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Investigating Gender-Based Humor In Punjabi Stage Dramas In The Digital Age

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Abstract

This research focuses on the prevalence and implications of gender-based humor in Pakistani stage dramas and its role in perpetuating misogyny and sexism. The current study aims to enhance the understanding of how sexist humor in stage dramas can jeopardize women's image in Pakistan. Our media has fostered a typical image of a woman, and society gradually considers females who deviate from the image unacceptable. Through our research, we argue that the propagation of sexist comedy undermines and endangers women's social identities and diminishes their self-value. The phenomenon not only damages the credibility of the female gender but also restricts opportunities and mobility of women in society and reinforces stereotypes and gender inequity.

We used qualitative content analysis of Pakistani Punjabi stage dramas of the last five years to study gender-based humor. After analyzing the content, we found that most of the stage dramas' content is gender biased. Women are predominantly targeted and subjected to several forms of mockery. Harmful stereotypes are reinforced and perpetuated through the content. These plays not only belittle women by portraying them as laughingstock but also highlight traditional gender norms and downplay their worth and potential.

Keywords: *Gender-based humor, Stereotypes, Pakistani society, Punjabi stage dramas*

Introduction

Humor is essential to our daily lives, used to entertain, build social connections, and cope with life's challenges. However, humor has also been used to reinforce stereotypes, discrimination, and prejudice, particularly regarding gender. Gender-based humor has become pervasive in the digital age, amplified by social

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media platforms and other digital technologies. Gender-based humor is not a new phenomenon but has a long historical legacy. In early modern Europe, gender-based humor was widespread in various forms, such as literature, theater, and art. Gender-based humor continued to be popular throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with comic strips, cartoons, and television shows portraying gendered caricatures of men and women (Sanghavi, 2019).

The emergence of the internet and social media platforms has led to an explosion of gender-based humor in the digital age. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become breeding grounds for gender-based jokes and memes. These platforms have allowed for the rapid spread of gender-based humor to a massive audience, potentially normalizing harmful stereotypes and prejudices. Jokes about rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence can desensitize people to the seriousness of these issues and create a culture that trivializes and normalizes violence against women. Studies have shown that exposure to sexist humor can lead to increased tolerance of sexist attitudes and behaviors (Khan et al., 1989; Sanghavi, 2019).

Our study mainly discusses how gender-specific humor is highlighted in Pakistani Punjabi stage dramas. These stage shows are also available on YouTube. Their jokes and dialogues are shared in reels and short videos on other social media apps as well. The dialogues in many of these shows contain purposeful and multifaceted words and reinforce gender stereotypes. Humor that belittles or objectifies women perpetuates a culture of misogyny and contributes to the normalization of gender-based violence.

For our study, we screened ten Pakistani Punjabi stage dramas to see how they have been portraying the female gender. These dramas include Churrian (2018), Taza Dry Fruit (2018), Dilbar Jani (2019), Dancing Car (2019), Dil Tagdi (2020), Ghare Di Machi (2020), Dhola Chadi Naa (2021), Baba Taka Sain (2021), Pariyon ki Rani (2022), Lo Phir Aagaye (2022).

Stage dramas have been prevalent in Pakistani society for a very long time. Pakistani stage still holds a big chunk of viewers. The origins of Pakistani stage dramas can be traced back to the early 20th century, during the British colonial period. British officials introduced Western-style theater to the country to promote the English language and culture. However, the indigenous population quickly adapted the art form to their cultural traditions, and soon, it became an integral part of Pakistani culture (Azher, 2018).

Today, Pakistani stage dramas continue to be a popular form of entertainment in the country, with new productions staged yearly. They remain essential to Pakistani culture, reflecting the country's changing values and social issues.

The portrayal of women in Pakistani stage dramas has been debated for many years. Some people argue that the portrayal of women in stage dramas is derogatory and objectifying. In contrast, others believe it is a form of entertainment that should not be taken too seriously. Some argue that the portrayal of women in stage dramas has changed over time and that the current trend is towards more positive and empowering portrayals of women.

One of the most common criticisms of Pakistani stage dramas is that they objectify women. Women are often depicted as objects of desire, and their bodies are usually on display for the audience's entertainment. There are several ways in which Pakistani stage dramas create female gender-based comedy and entertainment. The following are some examples: In many Pakistani stage dramas, female actors must wear revealing clothing, such as short skirts, low-cut tops, and tight-fitting dresses. These costumes are designed to show off their bodies and emphasize their curves. Female actors are also often required to dance seductively, using provocative movements and gestures to attract the audience's attention. This sexualization of women's bodies reduces them to objects of desire rather than as individuals with their agency and worth. It reinforces the idea that women are valued primarily for their physical appearance and ability to please men.

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Pakistani stage dramas often use vulgar language to describe women. Female characters are often called "item girls" or "sexy mujra dancers." These terms reduce women to mere objects of desire rather than as individuals with their personalities and identities. In some Pakistani stage dramas, women are portrayed as inferior to men. Female characters are often seen as helpless and dependent on men for survival. They are described as weak and vulnerable, needing protection from men. This portrayal reinforces harmful gender stereotypes and contributes to the oppression of women. It sends a message to the audience that women cannot take care of themselves and need men to protect them. In some Pakistani stage dramas, women's emotions are also objectified. Female characters are often shown as emotional and hysterical, unable to control their feelings. They are portrayed as being driven by their emotions rather than as rational beings. This portrayal reinforces the idea that women are irrational and unstable and cannot be trusted to make decisions on their own. It reduces them to mere objects of male desire rather than as individuals with their thoughts and feelings.

Today, we have many famous stage dramas such as “Lo Phir Aagaye,” “Aag Lagaa Dee,” “Shadi Magar Aadhi,” etc. that have over hundred-thousand views on YouTube. What are these dramas actually about? In these dramas, there are around 3 to 4 men who keep bashing 1 or 2 women who are present on the spot. The women are made to wear tight clothes and put on much makeup to make them look like *“women.”* Contrary to that, not once in any of these dramas do we see women trolling men, women sexualizing men, or men being the victims. Our society has portrayed humor

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in a way that is only considered funny when directed towards women. Being able to show women in a particular manner, encouraging a specific type of stereotypical behavior, and accepting only the kind of women who fit into this definition is what we, as a society, are made to believe today.

Research Question

This paper focuses on the following questions:

1) How prevalent is gender-based humor in Pakistani stage dramas, and what are the most common forms of this humor?
2) What is the relationship between gender-based humor and the perpetuation of misogyny and sexism in electronic media?

Literature Review

Humor is often used as a tool of communication by the media to deliver messages to a mass audience. Often, this very tool is used for spreading humorous messages in a way that is considered intolerable and aggressive towards the outgroup (Gogova, 2019). Women are portrayed stereotypically in the situation comedy (Ivanov, 2019). Many studies highlight the stereotypical portrayal of women in media (Wood, 2018; Abbas, 2017; Gallagher, 2016; Grau & Zotos,2016). Sanghavi, A. Discussed that media in the twenty-first century affects audience perceptions of female comedians and the humor business. The article focuses on female comedy artists, particularly female stand-up specials. Because it is observed that these stand-up comedies are still being published on digital platforms, their numbers are still insignificant as compared to the male comedian shows (Sanghavi, 2019).

There is a perception that only men have the “ideal sense of humor” (Tosun et al., 2018). In some places, talking about sex and cracking sexist jokes are considered funny. So, men, due to their bold expressions, take the credit for being funny and rate themselves higher in initiating humor than female comedians. Even in the media era, the low number of successful female comedians is a glaring example of the need to raise awareness among content creators and consumers of the value of female performers on a public stage (Sanghavi, 2019). Talking about the role of jokes in negotiating the social relations of power through language, *Azher*, M. discussed how women are portrayed in jokes shared on Pakistani social media. He studied four themes—representation of women in general, representation of women exercising their skills and intellect, representation of women as life partners, and representation of teenage girls/young women—in the light of the general theory of verbal humor (2018). Gendered conversational humor is also essential in the field of advertising. Ivanov, L., Eisend, M. & Bayon, T. studied the responses of impromptu vs scripted comedy to male and female customers and found that women respond more favorably to

spontaneous comedy than to manufactured humor, while men's responses are unaffected by humor type (2019). Maaranen, A. & Tienari, J. state that by highlighting the connections between social media and hyper-masculine work cultures, we want to advance the body of knowledge on social media as a space for gender relations and inequality. We concentrate objectively on the raging social media debate that #MeToo unleashed on New York's Wall Street. We contend that online responses demonstrate the erratic character of social media movements and their reception in organizations despite the fact that the likelihood of this movement backfiring has gotten very little academic attention. Organizations that are profoundly gendered but not overtly hyper-masculine need more study on social interactions and technology (2020). This article also talks about how women have been urged to speak out against gendered violence and sexual harassment collectively in conventional media by movements like #MeToo. This article sheds light on the issues people face due to constant negative trolling, but it does not specify a gender on which humor is more directed. Our paper will be very specific regarding a specific gender to make the study more accurate.

Humor practices during the 2014 Ebola Outbreak were helpful in minimizing the emotional effect of disaster (Cottingham & Rose, 2022). The article stated how Twitter's funny culture defies conventional dynamic standards during a disease pandemic. Using humor during an outbreak may be an effective technique for coping with challenging feelings like worry and dread. It may sound silly or disrespectful. According to our research, AAVE (African-American Vernacular English) and Black cultural allusions were often used in humorous tweets about the Ebola virus. This article talks about the harmful effects of humor during a pandemic, showcasing how humor can also have adverse effects on our society.

Comedy is a problematic issue that has undergone extensive experimental research by marketers over the past 25 years (Weinberger & Gulas, 2022). Humor is a complex idea that is influenced by a wide range of variables. Generalizations concerning the impact of comedy are rife with errors due to the numerous dependencies imposed by the desired purpose, type of humor, medium, placement, and audience. According to studies, 94% of advertising professionals believe that using comedy to attract attention is a successful strategy(Weinberger, 2022). Also, advertisers believe humor is more effective in grabbing attention than non-humour (Ivanov, 2019). Although the personal opinions of advertising executives should not be equated with thorough hypothesis testing, these opinions reflect a knowledge base developed through years of daily experience with confidential search results.

Most of the studies mentioned above are conducted in the United States. However, there is still a shortage of genuine research that can discuss the element of comedy from a Pakistani standpoint. This study addresses this gap by exploring the phenomenon from a gendered perspective.

Research Methodology

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We employed a qualitative content analysis approach to investigate the prevalence and implications of gender-based humor in Pakistani stage dramas. Our sample consists of Pakistani Punjabi stage dramas from the last five years (i.e., 2018-2022). We have selected these stage plays to ensure a representative cross-section of this genre. Since they are popular among the public, we assume they can influence and shape cultural narratives in Pakistan.

Qualitative content analysis is a valuable research method many researchers employ (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to extract meaningful insights and examine gender patterns within various contexts. This approach involves a systematic and in-depth analysis of textual, visual, or audio data, enabling researchers to uncover the nuances and delicacies that quantitative methods often overlook. Qualitative content analysis is an indispensable tool for researchers seeking to delve deeply into gender patterns, offering a nuanced understanding that complements quantitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By examining the complexities of gender through this method, researchers can contribute to more informed and socially relevant discussions on gender issues.

To ensure a representative sample, we took two dramas from each year. A total of 10 dramas were studied for the analysis. The content analysis process involved systematically examining scripts, dialogues, and performances in the selected stage dramas. We used a thematic coding framework to categorize instances of gender-based humor, focusing on the targeting of women and the forms of mockery employed. After coding the content of the selected stage dramas, we conducted a thematic synthesis to identify overarching patterns and themes related to gender-based humor. Our themes included different manifestations of gender-based humor, such as theme 1: Jokes related to women's physical appearance; theme 2: Jokes related to women's ascribed roles; theme 3: Jokes related to women's nonverbal sexual moves; theme 4: Jokes related to women's achieved roles; theme 5: Jokes related to women's trauma. This process allowed us to gain insights into the prevalence and implications of such humor and its role in perpetuating misogyny and sexism in Pakistani stage dramas.

We adhered to ethical guidelines throughout the research process by respecting intellectual property rights and ensuring that our analysis and reporting handled any potentially offensive content sensitively.

Discussion

Theme 1: Jokes related to women's physical appearance.

When we talk about jokes related to appearance, our primary concern here is physical. In almost every stage drama, we saw that the appearance of the women depended on their roles. For example, if a woman was given the role of a bride, she had a slim physique and a pretty face. On the other hand, if a woman was given the role of a maid,

she was fat and was dressed in a way that made her look funny. Similarly, the jokes also varied with the appearances of the women. The females in the drama who were pretty had more seductive jokes thrown towards them, whereas those who were not that pretty were made fun of solely by how they looked. In the first drama, “Churrian”, there was almost no act in which a woman’s physical appearance was not discussed or joked about. Still, as mentioned earlier, they varied according to appearance. For example, there was a lady playing the role of a maid, and the jokes made on her were:

- "Jairay paraa nu thand lagg rahi hai hath kharaa karo utay razai diye"
- "Mera khayaal hai pizzay de naal aik aadi dukaan vee khaadi naal"
- "Mughal-E-Azam daa dour ka takiya ae"

She was trolled because of the way she looked and was carrying herself. She wore tight clothes that made her look worse. With that, her face was covered in makeup that did not match her skin tone; hence, that made her look even more like a joke. On the other hand, somewhere in around Act 3, a women dressed as a bride enters, and the kind of jokes thrown towards her are as follows:

- "Ainj warghi aurtaan se 10 10 aadmi rakhay hoonday"
- "Kinay paisay lele gee?"
- "Bistar dee silwatein bataa rahi hain kurri ithay ae"

Now, because she was dressed as a bride, the jokes were more sexual and intimate. It involves talking about a woman’s appearance in a way that even if she is dressed as a bride, her facial expressions and body language made her look like a slut, like someone who has been going around with different men. Similarly, in our second drama “Taza Dry Fruit”, a dialogue was going on between two men. One of them was speaking for the other men’s sisters. The jokes made about them are as follows:

- "Ek payn daa kan wadaa, ek dee nak waddi, ek daa bul wadaa"
- "3 gaddiyaan… Kausar, nasreen te cultus"
- "Aiday wargay chaudhary kehnay aa mai ki faislaa karnaa ae raati meri apni paynaa chuki gayi aa. O chuki vee jaani aa?"

This is a classic representation of the kind of humor that takes place in stage dramas. Even when the women aren’t a part of the act, there’s still being told a utopian image that these men hold of those ladies. In the same way, there was another woman in the drama who was very fat and playing the role of a bride who had just come home. The joke made on her was:

- "Bahr nikal nee moto"

That woman was objectified on the basis of her looks and to make it funnier, she was wearing a dress that was slightly torn from the back and so she was trolled for being so fat that her dress was torn. In the same way, in another drama named “Dilbar Jani”, there was a girl dressed as a call girl. The kind of jokes made on her were:

- "Mere saamnay khaloti maraasiyan dee kutti"
- “Tusi dou vaari ainj kitta 3 vaari ainj kitta lou paisaa he paisaa"

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- "Ae 3-4000 jairaa muu te laaya ae aye dho mere goday wargaa muu nikalnaa ae tera"

She was dressed in a way that made her body more appealing to a man's eye. Most of her role included her bending down, her sitting weirdly and one way or another showcasing her upper body. In another drama named "Dil Thakgdi", there was a girl dressed in an appealing way portraying as if she was a call girl. The entire set up was that of a cold weather. The kind of jokes made on her were:

- "Mere kol aaja sardi barri ae"
- "Ae loya rakh le te koi bachi dede"
- "Chacha jee aidee naal dee 1 aur hai te pack kar diyo"
- "Ae ko kaaf dee heera mandi dee bohat shareef larki ae"

She was objectified in a way that made her look like a whore. She was also forced to sit on a bed with a strange man who kept touching her inappropriately. Moreover, the girl was so pretty that there were literal hoots from her co-actors after her every dialogue. They did not even let her finish the act and kept joking around about her appearance and her body. Similarly in another drama named "Ghare Dee Machi", there was a girl and a boy who were in love. The girl was wearing matching clothes with a boy and was staying close to that boy, the kind of joke made on her was:

- "O warr gayi jaidee andar"

Another drama named "Dholaa Chaddi Naa", there was a lady playing a role of a receptionist. She was very tall. The jokes made related to her height were:

- "Ae jiddi lambi aa ainu dair baad charni ae"
- "Mashallah ae jazz ka tower kairaa ae?"
- "Aye kurri tea apay he patri warghi lammi aa"

Just because she was taller than everyone else, she was made fun of. These are just a few examples that I've jotted down here. If you look at the bigger picture, we can see that stage dramas have a huge audience. When women and objectified like this by the media Mughals, there will definitely be a change in the behavior as to how men view and treat the women of our society. These media channels have influenced the thinking pattern of our society in such a way that calling women fat or ugly is not a problem anymore.

Theme 2: Jokes related to women's ascribed roles

A person's social identity or title that is assigned to them based on characteristics they have no control over, such as their gender, age, or race, is known as an ascribed role. This is a role that has been assigned to us without our input. Social roles that are assigned to people based on their sex is another way to understand the ascribed roles. For example, for women, the ascribed roles will include being a mother, a sister, etc.

In one of the drama named “Taza Dry Fruit”, two men were casually joking around, which were as follows:

- "Oh mera yaar… Oh te teri ammi vee kehndi see"
- "Anthak maa deya bacheya"

The way men spoke about the mothers and sisters, with little to no respect for them shows how only women, be it any kind, are only subjected to jokes when it comes to creating humor. There is not a single punchline in any drama regarding male roles or men in general that made the audience crack. Women are the selling point of the show. In this same drama, there was another joke that was:

- "Koi achi dai waaqaf hai? Twanu waapas pijwana ae"

This joke was made on a woman who, after being trolled throughout started trolling the same men who were trolling her. Because this was a woman responding, it was not even well received by the audience whereas the line above became the highlight of the entire act. Another dialogue from the same drama states:

- "Dulhan dee painoon, tusi andar jao mere kamray wich"

In this scene, and Man was talking to his wife’s sister-in-law. It depicted a scene that they were both married and wife’s sisters were just goofing around with the man. The man first asked his wife to go to wait for him in the room. When she failed to listen, he said the following line to them. In another drama named “Dilbar Jani”, there was a dialogue:

- "Saada te aik he abbu hai tere 2-3 hain te dass de"

Talking about women’s ascribed roles, you would never hear this dialogue the other way around. In most of the dramas we saw women were blamed for having more than one husband or more than one physical relation. Whenever the women would try to say something back, they were either shushed or thrown out of the act. We are still unsure as to either it was a part of the act or not. In the same drama there was another dialogue:

- "Oh teri biwi ae teri ammi nae"

Just because she is you wife, you are not really supposed to pay any attention to her. This is what they joked about and when the man felt like he was being trolled a lot, he started touching his “so called” wife for that act inappropriately and it shifted the attention to her. In another drama named “Dancing Car”, there were dialogues:

- "Gareeb maa de wailay bachay"
- "Waikh laein ghalat payn naa paish karayein"
- "Apni biwi nu kissi aur de kaar sulaa ditta"

Even when the women were not dressed as mothers or sisters and were not even around, they were still trolled. The entire acts were made funnier by using foul language for one’s maternal relations. The first dialogue portrays how a guy was speaking about his friend’s mother. The second one portraying that how easily were they talking about offering one’s sister to another. The third one portraying that hoe easy is it to add humor by trolling the role of a wife. Not only that, these are some of

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the most well received dialogues from the show. In another drama named “Dil Thagdi”, there was a very famous dialogue:

- "Kehta tera ki naam bolaa tariq teddy kehnda teri ammi daa naam? Kehnda sumera ready"

Tariq teddy was one of the most famous stage drama actors. Here he was talking to another co-actor who in order to troll tariq, said the following line. The line was so much loved by the audience that they started chanting “sumera nuu bulao”. In the same drama there was another line:

- "Abba mera ithay viyah naa hoyaa te mai dadi naal vayah karana ee"

A relation as pure as that of a grandmother and a child was being trolled and jokes about in front of thousands of people. Two things are important to note here. The first one is that jokes related to marriage are only made when it comes to a woman, not the other way around. Secondly, every female gender role has been trolled and maybe 1 or two male gender roles took a slight humorous hit. In another drama named “Lo Phir Aagaye”, there was a dialogue:

- "Tu kiu hass rahaa ae teri payn nass gayi hai?"

Use of unnecessary language is done in order to make the act funnier. It is all done to make the act funnier and one way or another it always works. The audience now expects humor in the form of female trolls only. In another drama named “Pariyon Ki Rani”, there was a dialogue:

- "Koi teri chachi, phuphi, khaala, langri, luli andaro laa k ithay suth"

In this one sentence every possible role associated with a woman was trolled. Not only that, the line was so well received that for the next minute, men kept laughing and cheering the actor who said it. When they talk about women like this, how do they expect the audience to not treat women like they own them. The lack of respect our society has today for our mother, sisters or women in general, major chunk of it are the entertainment units of our country. We portray women like some toy to be played with and once its done, to throw it away. Humor in our society is only directed towards women because they are the easier target. This is how we see women. This is how we portray them and this is exactly how we treat them in real life as well. Why is it that men who listen to their wives are considered weak? It is because of the way media has portrayed the roles. We do not tend to think anymore but just believe what we are shown. Our brains think what media directs us to think about, and it says nothing but to treat women with respect.

Theme 3: Jokes related to women’s sex

Sub Category: Sexual moves

Sexism is the opinion that one sex is better to the other. It is essentially prejudice or discrimination based on gender stereotypes and is frequently directed at women,

especially in patriarchal settings. People are aware that certain jokes have gone too far in various settings. However, in order to avoid conflict, many people continue to laugh along with the sexist, gender-based, and demeaning jokes that their peers tell. In stage dramas, the most active way of creating comedy is through sexual appeal or making jokes based on women's sex. In one of the dramas names "Dil Thagdi", the dialogues goes like:

- "Apni sister mere val paij dee kehnda easy paisaa"
- "Ae turdi ainj lagdiya 2 banday apas che chugliyaan kar raye ne"
- "Dariya ne vee kurri thandi karni mai vee thandi karni"
- "Shirt de thallay piyaliyaan de wich"

All of these dialogues happened between two men who were talking to each other while there was a woman present on stage. Sexualizing the women and touching them inappropriately is a common practice when it comes to stage dramas. Most of the dialogues are based on a women's body. They talk about it indirectly hence to make it cheesy. They touch women inappropriately and act like they do it unknowingly. In another drama named "Ghare Dee Machi", there were dialogues like:

- "Mera yaar.. Oh te teri ammi vee kehndi ae"
- "Anni daa bachiya maa daa aslaha laa k aagaya ae"

Here, jokes are made related to the sacred role of mother. This scene took place as a conversation between two friends trolling each other on stage. Sexist jokes often rely on derogatory stereotypes about women, perpetuating the belief that women are inferior or should be objectified. These jokes can reinforce harmful gender norms and contribute to the marginalization and devaluation of women in society. As you can see above, the actors or the producers of such entertainment channels do not find any harm in perpetuating such harmful stereotypes. In turn, the audience does not only use it as a source of entertainment but unconsciously also behaves the same exact way. In this same drama another dialogue goes like:

- "Kiway rob pawaan mai unj lamaan panaa"
- "Oh te pona pona ghaintaa saa bandd kardee see"

These lines were a part of an act where a girl was dressed as a bride. This dialogue took place between her and the husband when all of his friends on the stage. These dialogues were also well received by the audience. Because she was dressed as a bride, hence it might have only made sense to make such jokes regarding her. In another drama named "Baba Takka Sain", there were following dialogues:

- "Ae bachi mainu gift karde"
- "Uth pay kuriye baba kharaa hojaye gaa"
- "Baba jee mera kuch karo…Utay chaddar paa"

These scenes take place in a witchcraft setting. There is a baba and a girl enters with his father asking for help. She kneels down in front of the baba jee for help and he goes on and says the second line mentioned above. In another drama named "Pariyon Ki Rani", the following conversation took place:

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- "Hai koi teri maa pehn ainj warghi? Agar hai te suth market te"
- "Aidee payn ne kadaa ditta paseena"
- "'Kanjaran de khaandaan naal aidaa taaluq ae"

These dialogues take place in the very next scene when a guy enters with a girl and introduces her to a bunch of men. The girl then dances for them, hence the third dialogue. Today when we see men talking to women in a rather chill way and how they objectify them, one might wonder where this all is coming from. Sexist jokes can undermine the self-esteem and confidence of women and girls. Constant exposure to derogatory jokes can contribute to feelings of being devalued, objectified, or not taken seriously, leading to a negative impact on their overall well-being and sense of self-worth. In another drama named “Lou Phir Aagaye”, we have the following dialogues:

- "2 minto mai thanda karay"
- "Oh teri payn shameem naal kitta je teri payn dee awaaz aagayi?"
- "Je tu kamraa naa lekke ditta te ithay ee kaam hojana ae"
- "Baba jee meri 2 bachiyaan vee naal aaiyaan ne… Te lekke aa baba de kol"

In this scene, there are two people talking to each other. They are talking about one of the friend’s wife and how she is sexually. The scene proceeds and they hear foul noise in the background. One of the friends looks concerned while the other friend sees him the above mentioned second line. Later in that scene a woman enters. She’s really pretty and hence is objectified because of her beauty. Sexist jokes can normalize discriminatory attitudes and behaviors towards women. When people hear or participate in these jokes, it can create an environment where sexism is seen as acceptable or humorous, making it harder to address and challenge sexist behavior.

Talking about the sub-category of our theme, there is one thing comment in all of the dramas and that is at least one to two vulgar dance performances. In every drama we see that whenever there is a transition between acts, it is covered by dance performances. Usually, it wouldn’t be such a bad thing, but the way these women dance and how they sexualize their body is a matter of concern. The way they shake their bodies so that they might look appealing is nothing less than torture. The audience however, has now gotten so used to of it that they enjoy it. They ask for it and these performances are one of the biggest reasons why stage dramas still hold a big audience. It is also essential to note that the portrayal of women in Pakistani stage dramas has been a subject of debate and criticism. Some argue that certain performances objectify women, reinforce gender stereotypes, and promote a culture of commodification and sexualization. These concerns stem from the way women are sometimes depicted and the expectations placed upon them within these performances. In addition to the dancing, the side dancers touch and hold women in such aggressive and disrespectful manner that it feels sexually harmful. The sky dancers or even the co-actors treat these

women like they're not human. They hold them, touch them and sometimes pull them so close to themselves that it's almost terrifying to see. In most scenarios, we can also see that some of the women are trying to push these men away, but instead of getting off her they come closer. Looking at it from a broader perspective, how can we expect the people of our society to be respectful and calm towards are women when this is what we are showing and encouraging. In order to help men, treat women differently, we have to subconsciously change this mindset that women are just "women ". It is important to respect every sex irrespective of whoever it is. We never see anything happen vice versa only because we have set a mindset that women are the easy target.

Theme 4: Jokes related to women's achieved roles

The term "assigned roles of women" refers to the societal expectations, norms, and stereotypes that dictate the behaviors, responsibilities, and positions traditionally associated with women in a given culture or society. These assigned roles often reflect long-standing gender norms and are influenced by cultural, historical, and social factors. Assigned roles of women can vary across different societies and time periods. Examples of assigned roles traditionally associated with women include domestic responsibilities, caregiving, restricted career option, emotional labor, etc. Unfortunately, in our society, anything outside of these assigned roles makes our women questionable. In one of the dramas named "churrian", the following dialogue took place:

- "Ek naukrani rakhi, kam koi kardee nae. Aan lain de ainu dasna mai"
- "Tusi payn wayao agay dassay gee ki see"
- Women dressed as bride
- Women dressed as maid

In most of these dramas we can see that there are certain rules assigned to a woman and they're only fulfilling dad. For example, in the above-mentioned drama, we can see that the women are the ones playing the role of either the bride or the main. It's not that there were not any of the rules but it's a specific kind of role is always assigned to a woman. Similarly, when it comes to joking about the assigned roles of women, we can see that marriage, sex, their lowlife, etc. has always been the hot topics when throwing jokes towards them. In another drama named "Taza Dry Fruit", we have the following dialogues:

- "Ithay payn vaichee ee aa?"
- "Be-mausami aurat deya bacheya"
- "Pabi raati sawaa 2 bajay kithay gaye saa?"

Whenever there was a personalized joke made regarding a family member, it was always directed towards females. For example, the first line was a metaphor made by one guy towards the other. I haven't seen such disgraceful metaphors being sad about men but in every drama, we have hundreds of these regarding women. The second dialogue is a true representation of how even in our society we blame women for

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everything that goes wrong. Now it's just a normal conversation between two friends but in order to insult one of them, the other one decided to curse not only him but his mother as well because he is her son. Contrary to that, we don't ever see men blamed for raising their children wrong. This is a role that we are society has assigned to women only that raising a child is only a woman's job. The third dialogue shows how biased we are towards gender even when it comes to doing whatever a woman feels like doing. For example, we would never ask a man where he was or what he was doing at two in the morning outside. But the above-mentioned dialogue was used as an insult for his husband. In another drama named "Dilbar Jani", we had the following dialogues:

- "Teri payn mere piyo nu love letter likhdi aa"
- "Ae tere naal badtameezi kardi ae naa waich k cycle lelay"
- "Tenu mai talaak de ditti tenu kissi ne metro mai vee nae bithaana"

Now similarly if you look at our first dialogue, since it had to be used as an insult, it says the way it is. If it was to be used romantically or to show that men care, it would have been used vice versa. We treat women how we feel fit not how did deserve. In the second dialogue, we cannot see that how, if a woman refuses to obey, can easily be replaced by something as meaningless as a cycle. Women are belittled throughout like this the entire show. Similarly, our third dialogue portrays a rather significant mindset. It shows that how much women are dependent on men. Throughout the show, the specific lady was reminded that if she was divorced there wouldn't be any way the society would let her live respectfully. She was constantly told that she would be rejected of her basic human right if there wasn't a man on her head. Such jokes can undermine women's agency and autonomy by reducing their roles to predetermined societal expectations. This can discourage women from pursuing diverse interests, career paths, or personal goals, reinforcing the idea that their worth primarily lies in conforming to assigned roles. Jokes about assigned women roles can impede progress towards achieving gender equality. They create an environment where gender disparities are normalized and can hinder efforts to challenge and dismantle gender stereotypes and biases. Constant exposure to jokes that belittle or mock assigned women roles can negatively impact the self-esteem and well-being of women. It can contribute to feelings of devaluation, being misunderstood, or not being taken seriously, leading to a sense of frustration, inadequacy, and diminished self-worth. In another drama named "Dholla Chaddi Naa", the following dialogues took place:

- "Mainu pepsi pilaa de. Kiu payn daa rishtaa ditta ae?"
- "Tu hai ee kissi gandi nasal dee aa"
- "Aadi raat nu teri ammi nu kairee agg lagg gayi ae"

As you can see, even when joking around casually, they always find a way to somehow joke around regarding women. In this case, as we talk about woman's assigned roles

we can see how, when a person tends to do something wrong the women in their lives playing a rather prominent role are blamed for it. Similarly, women seen outside in midnight is taken in a negative connotation throughout. On the other hand, we see that most of the acts of these dramas taking place are in the set up that gives a rather midnight vibe. But since it's men who are under discussion so it doesn't really matter. Whereas, the women are being called a rather insulted for going out this late at night. Jokes about assigned women roles can create barriers for women who wish to pursue careers, hobbies, or paths that deviate from societal expectations. They can discourage women from exploring their full potential or from challenging traditional norms, hindering their personal and professional growth.

Theme 5: Jokes related to women's trauma

Joking about women's traumas refers to making light of or finding humor in experiences of trauma that women may have endured. It involves using humor or making comedic remarks about events or situations that are inherently distressing, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, harassment, or other forms of gender-based trauma. Examples of joking about women's traumas could include making jokes that trivialize or mock these experiences, using derogatory language, or employing insensitive humor that dismisses or belittles the suffering or pain associated with such traumas. This kind of humor can range from casual conversation and comments to more explicit jokes or anecdotes shared among individuals or within certain social contexts. It is important to note that joking about women's traumas is highly inappropriate and disrespectful. It disregards the seriousness and emotional impact of these traumatic experiences, potentially causing further harm to survivors and perpetuating a culture that minimizes or dismisses their pain. With that being said, when it comes to our stage dramas, there is little to no regard for this matter. For instance, in a drama named "Churrian", there was a dialogue:

- "Mai barri izzat karnaa twadi, kuriyaan ne twaday peeche innay blade maaray ne"

How can we expect our society to care for women and their traumas when this is what we are portraying? This very sentence is taken from a conversation between two men. In this, one of the men was praising the other one for being very respectful in his eye and the reason was that a girl tried to kill herself because of him. When men offer society sees the kind of treatment the guy was getting in the drama for being ruthless with the women, they would automatically want to be him. The already little to less regard that they have for women won't be there in another few years. In another drama named "Taza Dry Fruit", there are a few dialogues like:

- "Aidee dadi maree, logoon ne aalay dawaalay baraf layi, ainay amb laa liye"
- "Aiday wargay chaudhary kehnay aa mai ki faislaa karnaa ae raati meri bachi chuki gayi aa"

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A death of a close one is a very traumatic experience and a topic to talk about with someone. You may not know what's your audience is going through while they're watching the program. Such kind of remarks can easily trigger anyone to feel lonely or to think about something they might have been avoiding. Now the first dialogue here clearly states that someone was put in a coffin. It can take literally two seconds for anyone of the viewer to collapse back or to get triggered. While in the second dialogue we can see that the issue people are joking about is really sensitive. There might be someone watching whose child might have actually been abducted. With no regards to their feelings, our media channels decide to show everything and anything for the sake of entertainment. Now similarly in another drama named as "Dilbar Jani", there was this dialogue:

- "Jinnay dee khurakaan tu khaandi aan ussi galaan toh mai daliye te lagaa hua"

Compulsive eating disorder is a real thing. It takes years and years of practice and patience and treatment to cure it. Your one sentence can have a drastic emotional abusive effect on an individual, and you might not even realize it. Joking around about issues as sensitive as this can cost you big. Not everything is okay to be shown on media outlets as long as it creates humor. Sometimes, people can really get hurt and there is no way provided by these same outlets for them to feel okay. It is crucial to foster empathy, sensitivity, and respect when discussing or joking about sensitive topics, particularly those related to trauma and personal experiences.

Conclusion

The impact of gender-based humor in the digital age cannot be underestimated. It reinforces stereotypes, perpetuates inequality, and normalizes discrimination against women. Its widespread presence on social media platforms and the internet amplifies its reach and influence, affecting individuals and society at large. To foster a more inclusive and equitable society, it is crucial to critically analyze and challenge gender-based humor. Humor is one of the most important forms of entertainment that we have. However, there is a thin line between good and bad humor. When we talk about the mistakes that we made when we were kids, that is positive humor. However, when we talk about physical appearance, financial stability, or other serious life issues jokingly, we might not realize it, but our words can cut deep. To foster a more inclusive and equal society, it is important to challenge and avoid gender-stereotypical humor. Promoting humor that embraces diversity, challenges stereotypes, and treats individuals with respect and dignity is crucial. Analyzing gender-based humor in the digital age and its perpetuation of misogyny and sexism in stage dramas is an important step toward addressing these issues.

Sexist comedy will undermine and endanger women's social identities, destroy their sense of self-worth, and do so in a way that isn't just influenced by the circumstances. In turn, society will keep on degrading women and the roles they play. Any other women outside of specific gender stereotypical roles assigned to them by media will be considered immoral. After a thorough analysis of our sample, we can all agree as to how important is the role of media outlets in promoting gender stereotypical humor within society.

Humor that consistently targets women can perpetuate and reinforce harmful stereotypes. It can depict women as objects of ridicule, emphasizing traditional gender roles and diminishing their value and capabilities. This reinforcement of stereotypes can contribute to gender inequality and limit the opportunities and potential of women in society. When humor is consistently directed toward women, it can normalize discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. By making sexist jokes or using derogatory language, it sends a message that it is acceptable to demean or objectify women. This normalization of discrimination can contribute to a culture where sexism and gender-based mistreatment are seen as normal or humorous. Constant humor directed towards women can undermine their self-esteem and confidence. When women are repeatedly the target of jokes or mockery, it can create an environment where they feel devalued, ridiculed, or not taken seriously. This can have a negative impact on their overall well-being, self-worth, and sense of belonging.

Consistent humor targeting women can create a hostile or unwelcoming environment. It can contribute to a culture of harassment and discrimination, where women feel unsafe, disrespected, or excluded. This can have detrimental effects on their personal and professional lives, impacting their ability to thrive and succeed. When humor consistently belittles or marginalizes women, it can discourage their participation and advancement in various domains.

Constant humor directed towards women can strain relationships and create divisions among individuals. It can create tension, discomfort, and a sense of exclusion within social circles, workplaces, or even within families. This can hinder healthy interactions, trust-building, and collaboration among individuals of different genders. It is important to promote humor and comedy that is inclusive, respectful, and sensitive to the experiences and dignity of all individuals, regardless of gender. Challenging and addressing humor that perpetuates sexism and discrimination is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone feels valued and respected.

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