as a person who can keep her health and safety at stake for the sake of emotional favors from her partner.</p> |
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Cultureme: Women Responsible for this Lockdown (1-)

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| <p>کچھ عورتیں آزادی لینے نکلی تھی اللہ اپنے ساتھ مردوں کو بھی قید کر والیا</p> | <p>Some women gathered in for their freedom (<i>Orat [woman] March</i>), instead of getting their freedom, they imprisoned the men too with themselves.</p> |
|--|---|

This post is hinting at the march and rallies arranged by liberals and feminist women on 8th March (Women's Day) to demand equality of rights. Immediately after that, COVID broke out,

this post is trying to link Corona with *Orat March*. Instead of achieving their proclaimed goals of freedom of speech and action, they have got men imprisoned with lockdown.

Cultureme: Men Wish to Get Rid of their Wives (1 -)

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| | <p>A saint said: Luckiest are the husbands whose wives went to meet their parents and the government issued lockdown orders.</p> <p>This post gives vent to Pakistani husbands' wish to get rid of their wives and feel relaxed in their absence.</p> |
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Cultureme: Men Wish to Have Multiple Women (1 -)

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| | <p>Incessant hand washing has removed the line of second marriage from my hand.</p> <p>This post reiterates men's wish to have many women in their lives, contrary to the notion that they are fed up with their current wives.</p> |
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Cultureme: Son-in- Laws Show Tantrum (1 -)

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| | <p>Corona is spreading like the son-in-law whose parents-in-law give him extra respect.</p> <p>Here the target of the post is a husband who takes undue advantage of the protocol given by his in-laws. It also delineates that sons-in-laws are respected unduly in Pakistani society, and no parallel reverence is offered to the daughter-in-law by her in-laws.</p> |
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Discussion:

The joke is a double-edged weapon that is destroying the image of female gender. It is not only a funny statement used for pleasure or to pass the time, but also has an implicit motive to create and reinforce a specific gender. Humorous discourses of social media are constructing an image

of a woman/wife who is callous, lackadaisical, materialistic, and crazy about fashion. Animal imagery of 'lioness' has been employed to delineate the 'carnivorous' attitudes of wives with their husbands who have to stay inside due to lockdown. These humorous discourses construct face-threatening images of these highly significant identities for a smooth social set-up (Khan, Rashid, & Hussain, 2018; Lazar, 2005).

As FCDA deals with gender inequality, it is surprising that unlike the serious discourses, including proverbs (Khan, Mustafa, and Ali, 2017), these humorous discourses have constructed the image of a wife as some cruel, dangerous, self-centered, unreliable, and harmful person. The findings of this study resonate with the research done in the other contexts that humor has been systematically used to create a face-threatening image of wives (Frued, 1976; Johnson, 2002; Sunderland, 2006; Lemish, 2010; Nayef and El- Nashar, 2014).

Jokes are told in a way in which one person gets superiority, and other feels inferiority as Nayef and El-Nasher (2014) have concluded a positive picture of men as loyal, innocent, and rational, while a negative picture of women, especially wives as talkative, ignorant, and illogical, has been captured. Current analysis has also identified several posts that presented women as singularly talkative who take pleasure in gossip and backbiting. Their talk is almost always useless and unbearable, unlike husbands. Similar results are concluded from the analysis of Pakistani jokes about wives, but no single joke related to men's speech habits could be found.

According to Sunderland's (2006) study of feminist humor, women are too crazy about shopping cosmetics and new outfits. They have many dresses but keep on saying that they do not have a suitable dress for a party or a funeral. The word 'marriage' has been interrelated with a workshop where husbands work and wives' shop. The current study has also identified supporting data that reinforces this stereotype of wives being shopaholics and spendthrifts who are always ready to spend a lot without realizing and appreciating the strenuous efforts put by husbands to earn that money, hence neglecting the supportive roles, wives perform in the real marriages where husbands do not earn much and tarnishing their positivity (Lazar, 2005).

The study of matrimonial jokes has further revealed that both husbands and wives have become unbearable creatures, and the lockdown converted them (husbands and wives) to cruel and canning attitudes towards each other. They become indifferent to each other and want to get rid of each other. Wives are presented as greedy, illogical, disobedient, lazy, materialistic, and talkative. Husbands' wishes for a new wife is coupled with their desire to get rid of the present wife and replace her with a new wife. Moreover, just like the Egyptian jokes, the present study has presented women as chatterboxes who cannot survive without gossip, and the lockdown has caused a severe shortage of backbiting (Nayef & Nashar, 2014). The feminist readings of sexist jokes by Sunderland (2006) portrayed women as talkative and contended, "silence is the final frontier where no woman has gone before" (p. 15). The stereotypical depiction of gender,

especially women in the humorous posts, have verified the findings of the previous research conducted in different contexts such as Sunderland's (2006) feminist readings of sexist jokes, Naghdipour's (2014) analysis of Iranian jokes, Nayef and El-Nashar's (2014) findings of the Egyptian women, and Siddiqui's (2013) study of South Asian languages which portrayed women as insane and dull.

In this way, gender is constructed through jokes through, the tool of popular humor, which is working on its ideological agenda of castigating feminine identities to keep them subjugated and dominated. These jokes are a stable form of verbal and social aggression launched against certain groups to make them believe in their negative traits through the ideological system of interpellation. Friere's (1998) 'Self Abnegation' theory has a clear answer about the effects of such deleterious discursive practices that a subject being incessantly told of their negativity and inefficiency to perform some productive task, ultimately results in lower self-esteem and a deficient self-image.

Conclusion:

The present study examined the gender related COVID-19 humorous posts taking theoretical insights from Feminist Critical Discourse analysis. It concludes that unlike serious discourses which present women as subordinated, meek, dependent, and men as authoritative, cruel, the center of all the activities; Pakistani jokes are creating gender identities in a significantly different light. We find females as wives who are depicted as cruel, greedy, unbearable, murderers, and jealous creatures. Women appear never satisfied despite their husbands' utmost efforts. Wives are also painted as capricious malady, a cruel leader, and wildlike 'lioness.' On the other hand, husbands are depicted as meek, obedient, flirtatious, and eager to have more than one woman in their lives. Moreover, the highest number of jokes about husbands reinforce the theme that they are fed up of their wives and want to get rid of them as soon as possible.

Husbands and wives have not been presented as two conjugal members of the same family, rather as adversaries, whose main objective seems to denigrate each other. In this way, these COVID-19 discourses unfold the serious gender-biased attitudes of Pakistani society in a light-hearted tone through jokes.

These jokes are not just 'jokes'; they are performing an alarming role by depreciating marriage and the matrimonial identities which are constructing the minds of the audience and the receivers of these jokes negatively about their future married life and resultantly our present generations are suffering from very shallow marital relations (Khan, Aziz & Hussain, 2018). To quote Rafi (2020), "I fear, in the long run, there might be significant implications of these words (humorous posts). They may cause to increase in the divorce rate, domestic abuse, and damage family system beyond our control. There are reports published in high circulation newspapers for a surge in domestic violence in the USA and an increasing divorce rate in China amid

COVID-19” (p.13). So, it is the need of the hour that the discourse creators should create and spread more constructive and positive discourses to maintain the sacredness of marriage as only then we can expect a generation with a sound character and a stronghold of familial bonds, which had been a hallmark of Eastern families.

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