

A Thematic Analysis of Gender Identities’ Construction in Facebook Humorous Memes

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the main gender identity-related themes reflected in humorous Facebook memes and how they differed across gender groups. The study adopted a socio-cognitive discursive view of gender as a social identity. The principles of the theory of gender and power allow to shed the light on the mechanism behind the construction of gender identity as a two-way dynamic process influenced by the gender order including the definitions of masculinities and femininities, and affecting it as well through users’ active agency in challenging or supporting the hierarchal gender order.

A thematic analysis of 72 memes created by both male and female creators revealed 10 key themes related to the socio-cognitive construction of gender identity for both men and women. Many of the identified themes depicted negative characterizations of both men and women, which could be attributed to in-group favoritism dynamics according to social identity theory. Interestingly, these negative portrayals emerged from creators of both genders, raising questions about why the in-group would create memes holding derogatory connotations about their own group. This paradox was explained by the alignment of these portrayals with perceived ideals of masculinity and femininity, suggesting that these themes may hold positive connotations from the group's perspective, despite their seemingly derogatory nature.

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While the majority of the memes seemed to support the hierarchal gender order, some memes brought attention to the disparagement and limitations men and women face within hierarchal gender dynamics. However, there was a noticeable lack of explicit rejection or resistance towards these dynamics. Only memes within a theme related to women as liberal depicted explicit resistance to societal norms regarding marriage and men's authority over their conduct and choices.

The study highlighted the complex interplay of social identity dynamics and the perpetuation of gender norms within the realm of meme creation.

Keywords: thematic analysis, Facebook, memes, gender identity construction, socio cognitive constructions, gender and power, social identity

تحليل موضوعي لبناء الهوية الجندرية في المحتوى الفكاهي (الميمات) على
الفيسبوك

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الموضوعات الرئيسية المتعلقة بالهوية الجندرية كما تعكسها الميمات الفكاهية على فيسبوك وكيف تختلف عبر مجموعات الجندر (الرجال والنساء). تبنت الدراسة الرؤية الاجتماعية المعرفية التحليلية للجندر كهوية اجتماعية. تسمح مبادئ نظرية الجندر والسلطة بتسليط الضوء على الآلية الكامنة وراء بناء الهويات الجندرية كعملية ديناميكية ثنائية الاتجاه تتأثر بالنظام الجندري بما في ذلك تعريفات الذكورة والأنوثة، وتؤثر عليه أيضاً من خلال قدرة المستخدمين الفعالة في تحدي أو دعم النظام الجندري الهرمي.

كشف التحليل الموضوعي لـ ٧٢ ميمًا تم إنشاؤها من قبل الرجال والنساء عن ١٠ موضوعات رئيسية تتعلق بالبناء الاجتماعي المعرفي للهوية الجندرية لكل من الرجال والنساء. اشتملت العديد من الموضوعات المستخرجة على توصيفات سلبية لكل من الرجال والنساء، والتي يمكن أن تُعزى إلى ديناميكيات تفضيل الجماعة وفقاً لنظرية الهوية الاجتماعية. من المثير للاهتمام أن هذه التوصيفات السلبية نشأت من صانعي الميمات من كلا الجنسين، مما يثير تساؤلات حول سبب قيام الجماعة الداخلية بإنشاء ميمات تحمل دلالات سلبية عن جماعتهم. تم تفسير هذا التناقض من خلال توافق هذه التوصيفات مع الأيدولوجيات المثلى المدركة للذكورة والأنوثة، مما يشير إلى أن هذه الموضوعات قد تحمل دلالات إيجابية من منظور الجماعة على الرغم من طبيعتها التي تبدو سلبية.

بينما دعمت غالبية الميمات النظام الجندري الهرمي، إلا أن بعض الميمات لفتت الانتباه إلى التحقير والقيود التي يواجهها الرجال والنساء في إطار الديناميكيات الجندرية الهرمية. ومع ذلك، كان هناك نقص ملحوظ في الرفض أو المقاومة الصريحة لهذه الديناميكيات. أظهرت الميمات ضمن موضوع "النساء كمتحدرات" فقط مقاومة صريحة للأعراف الاجتماعية المتعلقة بالزواج وسلطة الرجال على سلوكهن واختيارهن.

سلطت الدراسة الضوء على التفاعل المعقد لديناميكيات الهوية الاجتماعية واستمرار الأعراف الجندرية في مجال إنشاء الميمات.

الكلمات الدالة: التحليل الموضوعي، فيسبوك، الميمات، بناء الهوية الجندرية، البناءات الاجتماعية المعرفية، الجندر والسلطة، الهوية الاجتماعية.

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1. Study Overview and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

There is a dispute between different frameworks over the conceptualization of sex and gender and the relationship between them, yet no single framework seems sufficient to understand gender. The multilayered approach manages to take a midway position between these frameworks. Furthermore, the critical realism approach view of sex and gender is compatible with the multilayered approach as it recognized sex as real biological characteristics acting as referent and foundation of gender, yet it does not consider gender a reducible to sex. However, scholars asserted the discursive nature of gender as a socio-cultural construct often described in relation to prevailing social ideologies and gendered practices.

Media play a prominent role in the depiction of gender as a social construction. Scholars mainly focused on issues of recognition and respect in various media forms. As media develop, gender representation continues to be re-constructed and re-challenged. Internet had opened up new spaces for gender construction due to its capabilities and wide spread, leading to new trends in gender construction enabled by social media.

Memes, as units of popular culture easily and widely shared among social media users, are considered a carrier of cultural narratives including gender representations. Memes are known for their entertainment functions due to its integration with humour. Humour allows memes to gain more popularity, dissemination, and acceptance among social media users, emphasizing the memes role in cultural communication. Humour is integral to discursive events and serve many purposes, including ideological ones.

The principles of gender and power theory helps to reveal how gender identity is constructed through a dynamic, two-way process. This process is shaped by the existing gender order, which encompasses

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definitions of various masculinities and femininities, and is also influenced by individuals' active roles in challenging or reinforcing this hierarchical gender order.

Social identities are considered socio-cognitive representations held by individuals identifying as members of a group. Since socio-cognitive representations serve as a base for categorizing and comparing people, it is important to take into consideration the concept of gender otherness while analysing gender construction in humorous memes. Men and women as social groups maintain their superior identities by referring to the out-group as 'other' through a hierarchical relationship favouring the in-group over the out-group. It is worth mentioning that the current gender order serving hegemonic masculinity led to the appearance of different types of masculinity within men group and different types of femininity within women group, with different interaction among these sub-groups. Since social groups value positive distinctiveness, they will use various means for attaining it, including sexist humour that positively distinguishes the in-group from the out-group.

Sexism has a multidimensional ambivalent nature consisting of hostile and benevolent sexism. Although women are more negatively affected by sexism in compare to men as they usually hold more dominant social positions, previous studies asserted that men are also subject to gender inequality as different groups of men receive different treatment. Furthermore, given that each gender group has distinct examples of different types of masculinities or femininities, it is essential to consider the relationships between the subgroups within each broader gender category.

Thereby, this study is interested in analysing these new trends by exploring the way gender identity is socially constructed in Facebook humorous memes as socio-cognitive representations across gender groups reflecting diverse voices and perspectives.

1.2 Problem Statement

Humour occupies a unique position among Egyptians in social interaction, as it serves many functions including ideological one. The wide spread of humorous memes as socially constructed public discourse urged the worthiness of analysing new trends in gender identity construction. While the study of memes has lately started to attract the attention of Arabic scholars, it is still not applied sufficiently in the field of gender studies. Furthermore, studies analysing gender identity construction in this new form of discourse focus on the representation of men and women as two broad groups. However, there is still a need for more focus on how different femininities and masculinities are constructed and thus, the relationships between the subgroups within each broader gender group. Also, few researches focused on Facebook as a platform for sharing memes, instead they focused on memes' websites, despite of the wide popularity of Facebook in Egypt as a social media site contributing in the proliferation of memes culture.

Hence, the research problem of this study is represented in exploring the social construction of gender identity in Facebook humorous image memes, while taking into consideration how otherness is achieved and the way these memes relate to the current gender order.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Identify the key themes related to the socio-cognitive construction of gender identity for both men and women, as depicted in the memes.
2. Analyze the differences in these themes based on the gender of the meme creators and the target gender group.
3. Investigate the alignment of these themes with ideals of masculinity and femininity, and the role of social identity dynamics in their perpetuation

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study extends the scope of previous research by employing thematic analysis to investigate the representation of various femininities and masculinities in memes. By examining these gender representations within the specific local context of Egyptian society, this study addresses a notable gap in the literature. This gap pertains to the insufficient description of Egyptian masculinities and femininities, which have traditionally been interpreted either through a Western lens or by foreign scholars focusing on the Egyptian and Arab contexts. This research provides a nuanced understanding of gender constructs specific to the Egyptian gender order.

Recently gender issues became one of the top priorities in Egypt and worldwide. Achieving gender equality is a main sustainable development goal of the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.) and an essential part of Egypt's 2030 sustainable development plan (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, n.d.). Since memes are usually integrated with humour, some memes have a sexist nature through disparaging certain gender groups, thus having possible effects as releaser of gender prejudice, which leads to an endless loop of power imbalance reproduction and gender inequality. This study will help providing insights about the current gender status in Egypt, reflected through Facebook humorous memes. Moreover, shedding the light on how some humorous memes can be used to express gendered meanings will help to encourage the lay public to think more critically of these memes and search for implicit messages in what seems to be mere entertainment on social media, thus, spread awareness among about the possible sexist meaning these memes might hold.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The main principles of the theory of gender and power are:

1.5.1 Gender as Social Practice

Connell challenged the assumption that the reproductive dichotomy or the biological makeup of the bodies are considered the absolute basis of gender, however, that does not mean that the body is not involved in gender practices, instead there is a strong relation between biology and social practices. Gender is considered a social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what they do, but it is not social practice reduced to the body (Connell, 1987; Connell, 2005).

1.5.2 Structural Model of Gender Relations

Connell (1987) developed a structural model to characterize gender relations among men and women, as well as between them. The concept of social structure denotes the constraints on practice inherent in a set of social relations, typically operating through a complex interplay of powers across various social institutions. This model comprises four main structures as follows:

1.5.2.1 Gender Division of Labour. Production, consumption, and distribution are arranged in gender lines. This includes a) allocating work based on gender, b) discrimination in training and promotion opportunities, c) gendering of occupations which extends beyond job allocation to include the design, nature, and organization of work, d) unequal payments, and e) the division between paid work and unpaid work.

1.5.2.2 Gender Division of Power. Force, power, and authority are operated on gender lines. This includes implicit or explicit organized violence, inequality of resources in institution, organizational control, legal power (Connell, 1987).

1.5.2.3 Cathexis. Emotional attachment among people and groups are organized along gender lines. This emotional attachment might be affectionate, hostile, or both at the same time (ambivalent). Cathexis extends to include the extensive objectification of women (Connell, 1987).

1.5.2.4 Symbolism. Symbolic relations are the way gender identities are defined in culture, the language and symbols of gender difference, the dominant beliefs about gender (Connell, 2005), and the meanings assigned to the concepts of masculinity and femininity. The social construction of certain actions as symbolically masculine or feminine is not neutral, but reinforced by ideologies that place femininity as subordinate to masculinity (Connell, 2009).

These structures are distinct but cannot function independently of one another. Instead, there is a significant amount of overlap and intersection (Connell, 1987).

1.5.2 Gender Regime and Gender Order

Gender regime refers to the structural inventory of a particular situation. It describes gender-based institutionalized power relations which assign men and women to different social tasks and characterize specific social institutions. Gender order refers to the structure inventory of an entire society. Gender order describes a historically constructed pattern of power relations as well as definitions of masculinity and femininity. Gender order include the creation and contestation of hegemony. Gender order is very dynamic as gender relations can be renovated in new pattern, that will in turn advantage and disadvantage certain groups (Connell, 1987). Tendencies that destabilise gender regimes act as catalysts for change in a society's gender order. (Connell, 2009).

1.5.3 Femininities and Masculinities

Each of the major structures affects the way femininities and masculinities are produced and hierarchized in a certain milieu (Connell, 1987). They are situationally specific social actions that comprise

normative actions and behaviours for which men and women are held liable (Messerschmidt 2000; 2004). Certain forms of masculinity and femininity are idealised, while others are stigmatised (Charlebois, 2011). They can be summarized as follows:

1.5.3.1 Hegemonic Masculinities. Connell (2005) defined it as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p.77). The creation and maintenance of unequal gender relations with dissident masculinities and femininities is a defining feature of hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2016). Hegemonic masculinity varies across cultures, yet, it has general tenets related to ideal masculine attributes, including physical strength, courage, self-assertiveness, wealth, attractiveness, virility, acting as a rescuer, and the absence of stereotypical feminine traits. In the Middle East, patriarchal authority and patrilineal loyalty are also main dimensions (Kårtveit, 2022).

1.5.3.2 Dominant Masculinities. Messerschmidt (2016) defined dominant masculinities as “the most powerful types in the sense of being the most celebrated, common, or current forms of masculinity in a particular social setting” (p.38). Dominant and hegemonic forms of masculinity are usually mistakenly conflated, yet they are different. Hegemonic masculinities are always in unequal relationships with nonhegemonic masculinities and femininities, implying subordination. Dominant masculinities are powerful but do not involve the construction of such hierarchical relationships. Dominant masculinities do not have equivalent power as hegemonic masculinities.

1.5.3.3 Emergent Masculinities. Emergent masculinities, to encompass new patterns of masculine practice that are transformative in the lives of Arab men. Men emergent masculinities include their desire for monogamous love marriage, conjugal intimacy and privacy, commitment to and emotional connection with their wives, and living in

nuclear family. They adopt latest technologies, involve in political and gender equality activism, encourage daughters' education, do not consider fatherhood to be the pinnacle of masculinity. New Arab men reject traditional notions of manhood associated with their Arab forefathers. They engage in new masculinity practices that may become new hegemonic ways that may involve, if not rejection, at least decentring of patriarchy (Inhorn, 2012)

1.5.3.4 Complicit Masculinities. There is a limited number of men who actually meet the normative standards of hegemonic masculinity. Hence, complicit masculinities was recognized to theorize the situation of men who do not precisely practice hegemonic masculinity, but have connection with it as they benefit from the patriarchal advantages. They receive advantages like material wealth and social power from maintaining unequal gender order (Connell, 2005).

1.5.3.5 Subordinated Masculinities. Subordinated masculinities are men who are marginalized for not adhering to hegemonic masculinity or because of their embodied femininity like being physically weak or submissive (Connell, 2005). Their embodied gender displays blur the sharp distinction between masculinity and femininity, and thus threaten to undermine hegemonic masculinity's dominant position (Charlebois, 2012). Those who challenge this social norm are subjected to stigmatization and sanctions (Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt et al., 2009).

1.5.3.6 Marginalized Masculinities. Marginalized masculinities refer to the subordinated classes or racial groups (Connell, 2005). Schippers (2007) criticized defining variation in gendered practice across different races, and classes as different, she suggested considering this variation as hegemonic masculinity embodied through race and class variation. Charlebois (2012) used the term subordinate masculinities as an umbrella term including those who face social marginalization on the basis of race or class and on the basis of gender deviant social action.

Using this term in its broad sense aims to highlight the overall subordinated status of all nonhegemonic masculinities.

1.5.3.7 Oppositional Masculinities. Nonhegemonic masculinities that represent significant breaks from hegemonic masculinity, and may even threaten its dominance, are referred to as oppositional masculinities (Messerschmidt, 2000). This includes individuals who construct masculinities through social practices that challenge hegemonic norms (Hodges & Budig 2010). Accordingly, nonhegemonic masculinities are not only marginalized, but they also have the potential to equalize gender relations through oppositional masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2016).

The distinction of different masculinities does not imply that they are all-inclusive or mutually exclusive, instead, they all intersect and produce hybrid forms (Charlebois, 2012).

1.5.3.8 Emphasized\ Hegemonic Femininities. According to Connell, there is no femininity that is hegemonic as all types of femininity are constructed within the context of the overall subordination of women to men. Emphasized femininity is based on compliance with this subordination, it currently has the most support as it accommodates the interests and desires of men. Messerschmidt (2004) developed the emphasized femininity concept and defines it as the culturally idealized form of femininity in a given historical and social setting. This definition is more inclusive (Wajcman, 2013). Schippers (2007) suggested that the ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity does not negate the existence of hegemonic femininity and its ascendancy over other femininities to support the gender order emphasizing male domination, however, she does not neglect femininity's overall subordinate status in relation to masculinity.

1.5.3.9 Dominant Femininities. Dominant femininities are the most powerful or widespread type of femininity in terms of being the most celebrated, common, or current form of femininity in a specific social

setting (Messerschmidt, 2011), however, it does not necessarily imply a hierarchical relationship between masculinity and femininity. Dominant femininities are never emphasized unless they met the criteria of being subordinate to hegemonic masculinity.

1.5.3.10 Subordinate Femininities. Subordinate femininities are constructed as deviant in relation to emphasized and dominant femininities (Messerschmidt, 2011). Subordination can occur based on race, class, age, bodily display, or behaviour (Messerschmidt, 2011). Women who practice certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity and therein forgoing emphasised femininity face social stigmatisation, and regulation (Messerschmidt 2004; 2011; Messerschmidt et al., 2009).

1.5.3.11 Pariah Femininities. Both Connell (1987) and Schippers (2007) argued that women who express and embody hegemonic masculinity defy the workings of the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity. When a woman is authoritative, taking charge, or physically violent, she is sanctioned and stigmatised. Schippers (2007) viewed these femininities as not inferior but as contaminating the relationship between masculinity and femininity and challenging the ascendant position of hegemonic masculinity.

1.5.3.12 Oppositional Femininities. It describe femininity that is not practiced in a complimentary, complementary, and accommodating subordinate relationship with hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2011). Charlebois (2010) adopted the term oppositional femininities instead as it captures the idea of resistance to hegemonic femininity without carrying the negative semantic connotations of social outcast. Also, it encompasses a broader range of femininities.

Oppositional femininities can be classified into equality femininities who subvert aspects of hegemonic femininity by opposing disempowering feminine practises of hegemonic femininity, and oppositional femininities who subvert hegemonic femininity through toxic masculine practices like peer bullying. Although these women gain

power, their gendered behaviour promotes the naturalisation of a toxic masculine practice and the formation of hierarchical relationships.

As with masculinities, there is some overlap and intersection between emphasised, subordinate, dominant, and oppositional. (Charlebois, 2012).

1.5.2 Applying the Theory to the Study

Theory of gender and power sheds the light on the mechanism behind construction of gender, so it will help to analyse the construction of gender as a social identity within the gender regime of media, specifically in Facebook humorous memes. Memes creation and reacting to them are forms of daily social interaction which is a location for gender relations to form. This interaction is located in media as a social institution. Gender relations take place within the dimensions of gender structures of social relations. These structures influence the construction of gender, as these structures affect the production, interaction, hierarchization of masculinities and femininities, and their historical composition into a gender order. However, individuals are active agents in gender construction who can challenge or support the hierarchal gender relationships through their gender practices constituting different types of masculinities and femininities. Thus, the process of gender identity construction and its relation to the gender order is a two-way dynamic process. Hence, the analysis of helps to further explore how they relate to the current gender order of the Egyptian society. The analysis of gender construction is located within the symbolic realm of gender relations, as the analysis focuses on the language and symbols of memes.

After reviewing the different ways for classifying masculinities and, this research utilizes the following classification. It is an attempt to consider the hybridity and dynamicity of masculinities and femininities. It describes how they can fluctuate between affirming and challenging

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the hierarchal gender order, despite of having different degrees of power.

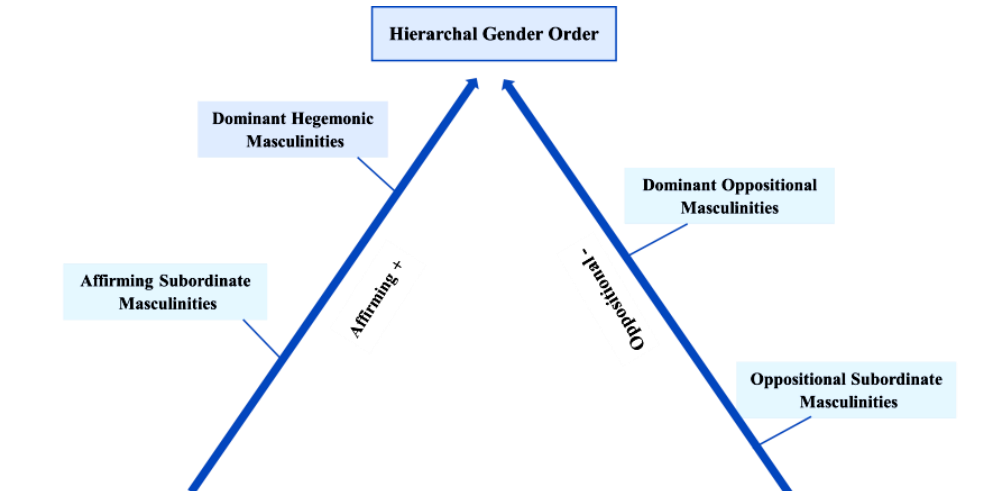


Figure 1.1: Types of Masculinities and Their Relation to the Hierarchal Gender Order

Hegemonic masculinity was embedded with dominant masculinity in dominant hegemonic category because they have common characteristics and practices representing exemplary or idealised forms of masculinity in a particular social context. What makes dominant masculinity simultaneously hegemonic or oppositional is whether they involve in legitimization and sustaining with other masculinities and femininities. Complicit masculinity is embedded under the umbrella of subordinate masculinity on the affirming side, as they both lack the ideal characteristics of hegemonic or dominant masculinity and are inferior to it. Each strives for the ideals of dominant hegemonic masculinity and tries to compensate for their inferiority complex but in different ways. However, complicit masculinities are more like alliance to hegemonic dominant masculinity.

Dominant hegemonic masculinities are considered on the top of the hierarchy as they have the most celebrated ideals of masculinity and are the most beneficiaries of the hierarchal system, followed by the

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dominant oppositional masculinities who also have the most celebrated ideals of masculinity but are non- beneficiaries of the hierarchal system, then the subordinate masculinities on the affirming side who lack many of the celebrated ideals of masculinity but participate in legitimizing it, at last there are the oppositional subordinate masculinities who lack many of the celebrated ideals of masculinity, oppose it, and do not benefit from the hierarchal system.

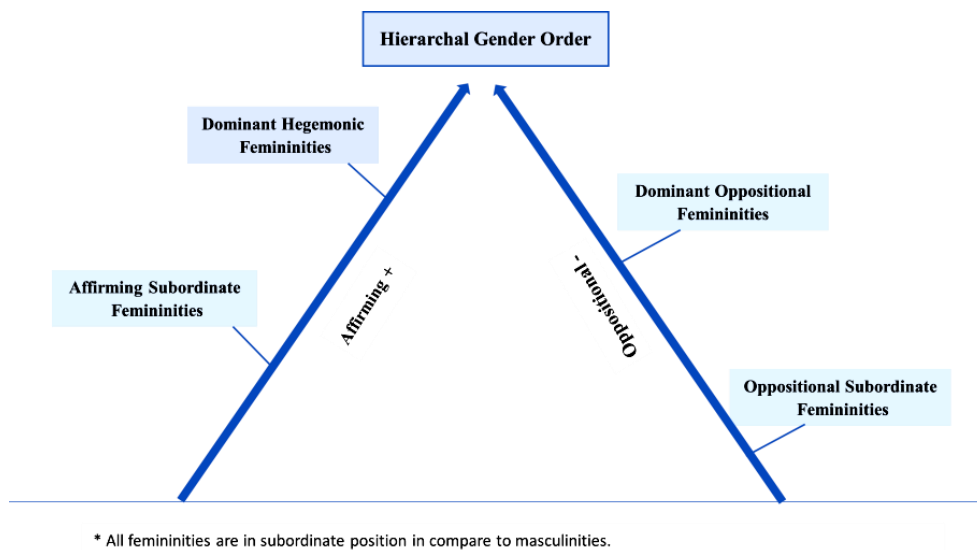


Figure 2.2: Types of Femininities and Their Relation to the Hierarchal Gender Order

Similarly, hegemonic femininity was embedded with dominant femininity in dominant hegemonic category because they have common characteristics and practices widely celebrated as ideals of femininity in a particular social context. Dominant femininity is either simultaneously hegemonic or oppositional based on their relationship of subordination to hegemonic masculinity. It is worth mentioning that dominant femininity can oppose hierarchal gender relation by rejecting upholding subordinate position to hegemonic dominant masculinity, yet it might engage in practices subordinating other femininities at the same time, thus, simultaneously affirming certain aspects of the hierarchal gender

order. They cannot be considered as equality femininity as long as they maintain unequal relations with other femininities.

Subordinate femininity can participate in legitimizing the hierarchal gender order either by accepting the ideals of hegemonic dominant femininity, admiring them, and striving to achieve them, or by engaging in toxic masculine practices that form hierarchical relationships.

Dominant hegemonic femininities are considered on the top of the hierarchy as they have the most celebrated ideals of femininity, have ascendancy over other femininities, and are the most supportive of the gender order emphasizing male domination, followed by the dominant oppositional femininities who also have the most celebrated ideals of femininity but do not support the gender order emphasizing male domination, then the subordinate femininities on the affirming side who lack many of the celebrated ideals of femininities but participate in legitimizing it, at last there are the oppositional subordinate femininities who lack many of the celebrated ideals of femininity and oppose it.

Social identity theory literature allows to deepen the analysis by examining intergroup relations among men and women groups represented through gender identities constructed in humorous memes. According to it, social groups compete for positive distinctiveness and use various means to achieve so. So, it helps to investigate how each gender group construct their identities through emphasizing positive things about themselves while derogating the other out-group. Since each gender group has different exemplifiers of various types of masculinities or femininities, it is useful to take into consideration the relations between the subgroups of each broad gender group.

1.5.3 Research Questions

The study aims to explore the following research questions:

RQ1: *What are the predominant gender identity related themes in Facebook humorous memes created by men?*

RQ2: *What are the predominant gender identity related themes in Facebook humorous memes created by women?*

RQ3: *How do the themes related to gender identity differ between Facebook humorous memes created by men and women?*

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sex and Gender Conceptualization

2.1.1 The Critical Realism Framework

This acknowledges that social mechanisms influence the allocation of sex categories and thus the social divisions into male and female. However, the reality of sexual difference is distinct from the social processes that assign sex categories. Gender represents the social manifestation of sexual difference, encompassing beliefs, values, expectations, social relations, and ordered practices. Gender arrangements vary across cultures but consistently reference sexual difference. While sex is foundational to gender, gender is not reducible to or determined by sex (New, 2020).

2.1.2 The Multilayered Framework

It views gender as a complex system operating at individual, interactional, and institutional levels (Wharton, 2012). Andersen (2020) argues that while the individualist approach effectively explains how inequality is reproduced through socialization it falls short in explaining the social-structural origins of gender inequality. The interactionist approach focuses more on social context than the individualist approach does (Wharton, 2012). According to Carter (2014), gender identities are diffuse identities that can take on any of three types of identities. These identities are: a) person identities referring to the self-meanings allowing a person to realize a sense of individuality, b) role identity referring to meanings a person attribute to the self while performing a role, and c) social identity referring to meanings individuals have when they identify with groups or categories.

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This discussion underscores the insufficiency of any single framework to fully grasp gender dynamics, leading to the adoption of a multilayered approach in this study. Wharton's (2012) conceptualization of gender serves as the basis, with additional elements incorporated for a comprehensive perspective, particularly regarding the relationship between sex and gender. A critical realist view allows for a nuanced understanding, compatible with the multilayered approach. Based to this, gender can be defined as multilayered system of practices and relations, *always referring to sexual differences but not reduced to it*. These practices and relations operate at all levels of the social world. They affect individuals' identities and characteristics, patterns of social interaction, and social institutions. *These practices and relations create and maintain a hierarchal dynamic gender order advantaging and disadvantaging certain gender groups**. The researcher concluded a definition of sex from a critical realism perspective to be deployed within this study. Sex is real biological characteristics classifying almost all human beings into males and females. Males' and females' bodies have different causal powers but they have much in similar, so they are not entirely dichotomous, but almost is. Sex is the referent and foundation of gender acting as a background mechanism among many other mechanisms shaping gender order.

2.2 Gender as a Social Identity

2.2.1 Socio-Cognitive Discursive View of Gender Identity

Gender identity is viewed as constructed, discursive, and thus dynamic and unstable (Van Dijk, 1998). Language is a unique tool for exerting power and constructing identity (Foucault, 1998). Gender has varying linguistic manifestations as different contexts of language use produce different gender identities informed by gender ideologies (Andersen, 2020). Gender ideologies are a system of beliefs people rely on to account for, and justify their behavior (Shitemi, 2009). This study

* Elements added to Wharton's (2012) definition of gender are written in *italic*.

is mainly concerned with gender as social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identities are theorized as socio-cognitive representations held by people who identify as members of a group (Koller, 2012; Van Dijk, 1998). Socio-cognitive representations are not individually held mental models, but organized, socially shared sets of knowledge about an object or domain of objects that combine the affective structures with inherent normative and evaluative dimensions (Augoustinos et al., 2014). Intergroup discourse, in which groups engage for purposes of self-presentation, self-defense, legitimation, persuasion, recruiting, and so on, particularly shapes social group identity (Van Dijk, 1998).

2.2.2 Otherness

Social categorization and social comparison are main pillars of the development of social identity (Trepte, 2006). Individuals are classified first by themselves, then by the various factors and triggers that surround them, such as the media, society, and institutions that shape them (AbdulMegied, 2022). Social comparison is a social action used to compare one group to another. Othering is the process itself through which a difference is transformed into otherness to create an in-group and out-group (Staszak, 2008), through this process identities are established in an unequal relationship (Crang, 1998), as the in-group represents the norm and valued identity, while the out-group is defined by their flaw and thus devalued and vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion (Staszak, 2008). Stereotypical traits are used to reinforce the notion of otherness as they involve a heightened focus on the other as different and a rejection of those who are othered (Harmer & Lumsden, 2019). Turner et al. (1987), pointed out that when differences of people within a category are minimized, while the differences between categories are maximized, this leads to depersonalization. Depersonalization is a process of self-stereotyping through which people perceive themselves as interchangeable exemplars of a social category rather than as distinct personalities defined by individual differences.

2.3 Sexism

Sexism describes prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups based on their sex or gender and that one sex is superior to another (Cardoso et al., 2021; Ricci, 2020). Sexism is used to maintain patriarchy, or male dominance, through the ideological and material practices of individuals, collectives, and institutions that oppress women and girls based on their sex or gender. Economic exploitation and social dominance are common forms of oppression (Masequesmay, 2020). The term e-sexism appeared to describe sexism in the online, electronic, or virtual realm (Clark & Stowers, 2016).

2.3.1 Men Versus Women as Targets of Sexism

Sexism mainly affects girls and women (Cardoso et. al, 2021), as men are in socially dominant positions in compare to women (Manzi, 2019). Furthermore, the consequences of sexism are more likely to be psychologically more harmful for the powerless (Schmitt et al., 2002). However, the term reverse sexism emerged by the late twentieth century to focus on disadvantages men experience under feminism's discourses and affirmative practices focused on women (Manzi, 2019). Benatar (2012) coined the term second sexism to refer to wrongful discrimination against men on the basis of sex. He claims that the second sexism is usually unrecognized, neglected, and not taken seriously to the extent that it might appear laughable to some. He acknowledged that sexism against women is still a more severe problem worldwide. He did not condemn females or feminism for the second sexism

2.3.2 New Forms of Sexism

Sexism has a multidimensional ambivalent nature consisting of hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism reflects negative evaluation of women with nonconventional roles. Benevolent sexism is subjectively positive yet sexist toward women in traditional roles. Benevolent sexism's protective paternalism and complementary gender

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differentiation aspects lead to the perceptions of women as needing protection and dependent, while men are expected to exert power over women, to protect and care for them. (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolence toward men refers to women's positive feelings of affectionate protectiveness, admiration, and connection with them, while hostility toward men refers to women's resentment of the consequences of this dominance, sexist attitudes portraying men as superior, and the way through which men assert control within intimate relationships (Lorenzi-Cioldi & Kulich, 2015).

Benevolent sexism is linked to gender stereotypes, which is linked to traditional sex roles (Swim et. al, 1995). There are two types of gender stereotypes; the descriptive stereotypes referring to expectations about traits that are typically associated with men and women, and the prescriptive stereotypes referring to beliefs about what men and women should be and should not be like (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). The threat of facing backlash when violating gender stereotypes keeps many women and men behaving in accordance with societal norms (Glick & Fiske, 2007).

2.4 Gender Construction in Media

Media use reflects and shapes both language use and attitudes. Media is one of the most influential sites of popular culture which is consumer culture produced for mass consumption. It refers to the beliefs, practices, and objects that are part of everyday traditions. Popular culture strongly affects the social construction of gender. Media popular culture is considered a place for the creation of new form of expression, as well as a vehicle for critique (Popa & Gavrilu, 2015). The media transmits gendered images, and hence fictitious representations of masculinities and femininities, nonetheless, the media's power is not limited to merely represent but to further construct notions of dominant, hegemonic, subordinate, and opposing femininities and masculinities (Litosseliti, 2006). Research analysing the

construction of gender in different media forms had focused on two related issues, which are recognition and respect (Ali & Batool, 2015; Ward & Grower, 2020).

2.4.1 Gender Construction on Social Media

The concept of gender has broadened as a result of the ease of communication in cyberspace and the interactions of people with diverse attitudes, behaviors, and customs (Gómez-Diago, 2012). Social trends, rather than the familiar long-term identities, affect individuals daily lives in modern times. The "we" within virtual communities provides a sense of unity, even if it is deceptive and intangible in solid existing forms of social interaction. Harmer and Lumsden (2019) referred to the term "online othering" to describe the abundant behaviors, conversations, and discourses that aim to (re)draw boundaries in, around, and between virtual spaces, and which shape the rules and norms determining which groups have legitimacy to participate in these spaces, and which are not.

Social media fosters a participatory culture (Atton, 2004) as they provide various features that aid in the construction of online identities through socializing, synchronous and asynchronous communication tools (Hepper & Carnelley, 2012). Social media reinforces gender stereotyping (Dasgupta, 2018). However, Web 2.0 offers unique opportunities for marginalised social groups, including women, to express their distinct voices (Shifman & Lemish, 2010). Facebook users can display their identities in a variety of ways (Dasgupta, 2018). Visual communication is a popular mode of communication on social media (Fahmy et al., 2014). Memes are one of the visual tools used by narrators on social media (Gbadegesin, 2019).

2.4.1.1 Memes. Shifman (2013) defined memes as units of popular culture that are circulated, imitated, and transformed by internet users, resulting in a shared cultural experience. It is a socially constructed public discourse which represent diverse voices and perspectives. Shifman (2014) further asserted that the main three components of

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memes are visual which is usually a still photo, text surrounding the visual, and humour. Regarding the characteristics of memes, they are expected to be catchy and have the ability to replicate and spread ideas on social media (Milner, 2013). By relying on jokes that revolve around an audience's familiarity with pop culture, politics, and real-world events, memes serve their function as relatable content (Breheny, 2017). Memes, like all visual imagery, play a role in representativeness and cultural transmission because visual imagery can have a direct impact on the self-perception of its viewers and reflect the culture that created it (Good et al. 2010). Although memes provide agencies for the representation of self and other identities in relation to existing paradigms, they provide opportunities to challenge these paradigms in relation to new and emerging cultures (Ferree & Hall, 1990).

2.4.1.2 Humour. Humour is a type of verbal and nonverbal communication that is deemed entertaining and capable of making others laugh (Billig, 2005). Humour has multiple potential functions beyond mere entertainment, such as the maintenance and subversion of hierarchies, the formation of group solidarity, or the reinforcement of boundaries and stereotypes. Humour projects new trends and in the construction of gender identities. Disciplinary humour is used to mock those who do not conform to social norms, whereas rebellious humour is used to mock and subvert established rules and conventions (Billig, 2005). People can use humour to express hostile attitudes toward others in a safe way (Brunner & Costello, 2002). Sexist humour is a type of disparagement humour, as it subtly express shared stereotypes and hostile feelings towards gender. The rise of social media has made it easier to spread sexist humour as it allows users to share sexist jokes on globally while remaining anonymous (Fitzgerald, 2006).

2.4.1.3 Gender Construction in Humorous Memes. Patoma (2018) conducted a study on internet memes and found that both men and women were subjected to gender stereotyping. The memes depicted men

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and women alike as bothersome, cynical, emotional, and clueless, though men tended to be portrayed as more confident. Siddiqi et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative content analysis of sexist memes and discovered pervasive elements of patriarchal bias, gender stereotypes, and derogatory language directed towards women. They noted that these memes often used humor as a vehicle for expressing sexism, with derogatory language frequently employed. Drakett et al. (2018) conducted a thematic analysis of internet memes and observed a trend of derogation towards women, perpetuating hegemonic masculinity. They found that women were often portrayed as "other," reinforcing traditional gender norms and roles. Lincoln (2019) investigated gender representation in political memes from the 2016 United States Presidential election on Twitter. She found that women were significantly underrepresented in both the network and the content of the memes. This perpetuated patriarchal assumptions about politics being predominantly male-dominated. Siregar et al. (2019) examined internet memes from Meme Comic Indonesia's Instagram wall and identified various stereotypes about women. They noted portrayals of women as temperamental, less credible about time, and aggressive, among other stereotypes. However, they also found instances where women were portrayed as dominant, challenging traditional gender roles. Gbadegesin (2019) discussed Correct Bae memes as a form of resistance against hegemonic masculinity. However, despite this attempt at challenging gender norms, Nigerian men's perceptions of women remained largely patriarchal, reflecting deep-seated societal attitudes. Kurpershoek (2018) argued that internet memes could serve as tools for feminist activism by subverting dominant discourses. They contended that memes could instill a sense of belonging in female audiences and encourage men to recognize and address their biases. Ibrahim (2019) explored the portrayal of veiled Muslim women in internet memes and GIFs. They found that these memes often depicted veiled women positively,

countering negative stereotypes prevalent in traditional media and advocating for hijab acceptance and respect.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A qualitative analysis is conducted through thematic analysis (TA) to answer the study's research questions that explore the *predominant themes related to gender identity depicted in Facebook humorous memes and how they differ between men and women groups*. TA is a widely utilized qualitative analytic method that allows for the formalization of textual interpretation through coding and the identification of thematic patterns (Alejandro & Zhao, 2023; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012). TA was conducted within a constructionist paradigm. Within this framework, meaning and experience are construed as socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering within individuals (Burr, 1995). Employing TA within such a paradigmatic lens aims to theorize the sociocultural contexts and structural underpinnings that underlie individual narratives.

3.2 Data Collection and Selection

The study examines Egyptian humorous memes on Facebook, which feature images accompanied by Arabic text. Facebook was selected as the platform due to its popularity in Egypt, with 85% of internet users using it monthly in January 2024 (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2024). The analysis does not focus on specific time periods or events but aims to understand ongoing identity construction. Data collection occurred over six months from April to September 2023.

To determine data sources for meme collection on Facebook, a pilot study was conducted due to the lack of comprehensive lists for identifying popular accounts, groups, or pages in Egypt. The absence of such lists is one of the challenges of selecting a sample from the

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Internet. (Zoghaib, 2009). The sample of the pilot study was selected purposively to include almost equal numbers of men 48.5% (n 34) and women 51.4% (n 36). The sample was stratified equally into the age groups (from 18 to less than 25) and (from 25 to less than 34), as these age groups are considered the most active users of social media in Egypt (Galal, 2023; Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2024). An online questionnaire in Arabic was used to collect data in September 2023. The link to the questionnaire was shared on some public Facebook groups to invite the respondents to fill it.

The top three men's and women's accounts with the most followers on Facebook by the end of September 2023 were selected for meme collection to achieve data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). These accounts were verified for authenticity, activity, and personal information. Only the first letters of the account names were mentioned to maintain confidentiality. The selected men accounts are W.D (759000 followers), A.A (420000 followers), and M.M (311000 followers). The selected women accounts are L.I (729000 followers), M.W (289000 followers), N.S (121000 followers). Only the first letters of these account names were mentioned since it was impractical to contact them to obtain permission to analyse their memes, especially as the research focused on potential sexist connotations. This act was done to maintain confidentiality.

The sample collection process involved several stages to minimize researcher subjectivity and ensure data depth. A purposive sample of Facebook humorous image memes was chosen based on: a) being centred on gender issues; b) having interaction on it; c) being relevant to the research questions; d) being clear and easy to understand; e) being relevant to the users by referring to something they can relate to.

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Afterwards, for validity purposes, the collected memes were checked by four other academic researchers and gender consultants¹ separately. Each one evaluated the memes independently on a five points Likert scale consisting of four statements. These statements reflected the previously mentioned sampling criteria, except for the interaction criteria that is indicated from the numbers of reactions and shares provided by Facebook. Memes that have total average score above 10 were selected for analysis. This allows to achieve investigator triangulation which is the involvement of two or more researchers in the study to provide multiple perspectives and add breadth to the examined phenomena (Carter et al., 2014). Initially, 150 memes were collected, but after filtering based on evaluation ratings, the final sample size was reduced to 72 memes². Selection was also guided by data saturation, ensuring thorough analysis by examining both frequency and depth. Additionally, two more memes from each account were examined to enrich the analysis after data saturation was achieved (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017).

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The collected memes were organized and categorized based on the meme's given number, source, date of publishing, gender of the meme creator, and reactions on the meme. The process of conducting TA on the dataset of memes followed several delineated steps:

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Ms. Heba Ali Youssef- Programme Associate at the United Nations Populations Fund- MA in Gender and Development from Faculty of Economics and Political Science- Cairo university

Ms. Alia Soliman- Advocacy and Communication Officer at the World Health Organization- MA in Gender and Development from Faculty of Economics and Political Science- Cairo university

Ms. Mai Khaled- Gender Consultant for multiple national and international organizations

² Memes can be accessed through the QR code

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Firstly, the researcher immersed herself in the data by iteratively reading and re-reading it, thereby noting initial insights.

Secondly, initial codes were generated manually to facilitate a deeper engagement with the dataset and a comprehensive understanding of it. The coding process adhered to an inductive approach. Inductive approach is data driven, as data coded without attempting to fit them into preconceived coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, a degree deductive analysis was employed to ensure that the open coding led to producing themes that are meaningful to the research questions and to prioritize meaningful interpretations of the data. The utilization of both semantic and latent coding strategies was integral to the analytical process. Data items were coded semantically to capture explicit or surface meanings, while latent coding sought to uncover underlying ideas, assumptions, and ideologies shaping the semantic content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data items containing multiple ideas were coded multiple times. The evolution of codes, from initial iterations to final versions, was meticulously documented.

Thirdly, codes were assembled into potential themes. These themes were then reviewed to assess their suitability as distinct themes, their quality and coherence, their relevance to the research questions, the delineation of their boundaries, and the amount of available data supporting them. Subsequently, clear definitions and labels were crafted for each identified theme.

4. Results of the Study

4.1 Answering Research Questions

The TA analysis of 72 memes³, revealed an array of identifiable themes. The following table presents the themes and their corresponding codes, arranged in descending order according to their prevalence in the



³ Memes numbered from 1 to 29 are created by women, while memes numbered from 30 to 72 are created by men.

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dataset. The quantification of themes prevalence is intended to clarify the prevailing thematic patterns within the sample of the study, however, this quantification does not fully encompass all the gender identity-related themes that are prevalent in Egyptian society. Instead, it presents nuanced perspectives on these themes. The presence and prevalence of specific themes are influenced by the preferences and intentions of the meme creators. This highlights the considerable impact exerted by creators on the thematic content inherent in the dataset.

Table 4.1: Themes and Their Corresponding Codes Emerging from The Memes

Themes	Codes	Total of memes related to each theme					
		Created by men		Created by women		Total (created by both)	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Women are controlled	Women are submissive partners	7	16.2%	9	31%	16	22.2%
	Women appearance is policed by men						
	Women behaviour is policed						
	Women circumventing men's control						
Women are irrational	Women are inconsistent	8	18.6%	5	17.2%	13	18%
	Women are emotionally reactive						
Men are players towards women	Men seize the opportunity for sexual advance	6	13.9%	6	20.6%	12	16.6%
	Men are not serious about commitment						
	Men deceive women to win their hearts						
	Men have multiple lovers						
Women are sexual objects	Women excessively focus on their appearance	6	13.9%	5	17.2%	11	15.2%
	Reducing women to body parts						
	Women are object for sexual desire						
Men struggle with the ideals of	Men fall short for playing the financial provider role	7	16.2%	3	10.3%	10	13.8%
	Men fall short for being dominant						

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masculinity	Men emotional complaints are dismissed						
Women belong to the domestic sphere	Women are incompetent for work life						
	Women are care givers	4	9.3%	4	13.7%	8	11.1%
Women exaggerate while men downplay	Women are extreme thorough while men are extreme cursory						
	Women overshadow emotional support while men restraint showing it	6	13.9%	zero	zero	6	8.3%
	Women overreact to upsetting situations while men decompress						
Women are liberal	Women challenge society standards for marriage						
	Women challenge men's control of their behaviour	1	2.3%	5	17.2%	6	8.3%
Women are toxic partners	Women causes distress for their partners						
	Women do not respect their partners privacy	4	9.3%	2	6.8%	6	8.3%
	women are not loyal						
Women are unexpectedly aggressive	Women are unexpectedly aggressive	2	4.6%	1	3.4%	3	4.1%
		N (by men) = 43		N (by women) = 29		N (total sample size) =72	

As the previous table showed the following gender identity related themes emerged:

4.1.1 Theme 1: Women Are Controlled

This theme explores the portrayal of women who undergo various forms of control on their physical appearance, behaviour, and relationships. Primarily, this form of control originates from men who may occupy positions as the women's partners, family members, or even outsiders. Moreover, women may be subjected to control by fellow

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women, specifically mothers who exert parental control over their daughters' decisions and behaviour. This theme delves into the examination of coping mechanisms utilised by women in response to control, demonstrated through either submissive responses or circumvention, hence highlighting adaptive strategies as alternatives to direct confrontation. Based on the theory of gender and power, exerting control and establishing non-egalitarian romantic relationships is intertwined with hegemonic masculinity, whereas manifestations of submissiveness are associated with hegemonic femininity (Charlebois, 2010; 2012; Connell, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2004).

The emergence of this thematic pattern is based on the examination of seven memes produced by men and nine memes produced by women, which represents a substantial portion of themes originating from men, comprising 16.2% of the memes, and represents the most prevalent category among themes created by women, comprising 31% of the memes. The aforementioned codes were employed:

4.1.1.1 Women's Appearance Is Policed by Men. This code signifies that men possess authority over the physical appearance of women and establish normative standards for their clothing. As an example, meme 20 depicts a scenario where a husband holds authority over his wife's attire, specifically her choice of revealing clothing at the beach. The meme highlights the prevalent notion that men dictate normative standards for women's clothing, even when created by a woman who acknowledges this dominant role. Interestingly, the woman creator critiques the husband's decision to permit revealing attire, suggesting a nuanced view of men's authority over women's appearance. In Meme 42 a similar theme emerges as a man imposes clothing standards on his partner based on her physical appearance, accompanied by derogatory comments. This meme suggests that the man's negative remarks may stem from his frustration over his partner's refusal to adhere to his control over her clothing choices.

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Meme 29 furthers this theme by portraying a man preparing to argue with a woman over her clothing choices, emphasizing the consequences of deviating from societal norms. Here, the meme suggests that such quarrels are commonplace within relationships, indicating a normalization of men's authoritative stance on women's attire. Meme 21 employs satire to critique men who assert control over women's clothing choices early in a relationship. The meme implies that such behavior serves as an indicator of the relationship's status, highlighting the power dynamics at play even in the early stages of courtship. Meme 64 adds complexity by depicting a situation where a man's anticipation of his fiancée's compliance with clothing instructions is met with resistance. While this meme may seem to challenge the notion of male control, the focus shifts to the identity of the man exerting control rather than the control itself. It references a real-life incident involving a delivery worker who refused to deliver women's clothing, highlighting the broader societal issues surrounding men's authority over women's appearance.

4.1.1.2 Women's Behaviour Is Policed. This code highlights the occurrence in which individuals, predominantly men but occasionally women as well, exercise authority over women's behaviour, enforcing societal norms and expectations upon them. A commonly observed form of this control, as portrayed in memes, entails restricting the amount of time women spend outside their residences and requiring them to obtain prior authorization for such outings. The aforementioned behaviour is observable in meme 23, a daughter seeks permission from her father to go out, highlighting the imposition of restrictions on women's outdoor activities. The father's response, limiting her time to just an hour, underscores the control exercised over her movements. Similarly, Meme 11 depicts a mother disputing her daughter's minor delay in returning home, further illustrating the enforcement of societal norms on women's behavior within the family dynamic. Interestingly, these memes do not explicitly identify the daughter as a child, suggesting a broader

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commentary on the selective nature of behavior control. Additionally, the absence of comparable memes concerning sons receiving similar regulation raises questions about gendered expectations and societal norms. The two memes, created by women, bring attention to the contentious situations that women face within family dynamics. Although these limitations are depicted, there is a noticeable lack of explicit rejection or resistance towards the exerted control.

Moving into romantic relationships, Meme 22 depicts divorce as a potential consequence of a woman deviating from prescribed return times, highlighting the punitive measures taken by spouses to enforce control. However, there's a noticeable lack of explicit resistance to this control. Memes 36 and 37 reinforce the authoritative role of men in romantic relationships. Meme 37 portrays a man denying his partner permission to go out without justification, emphasizing control. Meanwhile, Meme 36 depicts a man justifying a curfew for his partner under the guise of protection. He asserts that the woman's gender renders her vulnerable to potential instances of harassment, thereby justifying his need to intervene in a protective manner.

Further illustrations of behaviour control towards women can be observed in Meme 39 depicting a husband assuming responsibility for taking corrective action upon receiving a video of his wife dancing during a work trip. This perpetuates the societal norm of men regulating their wives' behavior and intervening when they perceive violations. Similarly, Meme 72 normalizes the idea of a groom demanding his bride to quit her job, further emphasizing men's authority in marital decisions. Lastly, Meme 10 mocks men who end relationships based on their mothers' decisions, subtly implying women's symbolic deprivation of agency in marital matters.

4.1.1.3 Women Are Submissive Partners. This code pertains to the portrayal of women as subservient in their relationships with men, wherein they demonstrate tolerance for male authority and prioritising

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their partner's desires over their own. As an illustration, Meme 33 portrays the ideal wife as submissive, emphasizing her dedication to fulfilling her husband's needs without regard for her own autonomy or individuality. The meme focuses solely on the wife's services such as providing massages, belly dancing, and feeding him into mouth, neglecting to depict her as an equal partner in the relationship. Contrastingly, Meme 15 critiques the submissive nature of women in marital relationships, particularly in the face of abuse. The meme satirically depicts a woman lamenting her abusive husband while criticizing another woman for suggesting divorce, highlighting the societal pressure for women to prioritize family unity over their own well-being.

Additional memes created by women further perpetuate the portrayal of women as subservient companions. Meme 16 sheds light on women potentially compromising their relationship standards, celebrating being chosen as one of her partner's multiple girlfriends. Despite its seemingly satirical tone towards men's infidelity, the meme underscores women's tolerance towards such behavior. Similarly, memes 22 and 29 highlight women's tolerance for control exerted by men in relationships. Meme 22 depicts a wife manoeuvring to expedite her hairdresser appointment to comply with her husband's authority over her time, while Meme 29 portrays a woman accustomed to her partner's quarrels over her clothing choices, showcasing her acceptance of his authority. Both memes were assigned the codes "Women's Behaviour is Policed" and "Women's Appearance is Policed by Men," respectively. However, due to their notable focus on women's compliance with male authority, they were additionally categorised under the code "Women are Submissive Partners."

Memes 64 and 72 reinforce the theme of women's subservience by emphasizing their compliance with male authority. Meme 64 highlights women's compliance with male control over their clothing choices,

while Meme 72 depicts a woman acquiescing to her groom's demand to resign from her job, further illustrating the power dynamics within relationships.

4.1.1.4 Women Circumvent Men's Control. One additional coping mechanism demonstrated by women in reaction to control is encapsulated by the code "Women Circumvent Men's Control". This code captures instances in which women navigate around the constraints imposed upon them by men, illustrating an adaptable approach that entails a tacit acknowledgement of control rather than explicit opposition.

Memos 36 and 37 originally coded as "Women's Behavior is Policed," are also categorized under "Women Circumvent Men's Control" due to their explicit focus on women actively bypassing male authority. Both memes depict women attempting to venture outdoors without obtaining a man's permission, executing this action clandestinely only to be apprehended later.

4.1.2 Theme 2: Women Are Irrational

This theme revolves around the portrayal of women's emotions and behavior as irrational, lacking logical underpinnings or coherent reasoning. Memos within this theme serve to diminish women's emotional stability and coherence, while also critiquing women engaged in gender equality activism by depicting them as irrational. Drawing upon the gender and power theory, the interconnection between irrationality, emotionality, and intensified emotional expression is closely linked to hegemonic femininity (Baczynski, 2016; Charlebois, 2010; 2012; Connell, 1995).

This theme, derived from an analysis of eight memes produced by male creators and five memes produced by female creators, represents the most prominent category of themes originating from male creators, comprising 18.6% of the memes. Additionally, it constitutes a significant proportion of themes originating from female creators,

amounting to 17.2% of the memes. The aforementioned codes were utilised:

4.1.2.1 Women Are Inconsistent. This code highlights the portrayal of women as exhibiting inconsistency or unpredictability in their emotions and behaviours. As an example, Meme 66 emphasizes the notion that women's emotions, especially in romantic relationships, are subject to volatility due to hormonal fluctuations. It illustrates a scenario where a woman's feelings towards a man change significantly from warmth and engagement during a late-night conversation to sudden disinterest the following day, attributed solely to hormonal influences.

Additionally, there's a prevailing portrayal suggesting that women's behavior contradicts their intrinsic desires. Meme 5 and meme 70 depict situations where a woman blames her partner for not initiating contact despite expressing a desire for such cessation. Similarly, Meme 6 and Meme 67 illustrate instances where a woman shows interest in a romantic relationship but blocks individuals who reciprocate without apparent reason.

Furthermore, meme 27 presents a contradictory nature of women's behaviors. It shows a woman refusing a private dance but later engaging in a public dance, receiving admiration from the same man she refused earlier. This depiction of women's conduct signalling the contrary of their professed desires, elucidated by both male and female creators, implies a prevailing perception that that women may not genuinely align their desires with their verbal expressions and actions, thus revealing inherent self-contradictions. Moreover, meme 50 focuses on a perceived paradox within female gender equality activists. It highlights a scenario where an activist supports women's rights and condemns sexual harassment but accepts physical contact from her male trainer. It is noteworthy that the meme creator appears to grapple with a conceptual ambiguity between harassment and consensual physical contact.

4.1.2.2 Women Are Emotionally Reactive. This code delves into the portrayal of women as inclined to display highly emotional reactions characterized by immediacy, impulsiveness, and a propensity for exaggeration in various situations. Meme 1 and meme 60, depict similar situations highlighting women's irrational jealousy leading to exaggerated reactions. In meme 1, a jealous bride initiates a dispute with her groom on their wedding day due to his dance with a young female cousin. Meme 60 portrays extreme jealousy in a woman who initiates a dispute with an unfamiliar man on social media due to his playful interaction with another female in the comments section.

Other memes highlight women's impulsive and disproportionate displays of grief. Meme 69 depicts a woman consistently experiencing melancholy and outwardly expressing sadness without discernible justification. Meme 2 and Meme 68 converge on the concept of women's irrational sadness within the work context. Meme 2 portrays a woman's impulsive sorrow through regular bouts of crying attributed to work-life responsibilities. Meme 68 depicts a woman labeled as a persistent complainer within the workplace, consistently expressing grievances and sharing personal problems. Lastly, meme 43 focuses on perceived inconsistency among female gender equality activists. The meme depicts a woman displaying irrational anger during a casual card game with a male friend upon realizing that the Jack card holds a higher value than the Queen card.

4.1.3 Theme 3: Men Are Players Towards Women

This theme portrays men involved in casual or non-committal relationships with women, actively pursuing short-term romantic or sexual advances without a long-term commitment. The thematic exploration suggests that these men employ various strategies and tactics to attract and engage with women, often simultaneously pursuing multiple partners. These behaviors align with the ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity, as outlined by gender and power theory,

encompassing roles as sexual initiators, participation in non-egalitarian relationships, engagement in polygyny, and involvement with multiple partners without a commitment to monogamy (Charlebois, 2011; 2012; Inhorn, 2012; MacDonald, 2014; Jozkowski, 2022).

This theme is evident in six memes created by men , comprising a significant category of themes originating from them, representing 13.9% of the memes. Additionally, it appears in six memes created women, comprising a predominant category of themes originating from them, representing 20.6% of the memes. The prevalence of this theme indicates its prominence across genders. The aforementioned codes were employed in order to ascertain this particular theme.

4.1.3.1 Men Seize the Opportunity for Sexual Advance. This coding pertains to the portrayal of men exploiting circumstances to initiate sexual advances towards women. Memes 25, 31, 39, and 58 collectively depict men as opportunistic individuals pursuing sexual advances, ranging from subtle flirtation to more explicit propositions. Meme 25 illustrates a man's direct proposition by soliciting a kiss from a girl who aided him in cheating during an exam, emphasizing his opportunistic behavior.

In contrast, other memes from male creators focus on more subtle approaches. Meme 31 depicts a man taking advantage of a girl's accidental friend request on social media to subtly pursue sexual advances. This is evident through the man's body language, which includes suggestive glances and physical proximity without direct contact. Meme 39 a husband seeking advice on social media platform concerning his wife dancing during a work trip, wherein another man takes advantage of the situation by requesting the video, while Meme 58 depicts a man deviating from engaging in a dispute with customer service to initiate flirtation with a female representative.

4.1.3.2 Men Are Not Serious About Commitment. This coding highlights the portrayal of men as characterized by a lack of seriousness

or commitment in their relationships with women. Two memes, both created by male creators, embody this conceptualization. Meme 32 depicts a man displaying hesitance towards committing to his partner, attributing this reluctance to a fear of commitment stemming from the concern of encountering a more desirable romantic prospect. Similarly, Meme 53 portrays a man exhibiting a lack of earnestness in his romantic relationship. Upon his partner's refusal of a wealthy groom, he proceeds to convince her to accept the suitor while simultaneously urging her to procure a job opportunity for him from that suitor. The depicted image emphasizes not only the man's hesitance to engage in a committed relationship but also his manipulation of the situation for his own benefit.

4.1.3.3 Men Deceive Women to Win Their Hearts. The portrayal of men utilizing deceptive tactics to gain the affection of women emerges as a prominent theme in memes, particularly those created by female creators. These memes offer insights into the perspectives of female creators regarding the various deceptive behaviors men engage in during the early stages of romantic relationships. Meme 14 illustrates the withdrawal of affectionate treatment after winning the affection of a romantic partner as one such strategy employed by men to deceive women and win their hearts. In Meme 17, another tactic is depicted which is the use of false promises. A man vows to embody the role of prince charming, but upon the woman's commitment to him, he demotes her to a subservient role. Meme 28 portrays the cunning act of establishing communication with a relative, specifically the romantic partner's mother, ostensibly to showcase the sincerity of one's commitment. However, the ultimate result of this approach leads to disillusionment for both the woman and her mother.

4.1.3.4 Men Have Multiple Lovers. This code encapsulates the portrayal of men involved in simultaneous romantic relationships with multiple partners. In Meme 16, a man explicitly communicates to his

lover that he has selected her and another woman as his romantic partners, distinguishing them from other potential girlfriends. Contrastingly, Meme 18 depicts a man feigning innocence by misleading his lover regarding his unfaithful involvement with another woman. The meme illustrates a woman dancing privately for him. Meme 54, created by a male creator, also portrays feigned innocence following a lover's confusion of another romantic interest's name. The man pretends that the mistakenly mentioned name is the agreed-upon appellation for their prospective daughter.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Women Are Sexual Objects

Memes within this thematic framework encapsulate the practises that systematically objectify women, portraying them primarily based on their physical attributes and as objects of sexual desire, often in a derogatory manner. Simultaneously, these memes also exemplify behaviours that are interpreted as expressions of women's self-sexual objectification. In the realm of gender and power theory, women are subjected to a state of subordination as a result of sexual objectification (Tomanov, 2018). Furthermore, the enactment of hegemonic femininity is intricately intertwined with and reliant upon the validation and evaluation of men. According to Charlebois (2010), hegemonic femininity standards heavily emphasize traits like youthfulness and slimness. Additionally, it is associated with stereotypical feminine practices such as shopping, accessorizing, and self-care (Coad, 2008). Consequently, numerous memes within this thematic framework depict women engaging in self-sexual objectification, aligning with these standards.

This theme is evident in memes generated by creators of both genders in a relatively equal manner. There are six memes (13.9%) created by male creators and five memes (17.2%) created by female creators. The prominence of this theme highlights its prevalence as a

dominant thematic category originating from creators of both genders. The following codes were employed:

4.1.4.1 Reducing Women to Body Parts. This code exemplifies the objectification of women through delineating them based on specific bodily features or physical traits. Meme 20 and Meme 42 both exemplify this coding paradigm. Both memes were dual-coded with the code "Women's Appearance Is Policed by Men," highlighting the portrayal of women as subordinate to men and confined to the role of mere sexual objects. Consequently, the act of objectifying women justifies the perceived lack of agency in women, particularly regarding their clothing choices. When women are reduced to their physical attributes, their clothing choices become a noteworthy concern, positioned as a necessity to be controlled by the dominant male authority that perceives them as possessions. Meme 20 prominently features women wearing revealing beach attire, emphasizing the attire as the focal point. Additionally, the meme depicts a scenario where a man refers to his wife by another male name, presumably his own, perpetuating the depiction of women as objects or possessions under the influence or ownership of another man. Meme 42 similarly revolves around a man assessing a woman's size, further perpetuating the objectification of women based on their physical attributes.

4.1.4.2 Women Are Objects for Sexual Desire. This coding analysis reveals a pervasive portrayal of women as objects of sexual desire. Two memes, both created by male creators under the theme "Women Are Controlled," received dual coding, aligning with the code "Women Are Objects for Sexual Desire." Meme 33 was dual-coded with "Women Are Submissive Partners," suggesting that objectified women, cater to the male gaze through activities like belly dancing, adopting a subordinate and complementary position. This representation conforms to the ideal wife archetype, lacking emphasis on individual traits, thereby limiting women to a submissive role as objects of sexual appeal. Similarly,

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Meme 39, dual-coded with "Women's Behaviour Is Policed," persistently emphasizes women as objects of the male gaze within the context of belly dancing, reinforcing the perceived necessity for their regulation by male individuals who view them as property.

Two supplementary memes produced under the theme "Men Are Players Towards Women," underwent dual coding with "Women Are Objects for Sexual Desire." This dual coding emphasizes the concept of men as predators who pursue women primarily for sexual advances without considering their individual qualities. For instance, Meme 18 depicts a woman privately belly dancing for a man who is unfaithful to his partner. Similarly, Meme 25 describes a woman as physically appealing and subsequently pursued by a man seeking a kiss, reinforcing the objectification of women. The last two memes, specifically Meme 27 and Meme 59, were coded as "Women Are Inconsistent" and received dual coding with "Women Are Objects for Sexual Desire." This co-occurrence highlights the discrepancy between women's verbal expressions of consent regarding sexual advances and their corresponding actions. For example, Meme 59 exemplifies that women may express disapproval of sexual harassment verbally while exhibiting a willingness to tolerate physical contact from men. Meme 27 illustrates the incongruity observed when a woman initially expresses verbal opposition to a suggested sexual advance but subsequently dances publicly for a man, seemingly flattered by his remarks on her dancing.

4.1.4.3 Women Excessively Focus on Their Appearance. Meme 4 and Meme 71 both depict the concept that women tend to allocate a disproportionate amount of their financial resources towards their outward appearance. This pattern indicates an excessive prioritization of physical appearance combined with a lack of proficiency in financial planning skills among women. Meme 4 portrays a woman wearing an extravagant amount of mascara, to the extent that she has purportedly liquidated all her possessions to procure it. In a similar vein, Meme 71

depicts a woman who expends her entire income on skincare and haircare products, with the aim of attaining a visually striking appearance, thereby disregarding prudent financial management.

Meme 48 delves deeper narrative by depicting a woman's prolonged process of getting ready for a video call with a man. This meme highlights the notion that women might feign natural beauty through the use of makeup and artificial enhancements. The woman portrayed in the meme arrives three hours late and attributes her delay to casual activities, such as drinking, despite evidence of blue lenses and makeup as portrayed in the meme.

4.1.5 Theme 5: Men Struggle with The Ideals of Masculinity

This theme highlights the challenges men face in conforming to societal ideals of masculinity. These challenges are expressed by showcasing specific practices as unattainable ideals for certain men, portraying men who fail to meet these ideals in a derogatory manner, or illustrating situations where men face negative responses due to their inability to conform. While these memes draw attention to men's struggles with societal expectations, they refrain from explicitly rejecting these societal norms. The theory of gender and power suggests that only a limited subset of men are able to completely conform to the established standards of hegemonic masculinity. However, individuals who do not meet can function as allies to hegemonic masculinity, acknowledging and perpetuating hierarchical dynamics with women and other male groups (Charlebois, 2012; Connell, 2005).

This theme is evident in seven memes created by men and three by women. It holds a prominent position among themes produced by male creators, comprising 16.2% of the memes. In contrast, it is relatively less prevalent in themes originating from female creators, making up only 10.3% of the memes. The frequency of this theme is notably higher in memes produced by males, emphasizing the degree to which this issue is primarily associated with men, aligning with societal norms that define

their primary role. The following codes were employed to identify this theme:

4.1.5.1 Men Fall Short for Playing the Financial Provider Role. This code represents men failing to meet societal expectations in terms of their role as the primary financial providers in relationships. The economic difficulties in Egypt have greatly complicated the traditional male role as providers, particularly impacting individuals from impoverished and working-class backgrounds (Ghannam, 2013; Inhorn & Isidoros, 2018).

Three memes, all crafted by male creators, exemplify this portrayal. Meme 46 illustrates the struggle of conforming to the masculine ideal of financial provision amidst economic limitations. This is depicted by a man who lacks the financial means to pay for his female companion's meal, prompting him to ask her to cover her own expenses. Meme 49 portrays a man feigning wealth by pretending to have a wealthy father in order to attract a woman. This exposes the individual's inability to achieve societal ideals of wealth genuinely, resorting instead to flaunting his father's riches. Notably, the meme also highlights the fabrication of his father's financial prosperity, despite the paternal figure facing financial difficulties. The meme appears to primarily ridicule men engaging in such behaviors rather than challenging the fundamental masculine ideals associated with wealth. Meme 40 delves into the consequences of societal responses to men's perceived inability to fulfill the traditional role of being the primary financial provider. It illustrates a scenario where a bride's father mocks a groom proposing to his daughter due to the groom's lack of wealth. The meme suggests that despite some lip service to accepting proposals from men with lower financial resources, there remains an underlying idealization of financial success. Men who do not conform to this norm tend to receive less favorable evaluations in relationship contexts.

4.1.5.2 Men Fall Short for Being Dominant. This code exemplifies the portrayal of men's failure to establish the dominance and control intrinsically associated with hegemonic masculinity. Memes illustrate men's limited ability to assert dominance across various life domains, including personal relationships and social contexts. Dominance is characterized by controlling women, displaying a lack of concern for their reactions or being exempt from being held accountable by them, as well as exhibiting assertiveness in decision-making and ensuring personal safety in public spaces.

Meme 20 and Meme 38 overtly satirize men who fail to exert dominance over women to make them conform to societal norms regarding ideal feminine conduct. Despite being dual-coded with "Women's Appearance Is Policed by Men," Meme 20 also received the code "Men Fall Short for Being Dominant," satirizing the husband's failure to effectively exercise authority to ensure his wife's appearance conforms to societal standards. The humor arises from the depiction of the husband exerting dominance to the point of possessing his wife, yet failing to enforce feminine clothing ideals. Meme 38 explicitly satirizes a man who refrains from controlling a female counterpart by showing tolerance of her utilisation of profanity as a means of self-expression., implying that his lack of dominance makes him less manly.

Meme 45 portrays the belief held by some men that exhibiting apathy towards their partner's responses represents an ideal form of masculinity, even if they do not fully embody this ideal. This meme depicts a man communicating to his friends that he is unaffected by his partner's reactions, suggesting an acceptance of this behavior as a masculine archetype associated with dominance. However, his actions contradict this ideal as he actively seeks support from friends to evade online detection by his partner. Meme 10 highlights men's inadequacy in displaying dominance, particularly in assertiveness in decision-making, by satirizing men influenced by their mothers' preferences in marriage

decisions, depicting them as effeminate. Finally, Meme 36 exemplifies men's failure to exhibit dominance by emphasizing societal norms that expect men to safeguard themselves in public domains. The meme suggests that men may not consistently meet this expectation, portraying a man who asserts his capability but ultimately falls short and becomes a target of aggression. This meme also underwent dual coding with "Women's Behavior Is Policed," implying that men may impose control on women to compensate for their perceived lack of dominance in other behavioral domains.

4.1.5.3 Men's Emotional Complaints Are Dismissed. This code encompasses memes portraying situations where men face negative responses from others when they do not adhere to hegemonic masculine norms, particularly regarding concealing their emotional vulnerability. It illustrates the disregard or trivialization of men's emotional grievances or expressions. Meme 24 illustrates a woman's ironic reaction to a man's emotional concerns. It sarcastically depicts a woman reacting to a man crying while conversing with another woman, likely his romantic partner. The depicted man implores his partner not to disclose his emotional display to anyone, highlighting the belief that showing emotional vulnerability contradicts masculinity expectations. Similarly, Meme 52 depicts the challenges men encounter when their emotional issues are disregarded. The meme shows a man expressing distress and loss of appetite to his family members in an attempt to evoke empathy. However, his sister exhibits apathy and a lack of empathy, solely fixating on consuming his designated portion of food, regardless of his emotional state.

4.1.6 Theme 6: Women Belong to The Domestic Sphere

This theme centers on the idea that despite engaging in professional work, women are primarily perceived as caregivers. They may perceive themselves as not fully aligning with the professional domain, or others may perceive them as such due to perceived

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competence gaps. It also highlights women bearing the responsibility of both professional and household duties simultaneously, often without adequate acknowledgment from society. According to gender and power theory, hegemonic femininity is expressed through the acceptance of marriage and childcare as responses to labor market discrimination against women (Connell, 1987). Both financially dependent housewives and working professional women who manage full-time careers alongside part-time domestic responsibilities epitomize ideals of femininity in diverse temporal and contextual settings (Charlebois, 2010; 2012).

This theme emerges from analyzing four memes created by males and three by females, representing a moderately represented proportion in both categories. Among memes created by male creators, it constitutes 9.3%, while among female creators, it is 13.7%.

4.1.6.1 Women Are Incompetent for Work Life. This code suggests a recurring theme wherein women are portrayed as deficient in competence or ability within professional settings. Specifically, Meme 2 and Meme 72 highlight the notion that women perceive themselves as unsuited for working life. In Meme 2, a woman acknowledges her inability to handle the responsibilities of a professional career, receiving a dual coding of "Women Are Emotionally Reactive" as she articulates her perceived incompetence through daily weeping, ostensibly linked to work-life burdens. This dual coding accentuates how women's presumed emotional inclinations intensify the depiction of their perceived unsuitability for professional endeavors. In Meme 72, a woman states that her work experience led her to submit to her prospective spouse's demand to give up her employment upon his proposal, further strengthening the idea that she considers herself unsuitable for working life. The dual coding of "Women's Behavior Is Policed" and "Women Are Submissive Partners" implies a broader societal context wherein men exercise authority over women's conduct and decisions, idealizing

the belief that women should unquestioningly submit to men and prioritize men's needs over their own, potentially explaining why women have limited access to job opportunities.

Memos 61 and 68 shed light on societal views regarding women's perceived lack of ability in the professional environment. Meme 61 portrays a male manager having reservations about the competence of a female employee due to her consistent errors in the workplace. Meme 68 depicts a female employee engaging in unprofessional conduct, with a male colleague informing her that customers perceive her as a complainer due to her habit of sharing personal problems. This narrative suggests she is regarded as lacking professionalism by both customers and colleagues. Moreover, Meme 68 underwent dual coding, specifically "Women Are Emotionally Reactive," emphasizing the reinforcement of stereotypes regarding women's emotional inclinations, rationalizing the portrayal of women's perceived lack of competence in professional endeavors.

4.1.6.2 Women Are Caregivers. This code reinforces the prevailing perception that caregiving is primarily associated with women, encompassing tasks such as nurturing and providing care for others. Meme 17 illustrates the transition of women into caregivers after entering a committed relationship, exemplified by a woman serving food to a reclining male on a sofa. Meme 56 further explores this perspective by suggesting that marital relationships persist only as long as women continue to fulfill the role of caregiver. The meme depicts a father divorcing his wife after he independently prepares eggs for their children, implying that the wife's perceived value is primarily based on her culinary duties, making her easily replaceable once the husband can handle this task himself.

Meme 12 presents a nuanced perspective by recognizing the dual role of women as both employed professionals and caregivers, responsible for domestic chores and nurturing children. However, it

critically highlights the societal inclination to place excessive importance on men's roles as workers while simultaneously undervaluing the diverse responsibilities shouldered by women. This underscores the disparities in how society perceives gender roles and contributions.

4.1.7 Theme 7: Women Exaggerate While Men Downplay

The memes in this theme emphasize gender differences by portraying women as individuals possessing meticulousness, expressive inclinations, emotional support, and responsiveness to various circumstances. Conversely, men are depicted with a lack of attention to detail, a reserved or stoic demeanor, a deficiency in emotional support, and being unresponsive or indifferent to situations. The code "Women Are Emotionally Reactive," falling under the broader theme of "Women Are Irrational," partially addresses women's heightened emotional response. However, this theme specifically delves into expressing emotional support and responding to situations genuinely eliciting emotional or behavioral reactions, surpassing the mere imbalance of emotional reactions in different situational contexts. It includes a comparative analysis of the differences between men and women in these aspects. Referencing perspectives from Connell (2010) and Deutsch (2007) recognizes that emphasizing gender differences perpetuates gender inequality.

This thematic construct emerged from a collection of six memes created exclusively by male creators, representing a significant proportion of themes by them at 13.9% of the memes. The subsequent codes utilized include:

4.1.7.1 Women Are Extremely Thorough While Men Are Extremely Cursory. This code suggests that women are portrayed as meticulous and thorough in their actions, while men are depicted as taking a more casual or brief approach, avoiding unnecessary elaboration or embellishment. Two memes, created by male creators, conveyed this

thematic representation. Meme 34 examines the disparity between the verbosity of women compared to the succinct communication style of men. The meme depicts a situation where a woman spends three hours recounting a mundane journey to the end of the street, while a man succinctly describes his voyage to space. This scenario highlights the discrepancy in how women often pay excessive attention to details, leading them to use more descriptive language and vivid details to express their experiences, in contrast to men. The male creator openly supports this deviation in behavior by portraying the man in the caption as a "simple beautiful creature," implying a subtle ridicule of women's tendency to be excessively meticulous. Meme 55 also showcases a scenario where women exhibit excessive attention to details. The meme depicts women engaging in prolonged sessions of trying on various pieces of clothing at stores, often without making a purchase. In contrast, men are portrayed as simply seeking assistance from a salesperson, asking them to select any item based on their preference and indicating the amount they should pay.

4.1.7.2 Women Overshow Emotional Support While Men Restrain Showing It. This code emphasizes the portrayal of women as prominently displaying emotional support, contrasted with a more restrained expression of emotions among men. Two memes, created by a man, exemplify this depiction. Meme 41 illustrates the stark contrast between the efforts made by women and men when organizing a surprise for a friend's birthday. While women dedicate a significant amount of time, starting 283 days in advance, men simply extend their birthday wishes a mere two weeks after the occasion. Similarly, Meme 57 illustrates the abundant emotional support provided by women to a friend with a minor ailment, demonstrated by daily visits and a sole dedication to socializing exclusively in her company. In contrast, men exhibit a noticeable absence of empathy when they visit a friend who has a severe hand injury, to the extent that they even ask for a handshake

from him. The humor in these memes arises from the striking disparity between women's abundant empathy and men's evident absence of it.

4.1.7.3 Women Overreact to Upsetting Situations While Men Decompress. This code represents the portrayal of women as more likely to react excessively to distressing situations, while men are depicted as handling situations with less intensity than necessary. This pattern is evident in two memes originating from male creators. Meme 47 portrays the contrasting responses of a son and a daughter when engaging in arguments with their fathers. The daughter resorts to incessant online cursing of him, while the son, accustomed to daily physical reprimands from his father, views a day without such punishment as unusual, causing him to question his father's well-being or mood. This depiction highlights the significant level of normalization of violence among men. Meme 63 delves into a work-related situation, specifically examining the contrasting responses of men and women towards salary reductions. The meme depicts a woman expressing dissatisfaction over a small reduction in her salary, leading her to escalate the issue to the Human Resources department. This is contrasted with a man who appears to be celebrating setting a new record for a significant decrease in his salary.

4.1.8 Theme 8: Women Are Liberal

Memos in this thematic category depict women who resist societal norms regarding marriage and assert their independence in the face of male attempts to control their actions. From the perspective of gender and power theory, these behaviors align with the concept of oppositional femininities. This refers to a type of femininity that does not conform to a submissive and accommodating role in relation to hegemonic masculinity. Oppositional femininities challenge and reject disempowering practices associated with hegemonic femininity (Charlebois, 2010).

The theme was derived from a single meme created by a male creator and five memes created by female creators. The occurrence of the theme in memes created by men is relatively low, accounting for only 2.3% of the memes. Conversely, it represents a significant theme in memes created by women, comprising 17.2% of the memes. The subsequent codes utilized include:

4.1.8.1 Women Challenge Society Standards for Marriage. This code illustrates the portrayal of women who defy prevailing societal norms and expectations related to marriage. In Meme 8, a woman feigns sadness in front of her family for rejecting a prospective groom before any marriage proposal is made. The feigned grief towards her family suggests that accepting such marriage proposals conforms to societal norms, and her subtle effort questions this convention. It is important to clarify that her rejection of the groom does not automatically mean she is against marriage or intends to stay single. Instead, it may indicate a preference against traditional arranged marriages. Regardless of the interpretation, the actions depicted in the meme represent a challenge to societal norms and expectations regarding the institution of marriage. Similarly, Meme 19 portrays a woman voicing her dissatisfaction with people pressuring her to make them celebrate her, which is an expression indicating that they want her to get married. She asserts that she has already accomplished academic achievements worthy of celebration. This manifestation underscores her prioritization of academic success, emphasizing her refusal to confine her life and happiness solely to the institution of marriage.

4.1.8.2 Women Challenge Men's Control of Their Behaviour. According to the coding analysis, women are depicted as actively defying or opposing men's authority over their conduct and choices. Two memes, both created by women, depict situations in which women challenge men's attempts to impose authority over their ability to spend time outside. Meme 13 depicts a man attempting to restrict a woman

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from attending a wedding while threatening the potential dissolution of their relationship. Nevertheless, when he subsequently contacts her, she claims she cannot hear him due to the DJ sound, indicating that she attended the wedding despite his objections. Similarly, Meme 26 depicts a situation in which a woman informs her spouse about her intention to go out with friends, which he opposes. The accompanying image of the meme depicts the wife getting ready to leave while the husband is physically restricted, symbolizing a clear rejection of male dominance over women's actions in this particular situation.

Furthermore, Meme 7 tackles the issue of women resisting a distinct type of men dominance over their actions. This meme depicts a wife negotiating her husband's expectation for her to make breakfast by challenging the notion that he has the right to wake her up for this purpose. This defies the conventional submissive role of placing a husband's needs above her own and challenges the stereotype of women as carers or nurturers within the family. Meme 65 portrays women defying a different method of controlling behavior, specifically pertaining to shopping. The meme portrays a man exhibiting a feeling of concern or disapproval towards a woman independently making purchasing choices without seeking his consent. This depiction implies that the creator views such conduct as deviating from established standards, leading to contemplation or examination. Based on the gender dynamic between the meme creator and the subject as an out-group, it can be deduced that the male creator recognizes instances of women challenging men's authority in this domain but chooses not to normalize or endorse such behavior.

While these memes illustrate power dynamics in which men seek to establish control over women's behavior as a customary practice, they are not labeled as "Women's Behavior is Policed." This is because these memes do not depict women in scenarios characterized by unwavering compliance, subordination, or avoidance of male dominance. Instead,

they specifically concentrate on the active confrontation of these power dynamics and a rejection to acquiesce to such control. Therefore, the emerging theme of "Women Are Liberal" is partly derived from this code, highlighting the explicit opposition and defiance towards established power dynamics.

4.1.9 Theme 9: Women Are Toxic Partners

This theme is about the portrayal of women as problematic partners and potential sources of distress and as individuals inclined towards manipulation, represented in mistrust and disloyalty. Within the framework of gender and power theory, the portrayal of women as manipulators is associated with the notion of hyper-femininity, which is a specific form of hegemonic femininity (Baczynski, 2016).

This theme arise from the examination of four memes created by male creators and two memes created by female creators. It constitutes a substantial proportion of themes originating from male creators, comprising 9.3% of the memes and a comparatively lower proportion from female creators, comprising 6.8% of the memes. The following codes were utilized:

4.1.9.1 Women Are Source of Distress for Their Partners. This code implies that women are catalysts of distress or upheaval within their interpersonal relationships, specifically with their partners. Meme 3 and Meme 35 exemplify this thematic emphasis. Meme 3 portrays a woman displaying characteristics of neediness and excessive demands in a relationship, appearing to be unconcerned about her partner's needs and issues. The meme depicts a situation where a woman holds her partner responsible for not initiating a call, despite his consistent communication regarding his excessive workload. Meme 35 serves to depict a woman as a catalyst for distress in her partner's life, to the extent that he is portrayed in a hospital setting wearing an oxygen mask. Although the woman appears innocent and affectionate by engaging in cuddling and other loving gestures, her partner is depicted as deeply distressed.

4.1.9.2 Women Do Not Respect Their Partners' Privacy. This code depicts instances where women violate or disregard the boundaries of privacy in their relationships with men. Meme 24 and Meme 59 depict women as failing to respect the privacy of their partners. Meme 24 depicts a situation in which a man explicitly asks a woman not to reveal his vulnerable moment of crying to anyone. Notwithstanding her reassurance, the following day he observes her acquaintance ridiculing him for his vulnerable exhibition of emotions. Similarly, Meme 59 illustrates a scenario in which a man confides in a woman about a confidential matter, but she chooses to prioritise spreading the information among her group of friends. Simultaneously, Meme 51 presents another example of the lack of respect for the privacy boundaries of partners. This meme portrays a woman covertly examining her partner's phone, presumably to determine if he is being unfaithful in their relationship.

4.1.9.3 Women Are Not Loyal. This coding pattern depicts women as lacking loyalty or fidelity in the context of their relationships. Two memes, both created by men, captured this thematic concept. Meme 41 depicts a bride who is deeply enamoured with the singers at her wedding. She instructs her groom to leave while she remains enthralled by the musicians surrounding her. This portrays women as shallow and unfaithful, implying that the woman's attraction is based more on superficial notions of masculinity rather than genuine affection for her partner. Meme 51, previously addressed as "Women Do Not Respect Their Partners' Privacy", portrays a woman engaging in infidelity. While examining her partner's phone to investigate possible unfaithfulness, she uncovers a screenshot that suggests she is the one involved in an affair.

4.1.10 Theme 10: Women Are Unexpectedly Aggressive

This analysis delves into the understanding of women exhibiting unexpected aggression. Memes in this theme imply that women can sometimes be depicted as displaying aggressive behaviors that go

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against traditional gender stereotypes that associate them with amiability. According to the theory of gender and power, the adoption of oppositional femininities can involve the engagement in toxic masculine practices, with aggression being a prominent example of such conduct. Women who adopt traditionally masculine traits may gain a semblance of power, but their gendered behavior contributes to the normalization of toxic masculine practices and the perpetuation of hierarchical relationships (Charlebois, 2010).

This thematic pattern is obtained from analysing two memes created by male creators and one meme created by a female creator. Remarkably, this particular theme makes up a relatively small percentage of the themes explored by both male creators, comprising 4.6% of the memes, and female creators comprising 3.4% of the memes.

A specific code encapsulating this theme is "Women are Unexpectedly Aggressive". Meme 9 delves into women's unexpected aggression within the realm of relationships. It juxtaposes the conventional belief that women are usually gentle towards their partners, seen as an idealised feminine behaviour, with the portrayed woman's aggressive behaviour of angrily shouting her lover's name. Meme 30 depicts how a woman's aggressiveness subverts male expectations. The meme juxtaposes a man's deliberate abstention from employing profanities in the company of a woman to avoid causing irritation. However, when the woman gets provoked she displays a willingness to quarrel or use explicit language, as evident from her body language in the meme.

In addition, Meme 62 depicts a man's anticipation that a woman would react to a workplace reprimand by crying. Nevertheless, this anticipation is overturned when the woman stands her ground, ready to engage in a quarrel. The meme highlights the disparity between the expected behaviour of women, which is characterised by gentleness and emotional vulnerability, and the surprising manifestation of aggression.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of the Results

The study aimed to explore the main gender identity related themes reflected by Facebook humorous memes and how they differed across gender groups. These differences were examined in terms of how the themes might differ based on the gender of the meme creators, as well as the gender of the target group whom identity is constructed.

The results of the thematic analysis of 72 memes created by male and female creators revealed 10 themes related to the socio-cognitive gender identity construction of men and women. All these themes have emerged from both male and female creators except for one meme. This theme is “women exaggerate while men down play. It appeared only from memes created by men. In general, the results aligned with the findings of previous studies revealing that both men and women were subjected to gender stereotyping and portrayed as other in internet memes (Drakett et al., 2018; Gbadegesin, 2019; Kurpershoek, 2018; Lincoln, 2019; Patoma, 2018; Siddiqi et al., 2018; Siregar et al., 2019).

Results have highlighted the prevalence of themes that depict men and women in a negative light. This phenomenon can be partially attributed to the dynamics of in-group favoritism, as proposed by social identity theory. Individuals tend to make comparisons that accentuate the positive traits of their own group while emphasizing the perceived negative attributes of the out-group, in an effort to maintain a favorable distinction (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg, 2016).

Interestingly, the majority of these thematic depictions have emerged simultaneously from creators of both gender groups. This raises questions about the underlying motivations behind the creation of memes that hold negative connotations towards the creator's own in-group. One possible explanation can be found in the roles, traits, and processes that each gender group perceives as ideals. While some of these depictions may appear derogatory, they may be linked to the

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socially constructed norms of masculinity and femininity, and thus hold positive connotations from the group's perspective. Furthermore, in accordance with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg, 2016), when groups engaged in competition establish shared evaluations reinforcing hierarchical distinctions, the subordinate group may acquiesce to the perceived superiority of the dominant group. The shared perpetuation of gender stereotypes across genders underscores the complex interplay of social identity dynamics and the reproduction of gender norms within the realm of meme creation.

Theme no.1 revolves around “Women are controlled”. Despite the expectation that women, as an in-group, might contest such portrayals, the findings indicate their active participation in affirming these depictions. This paradox can be elucidated by the alignment of expressions of submission with hegemonic femininity, thereby positioning such portrayals as aspirational rather than inherently negative. Women are expected to adhere to male authority and dominance, as evidenced by men's supervision and regulation of their mobility, clothing choices, and other personal freedoms (Atia, 2015; El-Feki & El-Zanaty, 2017; Mensch et al., 2003).

While some female creators of the memes seem to shed light on the contentious situations women face in the context of control, overt rejection or resistance towards the depicted control is notably absent in the overall discourse. Notably, only one female originator appears to challenge this prevailing portrayal in Meme 15 by accentuating the existing gender norm where women adopt submissive roles. Simultaneously, this creator challenges and satirizes such practices through the narrative embedded within the meme.

Moreover, Meme 36 coded as “women behaviour is policed” depicts a man enforcing a curfew on a female's external activities. He asserts that the woman's gender renders her vulnerable to potential instances of harassment, thereby justifying his need to intervene in a

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protective manner. The underlying justification for engaging in protective intervention reflects a manifestation of benevolent sexism towards women, which may appear to have a positive connotation. However, it connotes inferiority to men based on need of protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

The theme "Women are sexual objects" was highly related to the theme "Women are controlled". In the realm of gender and power theory, women are subjected to a state of subordination as a result of sexual objectification (Tomanov, 2018). This perception is evident in the dual coding of many memes under the theme "Women are sexual objects", aligning with codes such as "Women's Appearance Is Policed by Men," "Women's Behaviour Is Policed," and "Women Are Submissive Partners," collectively forming the overarching theme of "Women Are Controlled." The same mentioned interpretation of women active participation in affirming that they are controlled is applied on their active participation in affirming themselves as sexual objects. Furthermore, one code constituting the theme "Women are sexual objects" was "Women excessively focus on their appearance". This humoristic portrayal aligns with Nicholls' (2018) assertion that there exists a potential hazard in exaggerating femininity, emphasizing the need for a delicate equilibrium in presenting a hyper-feminine image. The concept of excess is pivotal in delineating the confines of femininity, aiming to avert perceptions of inauthenticity and associated labels. Although investing effort in one's appearance is deemed a feminine ideal, concealing this endeavour emerges as the paramount consideration in maintaining authenticity.

Similar to the preceding themes, in theme no.2 "Women are irrational" the representation of women as irrational carries inherent negative connotations. Both male and female creators contribute to the normalization of the perception of women as irrational, depicting it as a biologically inherent gender trait. This normalization may be elucidated

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by the association of irrationality with hegemonic femininity (Baczynski, 2016; Charlebois, 2010; 2012; Connell, 1995), thereby positioning such depictions as positive rather than inherently negative.

As for theme no.3, the alignment of characteristics related to “Men are players towards women” with hegemonic masculinity (Charlebois, 2011; 2012; Inhorn, 2012; MacDonald, 2014; Jozkowski, 2022) elucidates the rationale behind men associating these traits with their social cohort. This association carries a positive connotation, promoting in-group favouritism.

In terms of the code “Men seize the opportunity for sexual advance”, the rationale behind the female creator's focus on direct form of sexual advances, as opposed to the more subtle approaches depicted in memes created by male creators, can be attributed to men's proclivity for in-group favouritism. The perpetuation of men consistently seeking sexual advances aligns with ideals associated with hegemonic masculinity. However, portraying such advances in a more subtle manner may serve to mitigate the perception of sexism and harm, framing them as elements of attractiveness rather than harassment, thereby aligning with in-group favouritism.

Memos coded as “men are not serious about commitment” overtly underscore men's purported lack of seriousness regarding commitment. However, given their origin from male creators, there appears to be a subtle inclination to rationalize such behaviour by elucidating reasons for the reluctance to commit. These reasons are attributed to either an apprehension of commitment-related issues or a perceived deficiency in the financial resources' requisite for undertaking commitments. This perspective is supported by Ghannam (2013) and Inhorn & Isidoros (2018), who argue that economic hardships in Egypt have significantly complicated the traditional role of male caretakers, particularly affecting individuals from impoverished and working-class backgrounds.

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Given that all the memes coded “men deceive women to win their hearts” are authored by women, their creation may be construed as indicative of women's resentment towards the repercussions of male dominance. This sentiment aligns with the concept of hostility towards men as articulated by Glick and Fiske (1999), Lorenzi-Cioldi and Kulich (2015).

As for theme no.5 related to “Men struggle with the ideals of masculinity”, memes pertaining to the code “Men Fall Short For Playing The Financial Provider Role” are exclusively authored by men, primarily concentrating on illustrating the challenges men encounter in aligning with the masculine archetype of affluence. This mirrors the impact of economic difficulties prevalent in Egypt on the manifestation of this masculine ideal (Ghannam, 2013; Inhorn & Isidoros, 2018). While these portrayals potentially signal the emergence of new masculinities, redefining established ideals, there is a notable absence of explicit rejection of such ideals within the memes. Instead of adopting an identity management strategy that involves a re-evaluation of economic status as a comparative dimension, the memes persist in indicating a collective evaluation rooted in competitive notions of superiority and inferiority based on economic standing between higher status and lower status groups of men. Moreover, certain memes, such as numbers 38 and 45, created by men, overtly ridicule other men, even though they belong to the same ingroup. This potentially reflects a subordinate recategorization identity management strategy, wherein the ingroup of men is fragmented into subgroups based on the criteria of dominance as an ideal (Gaertner et al., 1993). The newly delineated lower-level ingroup is derided as a form of social sanction for failing to meet the criteria of the ideal hegemonic masculinity. Conversely, women's involvement in the discourse manifests not merely as mockery but also as a demonstration of shared group evaluation of their submissive status. They mock those who fail to sustain hierarchical relations or adhere to the masculine ideal, thereby perpetuating

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hierarchical gender dynamics and reinforcing women's submissive position relative to men.

As for theme no.6 “Women belong to the domestic sphere”, the depiction of women as confined to the domestic sphere, as portrayed by creators of both genders, contributes to the normalization of this perception rooted in gender differentiation—associating women with domesticity and men with external work responsibilities. Drawing upon the insights of Connell (2009) and Deutsch (2007), the accentuation of gender disparities is acknowledged as a significant contributor to the perpetuation of gender inequality.

The findings suggest that some women actively participate in affirming the stereotype that women are incompetent in work life. This paradox is explicable through the alignment of expressions indicating a lack of belonging to the work sphere with hegemonic femininity (Connell, 1987), thus positioning such portrayals as aspirational rather than intrinsically negative.

While certain female creators of the memes shed light on the challenges women face in being predominantly depicted as caregivers, overt rejection or resistance towards this control is notably absent. Significantly, only one female creator appears to challenge the prevalent portrayal of women tethered to the domestic sphere in Meme 12. This may signify women's resentment towards the repercussions of male dominance, critiquing societal tendencies to overvalue men's roles as workers while devaluing the multifaceted responsibilities shouldered by women. This sentiment aligns with the concept of hostility towards men as articulated by Glick and Fiske (1999) and Lorenzi-Cioldi and Kulich (2015). Additionally, it reflects an identity management strategy of social competition, as the female creator favorably compares women's multiple responsibilities in both domestic and work spheres to men who hold a singular responsibility associated with the work sphere. A social change belief framework is predicated upon acknowledging the lack of

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legitimacy inherent in the prevailing social order. Consequently, individuals belonging to low-status groups can develop cognitive alternatives and actively participate in direct social competition with the out-group based on pertinent comparison characteristics (Tajfel, 1978). Social Competition is characterised by motivation derived from self-evaluation and is rooted in social comparisons. It entails competing for a positive evaluation of the ingroup (Turner, 1975).

As for theme no.7 “Women exaggerate while men downplay”, only male creators present situations depicting women exaggerating and men downplay without overtly aligning with either gender's perspective. However, given the inclination towards in-group favouritism within each gender group, the male creators' intention might be interpreted as subtly favouring men by portraying them as more practical. This reflects an othering strategy, achieved through broad generalizations or stereotypes pertaining to gender groups, consequently depicting the women's group as inherently opposed to the men's group. Othering is the process through which a difference is transformed into otherness to create and in-group and out-group (Staszak, 2008)

It appears plausible that the bulk of memes related to theme no.8 “women are liberal” emanate from female creators. Such depictions ostensibly aim to disrupt prevailing gender power dynamics, thereby challenging the dominant position held by men as a collective. According to Charlebois (2011), oppositional femininities actively challenge and reject disempowering practices associated with hegemonic femininity. Two significant codes constituted this theme which are “Women Challenge Men's Control of Their Behaviour” and “Women Challenge Society Standards for Marriage”. In accordance with Inhorn's (2012) research, the practise of arranged marriages without romantic attachment was previously recognised as a characteristic feature of traditional Middle Eastern masculinity. According to Charlebois (2010), an exemplary instance of the opposition presented by unmarried women,

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who challenge the societal expectations linked to dominant masculinity by refusing to participate in the institution of marriage.

Men, driven by ingroup favoritism, are unlikely to actively promote or endorse such portrayals. Despite the emergence of a single meme, which is Meme 65 crafted by a male creator acknowledging instances where women contest men's control within this domain, there is a distinct reluctance to normalize or such behavior evident in his creation. This suggests an inclination toward questioning the legitimacy of such non-normative conduct.

Regarding theme no.9 “Women are toxic partners”, the predilection of male creators to depict women as toxic partners more frequently than their female counterparts can be theoretically rationalized through the reinforcement of in-group favouritism. Female creators focus tends to center on less severe toxic traits, such as neediness and excessive demands in relationships, as well as a proclivity for gossip, thereby infringing on their partners' privacy. Notably, these traits are intricately associated with ideals and stereotypes of hegemonic femininity, wherein neediness and excessive demands align with the notion of women as dependent and men as rescuers (Charlebois, 2010; Inhorn, 2012; MacDonald, 2014). The inclination to gossip also aligns with a pervasive stereotype attached to women (Imbuwa, 2022; Rosida & Handayani, 2023), positioning such portrayals as aspirational rather than inherently negative.

Male creators extend their focus to more severe traits, such as being a catalyst for distress in a partner to the extent of causing harm and being lacking loyalty. This reveals distinctions in the portrayal of toxic traits by gender, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in the creation and perpetuation of such discourses.

As for theme 10 “Women are unexpectedly aggressive”, the Meme 9 originating from the female creator can be construed as an illustration

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of assimilation as an identity management strategy. It is the process where a low status social group adopts similar characteristics and behaviours to a high-status outgroup (Blanz et al., 1998). In that meme, the focus is directed toward a negative trait associated with hegemonic masculinity (Charlebois, 2010), namely aggressiveness. The woman, by engaging with this trait, distinguishes herself from other women, thereby presenting men who exhibit aggressiveness as an ideal gender practice—an archetype she aspires to emulate, contrasting with the conventional notion of women embodying gentleness as an ideal feminine practice. Conversely, memes generated by male creators appear to satirize individuals who deviate from established norms by engaging in such practices. This form of mockery functions as a type of social sanction, contributing to the reinforcement of group boundaries among men. This collective effort aids in maintaining the cohesion of the male group by discouraging behaviours that diverge from established gender norms.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The study acknowledges several limitations that could be addressed in future research. Firstly, the data collection process was constrained by the availability of comprehensive information about the meme creators. The study solely considered the gender of the creators, as obtaining a complete list of meme creators and their detailed demographic characteristics, such as age, marital status, and socioeconomic status, proved challenging. Future studies could actively reach out to meme creators and gather more in-depth information through surveys or interviews, which would enable a more nuanced understanding of how the diversity of meme creators' backgrounds may influence the construction of gender identity within this digital landscape.

Additionally, the research was limited to the analysis of memes shared on a single social media platform, Facebook, which was selected due to its high percentage of active users in the Egyptian context.

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However, memes are often disseminated across various social media platforms, and future studies could expand the scope of investigation by comparing the process of gender identity construction across different digital spaces, potentially revealing platform-specific dynamics. Another limitation relates to the public nature of the analyzed memes. The researchers acknowledge that meme creators may be susceptible to social desirability factors, which could lead to the omission or selective presentation of certain gender identity aspects. Future studies may consider exploring memes shared in less public spaces, such as private WhatsApp chats, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nuances in gender identity representation.

The cross-sectional design of the present study presents an additional limitation, as a longitudinal research approach could generate more robust and significant findings regarding the evolution of gender identity construction within the realm of meme creation. Furthermore, the sample size of the analyzed memes could be expanded in future investigations to enhance the generalizability of the results. Also, the analytical approach utilized in this study could be further enriched by combining thematic analysis with critical discourse analysis, as suggested by Alejandro and Zhao (2023). This combination allows for a more rigorous exploration of the explicit thematic aspects as well as the implicit meanings underlying the construction of gender identity-related themes within memes.

Future research could also consider examining how Facebook users perceive and interpret these memes, and how their group membership and socio-cognitive representations shape their interpretations. Additionally, the prevalence of sexist meanings embedded within the analyzed memes underscores the need to explore the potential effects of these memes in creating an environment that tolerates gender prejudice, as evidenced by reactions, sexist comments, and further dissemination of such content.

5.3 Conclusion

This study revealed the complex interplay of gender identity construction and the perpetuation of gender norms within meme creation. Many themes depicted men and women negatively, partially attributed to in-group favoritism. Interestingly, these derogatory portrayals emerged from creators of both genders, suggesting alignment with perceived ideals of masculinity and femininity. The findings highlighted the two-way dynamic of gender identity construction, as informed by the theory of gender and power. While most memes supported the hierarchical gender order, some brought attention to the disparagement and limitations faced, with limited explicit resistance, except for a theme depicting women challenging societal norms. This research contributes to understanding how gender identities are constructed and negotiated within the realm of social media and online humor.

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