

## Teasing Humor: A Tapestry of Power and Solidarity Embedded in Banter of Pakistani University Friends' Circles

1Javeria Amjad, 2Shoaib Mehmood, 3Muhammad Umair Ashraf, 4Shaiq Hassan

<sup>1</sup>PhD Scholar & Visiting lecturer Department of Language and Linguistics, University of Sargodha  
javeria.laeq.83@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>MPhil Scholar and Visiting lecturer Department of Language and Linguistics, UOS  
shoaib.mehmooduos@yahoo.com

<sup>3</sup>Master's in applied linguistics and TESOL Macquarie University, Sydney ranau0592@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup>BS English & MA International Relations shaiqhassan@gmail.com

### Abstract:

This study explores the gender dynamics of teasing humor by examining the expressions of banter in masculine jabberwocky and feminine nitpicking of Pakistani university friends' circles, unleashing power dynamics and solidarity. Drawing upon qualitative data collected from recording of conversations within university settings, the study investigates the ways in which teasing humor manifests differently based on gender. The model on functions of humor is taken as a lens for the analysis of conversations given by Hay (2000). Masculine jabberwocky is characterized by playful banter, sarcastic remarks, and competitive teasing, often directed at specific individuals or groups. It reinforces traditional masculine norms by emphasizing assertiveness, camaraderie, and a sense of playful dominance. In contrast, feminine nitpicking involves teasing humor that focuses on minor flaws, peculiarities, or personal habits in a lighthearted and playful manner. It is often expressed through attention to detail, highlighting care and nurturing within female friendships. The findings highlight the existence of gendered patterns of power and solidarity in teasing humor within university friend's circles, reflecting broader societal expectations and stereotypes surrounding masculinity and femininity.

**Keywords:** Teasing Humor, Power, Solidarity, Jabberwocky and Nitpicking

### Introduction:

Teasing humor, as an essential facet of human communication, can be described as a form of playful and light-hearted interaction involving good-natured teasing and jovial mockery. Attardo (2001) delves into the concept of humor in his work "Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis," providing valuable insights into the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of various forms of humor, including teasing humor. This form of humor often employs witty remarks, sarcasm, and clever wordplay to evoke laughter and strengthen social connections among individuals. However, it is worth noting that teasing humor heavily relies on shared knowledge, inside jokes, and the context of the interaction, potentially excluding those unfamiliar with the social dynamics or cultural norms involved.

According to Attardo (2001), teasing humor serves several important functions in human communication. Some of the uses of this type of humor are: Social bonding, expression of affection, easing tension, negotiation of status and power, enhancing group identity, coping mechanism, testing boundaries and display of intelligence and wit. Teasing humor also serves as

a versatile tool that enriches communication and fosters positive relationships among individuals and within social groups (Attardo, 2001).

Teasing humor is a prevalent form of social interaction that serves various functions within interpersonal relationships as said by Hay (1994). One important aspect of teasing humor is the identification of its sources. Hay (1994) proposed a comprehensive categorization of humor sources, including incongruity, superiority, release, and affiliation. Incongruity involves the unexpected or surprising elements in a situation or statement, which can lead to humorous responses. Superiority humor arises from the amusement derived from feeling superior to others, often through teasing or playful mockery. Release humor is based on the relief or release of tension or stress through humor. Affiliation humor emphasizes the creation or reinforcement of social bonds through shared laughter and inside jokes.

Social dynamics and power structures deeply influence teasing. It can function as a way to assert dominance, establish hierarchies, or negotiate social positions. Fink and Walker (1977) argues that teasing humor in asymmetric relationships, such as those between superiors and subordinates, can be face-threatening. Listeners often employ specific response strategies to navigate these power differentials and maintain social harmony. Teasing is used further to create a stance of one's identity, to negotiate boundaries between relationships and to exhibit power and status (Partington, 2008). Functions of teasing are multifaceted and diverse and it also tends to explain the heterogeneous practices of behaviors in different circles and groups (Haugh, 2017a; Keltner et al., 2001). Power differentials between individuals, particularly in asymmetric relationships such as those between superiors and subordinates, can introduce face-threatening elements to teasing humor (Ervin-Tripp and Lampert 1992). The response strategies employed by listeners in such situations play a crucial role in managing these tensions and maintaining sociality rights (Gironzetti, 2017).

Drew (1987) has worked on teasing in spontaneous conversations and explains three basic elements of teasing as: Firstly, topic-initial utterances are not teases. Secondly, somehow, they are always responses to the prior turns, mostly the adjacent turns. Lastly, the person who is being teased in two- party or multi-party, takes that prior turn to tease. The claims of Drew are generated on the base of certain conversations but they can still vary according to the ambiance and social settings.

Kotthoff (1998) in her analysis on spontaneous conversations carries on with one of Drew's claims, that it's not necessary that every target immediately counters the teasing he has encountered through a teasing instance of his or her own. She asserts that this observation could be applied on natural conversations but it does not apply to every aspect of teasing humor, for instance in sitcoms where target gives immediate counter tease in reply, which explains "competitive wordplay". Kotthoff (1998) theorizes about the producer of the teasing instance, object of the teasing instance and the public of the teasing instance.

Martin (2007) in his work on social and psychological aspects of humor, tags teasing as a paradox, as it deals with both pro-social and aggressive functions. Martin's focal insights on teasing comprises three psycho-social mechanisms, i.e., group identity, affection and camouflage. Two subconscious and indirect messages are conveyed when teasers

focus a target. First message is that they signal about forming a specific group, affirming their group identity when they tease the target. Secondly, they stress on the non-inclusion of the target in their group by verbalizing it through teasing instance. "This type of humor enables members of an in-group to enhance their feelings of group identity and cohesiveness while excluding and emphasizing their differences from members of an out-group" (Martin, 2007). This phenomenon is also observed by Norrick (1993): "Spontaneous joking ends up more a matter of group cohesion than testing". Martin (2007) calls "friendly teasing" to the social function of teasing in a particular peer's group. It explains that people tease each other and laugh at each other's teasing instances to signal that the friendship of the teasing group is on a higher, affective level than the mutual friendship with less close friends whom they tease. It is a way of "calling attention to the fact that they are close enough that they can say negative things and not take offense" (Martin, 2007).

Teasing humor is a ubiquitous form of social interaction within university friend's circles, serving as a mechanism for bonding, establishing social hierarchies, and reinforcing gender norms. Within these circles, individuals engage in various forms of teasing humor that reflect and perpetuate gendered dynamics. This article explores the expressions of masculine jabberwocky and feminine nitpicking as two prominent manifestations of teasing humor in university friend's circles, as in the Pakistani context there are no instances of analysis of natural conversations on teasing humor. The social and cultural dynamics in conversations of Pakistani university students, emphasize on the adoption and reinforcement of the gendered expressions of humor regarding power and solidarity. Understanding the nuances of teasing humor in university friend's circles provides insights into the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the negotiation of gender roles within social contexts. These gendered patterns of teasing humor in university friend's circles reflect broader societal expectations and stereotypes surrounding masculinity and femininity. Masculine jabberwocky aligns with the idea of humorous assertiveness and dominance, whereas feminine nitpicking aligns with the notion of nurturing and attention to minute details.

As the overview of the previous works on teasing humor shows that spontaneous conversations are not analyzed particularly in the domain of teasing regarding power and solidarity. Researchers are of the view that the nuances of power and solidarity can be analyzed in the naturally occurring conversations. For this purpose, the feminine teasing is manifested in their nitpicking where according to Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, "nitpicking" is defined as the act of giving too much attention to small details or finding faults in a way that annoys other people (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Feminine nitpicking has been identified as another significant form of teasing humor within friend's circles (Parsons & Bales, 2014). This form of humor relies on the clever use of wordplay, irony, and absurdity to turn small issues into sources of laughter and amusement for the audience. Feminine nitpicking involves teasing humor that focuses on minor flaws, mistakes, or peculiarities, often in a lighthearted and playful manner. It can involve teasing about appearance, habits, or personal quirks. Nitpicking humor may serve to create a sense of bonding and intimacy among female friends, as well as express care and attention to detail in their interactions.

The feminine sense of humor has garnered attention as an intriguing area of study in the field of psychology and gender studies. Researchers have explored how women express humor and its

impact on social interactions. The feminine style of comedy often involves elements of wit, empathy, and emotional intelligence, shaping the way women use humor to establish connections and build rapport with others. Studies have shown that women's humor tends to incorporate subtle nuances and relatable observations, leading to a more inclusive and inviting atmosphere in social settings. Moreover, investigations into the role of gender in humor have highlighted the unique ability of women to navigate delicate subjects with tact, fostering camaraderie among peers. Understanding the characteristics and functions of feminine humor can provide valuable insights into gender dynamics, communication, and social bonding where female sense of humor is mocked by Goodman (1992) as:

**"There is a lingering perception that women are not best suited to telling jokes but rather to being the punchlines." (Goodman, 1992)**

In the realm of humor, the masculine sense of humor exhibits distinctive features that have been subject to research and analysis. Researchers have affiliated masculine teasing and sense of humor with their jabberwocky. "Jabberwocky" can be defined as a whimsical and nonsensical form of language used for comedic effect. It involves crafting sentences or dialogues that sound like they have meaning and coherence, but in reality, the words are chosen randomly, creating a humorous and absurd result. This type of humor relies on the playfulness of language and the unexpected juxtaposition of words, leading to amusing and entertaining outcomes. Masculine jabberwocky refers to teasing humor characterized by playful banter, sarcastic remarks, and light-hearted teasing often targeted at specific individuals or groups. It is a form of humor that may involve exaggerated stories, banter about accomplishments or skills, and playful challenges. The masculine sense of humor tends to explore themes of exaggeration, absurdity, and slapstick, drawing upon physicality and high-energy performances to evoke laughter. In social settings, men often use humor as a tool for bonding and camaraderie among peers, using jokes and humorous anecdotes to establish rapport and break the ice. Studies exploring the masculine sense of humor contribute to a deeper understanding of gender-specific communication patterns and the role of humor in male social dynamics (Talbot, 2003).

Importantly, the cultural and contextual factors shape the nature and dynamics of teasing humor. Cultural norms, social expectations, and individual differences influence the interpretation and reception of teasing humor. Cross-cultural studies have shown variations in teasing styles, demonstrating the importance of considering the socio-cultural context (Ziv, 1984). According to Silverstein (1997), teasing humor is particularly prominent in contexts of play and interaction among friends and siblings. It serves as a means for individuals to engage in lighthearted banter, exchange witty remarks, and create a sense of brotherhood.

The present study expands on this literature by examining teasing humor within the context of university friend's circles and specifically focusing on the expressions of masculine jabberwocky and feminine nitpicking. By addressing this research gap, the study aims to contribute to our understanding of how teasing humor operates and influences social dynamics within university settings. It is important to note that these patterns are not universal and may vary depending on individual personalities, the dynamics within the friend's circle, and the cultural context. Additionally, humor is complex and multifaceted, and individuals within a friend's circle may engage in a variety of humor styles that go beyond these gendered expressions.

The purpose of this study is to investigate and explore the expressions of teasing humor, specifically masculine jabberwocky and feminine nitpicking, within university friend's circles.

The study aims to understand how these gendered forms of teasing humor manifest, their role in establishing power dynamics and fostering solidarity, and the nuances of their usage within naturally occurring conversations among friends. Overall, this article's significance lies in its contributions to the fields of humor, gender studies, and social dynamics within university settings. By uncovering the intricacies of teasing humor, the research offers insights that can inform interventions, promote positive social interactions, and enhance the understanding of interpersonal dynamics among university students.

Research gap in the study lies in the absence of naturally occurring university conversations within the Pakistani context. While the study focuses on teasing humor in university friend's circles, the data regarding literature review is based on contexts outside of Pakistan. This gap highlights the need for research that specifically examines the dynamics of teasing humor within Pakistani university settings. By addressing this research gap, future studies can contribute to the knowledge base by exploring the manifestations of teasing humor, examining power dynamics and solidarity, and uncovering the nuances of gendered interactions within Pakistani university friend's circles. This research would provide insights that are more representative and applicable to the local context, enabling a deeper understanding of the social dynamics and cultural factors influencing humor in Pakistani universities.

### **Research Questions**

- How does the use of masculine jabberwocky in teasing humor reflect power dynamics and foster a sense of solidarity within University friends?
- How feminine nitpicking in friends' circle contributes in teasing, concocting power and solidarity?
- Which nuance of teasing, either power or solidarity is prominent in the banter of University male and female students?

### **Research Objectives**

- To examine how teasing in masculine jabberwocky demonstrates power dynamics and fosters a sense of solidarity within naturally occurring conversations among friends
- To explore how feminine nitpicking within friends' circles is incorporated into teasing humor, contributing to power dynamics and reinforcing a sense of solidarity
- To investigate whether conversations between male and female university students exhibit a greater emphasis on power dynamics or solidarity within their banter, and to understand the nuances of teasing in relation to gender.

Top of Form

### **Methodology**

The present research is qualitative in nature and fosters 12 conversations of Pakistani University students. The data is collected from the conversations of the students belonging to University of Sargodha. Conversation is mainly in Urdu with the code switching in English, therefore, every

selected chunk is transliterated, transcribed and translated. Further, data is divided into 6 male and 6 female naturally occurring conversations. The conversations are recorded after having the consent of the students but they didn't know the purpose. They are recorded during the intervals between classes and are of duration from 10 to 15 minutes each. The researchers are the part of the groups as the passive participant observers. All the conversations are manually transliterated and the chunks which are taken for analysis are transcribed. 10 chunks of conversations are selected and identified as humorous by using the Triangulation Method of Attardo (1991) and qualitatively analyzed with the congruity of 5 male and 5 female conversations. The transcription conventions used are from DuBois (1991) and Schmidt (2005) mentioned in appendix A.

**Theoretical Framework**

Jennifer Hay's model on functions of humor is taken as the theoretical framework to analyze the conversations of the University students. Her model divides the major functions of humor into power and solidarity, where both have teasing as a sub-category. Hay relates power in teasing with male creed as a prominent part of their criticizing humor, while she relates solidarity as major share in teasing conversations of the female. Teasing in norms of solidarity is light as compared to the one giving power show, which is criticizing and somehow, harsh.

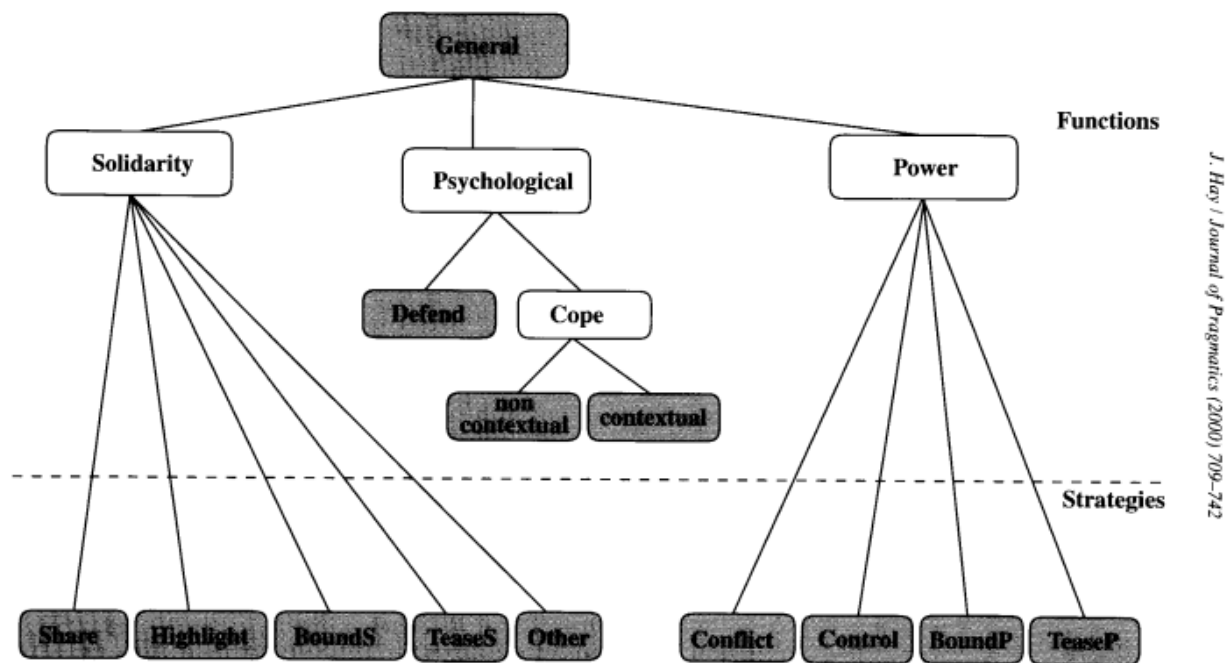


Fig. 1. Functions of Humor

**Analysis and Discussion:**

**Feminine Conversations:**

1. In the friends' circle of 4 girls, this conversation is regarding fashion and student A is giving example of how her male teacher once was a victim of fashion. Student B is initiating the conversation with teasing girls for overdoing makeup. This chunk is extracted from the conversation as the embodiment of feminine nitpicking.

1 Student A: ^Sir ne hamē 'btaya tha ..., /  
2 ...unhūr ne <L2 rebounding L2>krai thi ..., \  
3 aur unhūr ne baal <L2 dye L2> krae the ..., \  
4 ...tu <L2 ^lit=erally L2> unke baal gir gaye,\  
5 unki ^tind ho gai: @ (1.5 sec) /  
6 ...unhūr ne hamē btaya k: /  
7 ^fašhion karē..., /  
8 ... <L2 but within ^limits L2> ^fašhion karē, /  
9 ... jo <L2 ^natural 'beauty L2>hai, /  
10 wo <L2 ^natural 'beauty L2>hai [tu:] \  
11 Student B: [Laikin] ye bat larkiyūr ko kon samjhae.. k <L2 ^natural 'beauty L2> ..., /  
12 ...<L2 ^natural 'beauty L2> hoti hai ..., /  
13 ... unhūr ne tu 'mun pe ^thopna hota hai ..., /  
14 <L2 'lipsticks ^red L2> lagani hoti hē~ @@@

Translation:

Student A: Sir had told us that he had got his hairdo by rebounding and dying. Literally, his hair fell and he became bald. [Laughter] He told us that fashion should be adopted in limits and natural beauty must be preferred.

Student B: But who can put this sense in girls that natural beauty is the real beauty, they put layers of makeup on their faces and use red lipsticks. [Laughter]

Analysis:

Teasing is not always antagonistic and many a times, it is an expression of building solidarity with amusing remarks. As the above conversation depicts, girls are talking about fashion and nitpicking on the minor flaws of other girls regarding fashion. Theirs in group conversation shows solidarity with each other as they are making fun of the out group girls by the use of teasing humor. Here, a girl tells a story of her male teacher who got bald after rebounding and dying his hair. The sarcasm on fashion is marked by laughing here and the girl is further telling that fashion should be adopted in limits otherwise, it will have consequences as experienced by her male teacher. Till here, the discussion regarding fashion is light and amusing. Later, the second girl initiates with overlapping the conversation and nitpicks on girls who use red lipsticks and cover their faces with layers of makeup. Here, the nitpicking is invective and bitter with the direct attack on the girls who wear red lipsticks. The girl is teasing in a playful manner and laughing to show that whatever fashion girls do, it doesn't affect her. But, her attitude is criticizing and judgmental towards the out group girls which marks power in her tone. She somehow, considers herself superior that she doesn't wear red lipstick and use makeup and is naturally beautiful. Here, teasing is marked by power but it is opposite of the generally constructed view for girls where girls tease to create solidarity, according to Hay (2000).

2. This is also an excerpt of the conversation between female friends' circle. The discussion is regarding fashion and girls are nitpicking the out group female creed for their fashion. L2 represents code mixing of the language which is from Urdu to English. L3 represents code switching from Urdu to Punjabi.

1. Girl A: ... 'laikin aik aur ^baat,\
2. wo jab <L2 ^jeans L2> ki baat ati hai.., /
3. ...main ne aik 'lar̄ki ko dekha tha, /
4. ...usne nã.../
5. ...<L2 ^jeans L2> pehni hoi thi aur wo ^phati hoi thi, /
6. mujhe ^laga:...,\
7. ...k usne apni <L2 'jeans L2> ^phaṛ li hai, \
8. aur <L2 ^literally: L2> mujhe nahi pta tha k aisi bhi <L2 'jeans L2> hoti he~

@@@ \

9. Girl B: <L3 Hã: L3>...@, /
10. <L3 Agar sade buzurg wekhen na enj L3>, /
11. <L3 k pate kapṛe pae hoe nẽ L3>, /
12. <L3 te unhã nẽ kehnã a=e k shayad ehnũ gharo kapṛe koi nã labbe L3> @(2.0) /

Translation:

Girl A: But one more thing, when it comes to the jeans, I have seen a girl who was wearing torn jeans. I thought that she has somehow, ripped her jeans and literally, I didn't know that this type of jeans exist [Laughter].

Girl B: Yes! If our elders will watch such thing, they will think that she is wearing torn clothes and they will assume that the girl has shortage of clothes at her home [Laughter].

Analysis:

During nitpicking girls don't usually realize that their jokes are most often critical and personal attacks. They use teasing as a tool for gossiping and scandal mongering. In the above mentioned chunk of conversation, the girl is teasing fashion sense of another girl who was wearing ripped jeans. She euphemistically criticized the girl as being shameless because her clothes were revealing. Her tone is showing sense of supremacy and she thinks she is respectful, as she doesn't wear such things. This sense of supremacy is a power show in the form of tease (p) and the other girl of group in conversation shows solidarity towards her friend by further mocking the jeans. She asserts that her family elders will think after watching her that she is destitute and can't buy clothes. In other words, her family can never approve her to wear such things like the ripped jeans. Second girl's tone is light and mocking as compared to the first girl whose tone was serious and teasing. It is also in conformity with the concept that teasing is not always laughter.

3. This is a part of conversation among a group of five girls, in which four are talking about a popular Pakistani serial naming "Parizaad". The protagonist of drama, Parizaad is an average looking person who got rich by the stroke of luck. The nitpicking is about boys



that how every other boy wants to be Parizaad in real life and thinks himself as an unfortunate being who is often deceived by Girls.

1. Girl A: ^Saare ‘Pakistaniyũ: nẽ dehka hua.../
2. ...ab to balky sab ki ^khwaiš yeh ho gai hai ka hum ^Parizaad ban jaẽ @\
3. Girl B: Hã saare ^laŕke ‘samjty khud ko,...\
4. ...ke wo ^Parizaad ‘he~. @@@/
5. Girl C: ‘Khwaišaata nai ho gai,/
6. log samjty hi khud ko ^Parizaad he~/
7. aur ‘Parizaad ki tarha.. sab ko.. sab ‘kuch mil jay ga.@\
8. Girl A: Nai ‘yar!!/
9. wo bechara bohat mazloom tha..drame mẽ bana hua...\  
10. Girl B: ...Hã laikin is tarha kon kahe ga ke ‘Parizaad bane...\  
11. ...us pa tu itne ‘zulm huay,.../  
12. ...itni ^ziadtiyã huẽ,.../  
13. ...<L2 end L2> pa jo us ko itni saari ‘cheezẽ mili he~,.../  
14. ...kia baghair kuch kie sab kuch mil ^gya?.../  
15. Girl C: ...Laŕke samjhte he~/
16. ke unhaẽ dhoka milta hy ^hameša!...@@@/
17. Girl B: ... ^Hã:!/
18. Girl D: ... ‘Arre ^yarr!! @@@@/

Translation:

Girl A: All Pakistanis have seen it, as a matter of fact, now everyone desires to be Parizaad.

Girl B: Yes! Every boy thinks himself as Parizaad. [Laughter]

Girl C: It is not merely about desires but everyone considers himself as Parizaad and like him everybody will get everything in life. [Smirk]

Girl A: No, dear! He was a miserable character in drama.

Girl B: Yes, but in this manner who will want to be Parizaad, he bore so many miseries and atrocities and what he got in the end, was it without any effort?

Girl C: Boys think that they are always deceived. [Laughter]

Girl B: Yes!

Girl D: Oh dear!! [Laughter]

Analysis:

Girls gossip and nitpick in which they use teasing as implied tool and innuendos. The above mentioned conversation is about the popular serial Parizaad and the girls are nitpicking about how, every boy wants a fate like Parizaad and be rich overnight. Teasing is used sarcastically and with a criticizing note for boys. Tone of the girls is friendly towards each other showing solidarity and they are nitpicking about the boys with the tone of superiority depicting power

in teasing. They are sympathizing the protagonist of drama who was mocked by everyone due to his dark complexion and average looks. Later on, he got rich by the stroke of luck but his untiring efforts were also involved in his life's endeavor. Girls are teasing the average looking boys who have now started thinking that like Parizaad, they will also be successful in life. It is not actually a bad thing for average looking boys to have hope for their future but for girls, it is the trivial matter of mere looks, as their tone is again judgmental for male creed. They have used teasing as a tool to vent out their prejudice for boys by saying that boys think, they are always deceived by the girls. But in real, they are nitpicking boys and taunting them through their laughter. Their laughter is actually working as the implicature to convey the meaning that it is the boys who often deceive the girls. Again it is contrary to the general assumption of Hay (2000), which states that girls tease to show solidarity more than implying power. Here, again girls are teasing with the power in tone by being malicious and extricating their grudge for boys by being personal.

4. This is the chunk of an in group conversation between a group of 5 girls, in which three are participating in conversation. Here the discussion is solely about their own future life and the girls are talking about pros and cons of cooking, especially in their married lives. Only one girl is interested in cooking and the rest of them are interested in the usual makeup stuff. They are trying to convince that one girl by teasing that how cooking can be detrimental to her face and makeup and how she must avoid cooking in order to live a happy life.

1. Girl A: 'Uff:! ^Ya=ar!/'
2.       Tum log bhi:,.../'
3.       ...ek tu mera ^makeup bhi 'khatam hua para hai,../'
4.       ..aur tm log kya <L2 ^cooking L2> ko lay kay beth gai ho,.. /
5.       ..ye bhi koi ^kaam hai,../'
6.       ...ye bhi koi <L2 ^topic L2> hai chairnay wala?@/'
7. Girl B: ^Ya=ar! soch lo...\'
8.       ...<L2 ^kitchen L2> me~ jao gi,\
9.       tu garmi me~ tu tumhara ^makeup bhi kharab hoga,/
10.      tumhari <L2 ^skin L2> bhi <L2 'damage L2> hogi,../'
11.      ...phr kia kro gi?\'
12. Girl A: Aur ^ha:!/
13.      Ajkal tumhe pta hai,/
14.      ke ^Kasee's ki 'base kitni mehngi ho chuki hai....@@@/'
15. Girl C: ...Tou me~ 'base laga kay jaya ee nahē krū gi, /
16.      bus <L2 'cooking L2> kr ke aa jaya krū gi,\
17.      ^bhook bhi tou lgti hai,/
18.      sirf 'makeup say ee tou nhē me~ ne ^pait bharna.@@/'

Translation:

Girl A: Oh dear! What to say...My makeup is about to end and you people are talking about cooking. Is this work worth discussing and is the topic apt to talk about? [Smirk]

Girl B: Dear! Think about it, if you will go in kitchen, then your makeup will be smeared in heat and your skin will also be damaged, what will you do then?

Girl A: And yes! You know now-a-days, Kashee's base has become so expensive. [Laughter]

Girl C: Then I will not use base, I will only cook and come out [of kitchen]. Obviously, hunger cannot be tamed and only makeup will not help me fill my belly. [Laughter]

Analysis:

Conversation between friends cannot be free of teasing humor and if teasing is not there, the relationship is formal. This piece of conversation is a veneer of teasing humor, embedding solidarity, power, sarcastic and light remarks. The tone of first girl is somehow, critical and serious who is smirking and is seriously asking that why they are even having a discussion on cooking, when all she cares is her makeup. She has power wrapped in her tone to dominate the conversation and to talk about her favorite topic. Here teasing is serious but not antagonistic and the girl wants to mend the conversation towards herself. Narcissism is also depicted from her way of talking when she thinks that she must be the center of attention, so teasing here is also depicting a new shade i.e. narcissistic attitude, beside sarcasm and irony. Whereas, the second girl is prone to show solidarity more than dominance and asking the third girl in conversation to stop going in kitchen, otherwise, she will ruin her skin in heat. She also has a teasing tone but her care for her friend is apparent in her dialogue, unlike the first girl who just wants to mold the conversation towards herself. First girl then again nitpicks and adds about makeup by saying that some famous brand of makeup is getting more expensive. Her tone is ironic as she wants to say that going in kitchen will ruin her friend's makeup and she wouldn't be able to afford expensive makeup to go in vain. She is again being materialistic, in trying to convince her friend with overpowering tone. As a result, all of them laugh to make situation light and comfortable. The third girl in conversation, to whom they are trying to convince on giving up on cooking is in turn teasing her friends by saying that she will not go in kitchen after applying makeup. She is teasing with the light and friendly tone by saying that she can't eat makeup to tame her hunger and obviously, she needs to cook in order to eat.

5. This is a chunk of nitpicking between friends regarding the same topic of cooking versus makeup in another conversation. The same friend is being teased who likes to cook, instead of doing makeup all the time. This time she is being teased for having the smell of garlic after cooking which can annoy her future husband. Girls are laughing in light and teasing ambiance.

1. Girl 1: ...Ab har roz tu ^Maggie: nahē kha skti nā:... , /
2. ...kuch <L2 'extra L2> bhi tu khaany ko dil krta hai 'mera. @ \
3. Girl 2: Agr tum ne <L2 ^cooking L2> seekh li, \
4. tu jab tum 'makeup karne jao gi, \
5. tu ^lehsin ki jo <L2 'smell: L2> hai, /
6. wo bhi tum say ee aaye gi: @@@@/

Translation:

Girl 1: I can't eat Maggie (noodles) all the time, at times, I like to eat something extra. [Smirk]

Girl 2: If you will learn cooking skills, then whenever you will go for makeup, you will smell like garlic yourself. [Laughter]

Analysis:

This is an example of teasing where solidarity surpasses power in the teasing of girls. Change is inevitable in humans, whether in attitudes or in teasing. Monotony makes the conversation mundane and even difficult to be in conversation. Therefore, the overpowering tone of the friends for the girl who likes to cook was changed the next day and they are nitpicking with her using light and mitigating humor. They haven't given up on her friend to continue with notion of cooking in future, so they are implying euphemism in the form of meiosis by giving an understatement about cooking that it is the cause of smell rather giving her any benefit. Girl 1 is the one who enjoys cooking and likes to eat variety of food, instead of eating the same noodles daily. Her tone is defensive, as she wants others to agree with her notion, which is quite practical. So, she is smirking a bit to show that others must agree with her likings being a friend. Considering her tone and mood her friends are teasing her indirectly by using meiosis to show their solidarity with their friend. Here the teasing is light and mitigating, which is embodiment of solidarity for their friend who is on the verge of being annoyed by their teasing.

### Boys Conversations:

6. The following excerpt is taken from the conversation of boys to find out the difference of teasing between the conversation of boys and girls. As, mentioned earlier that men have a greater sense of humor and Lakoff (1975) says that women have no sense of humor. So, the upcoming chunks from the conversations of boys will further shed light on the claim of Lakoff (1975). The jabberwocky of boys can be seen in this piece of conversation where boys are not teasing anyone in particular but using mild self-deprecation to create humor. They are teasing each other just for the sake of fun. Discussion is about their result and how they behave on their friends' successes or failures.

1. Boy A: Jab bhi <L2 ^result L2> ana hota hai,.. /
2. ..mε~ neechy say <L2 'start L2> krta hun dekhna, \
3. kion ke mujhe 'yaqeen hota hai ke mera <L2 end L2> pay hoga,... @@@ /
4. ...tu dukh us waqat hota hai: jab ap 'fa=il hon or apka dost <L2 ^top L2> pay ho, /
5. us waqat jo dukh hota hai wo 'na qabil e ho, ^biyā: hota hai...@@@@ /
6. Boy B: ...^Bhai ap ye kehna chahty hε~:, \
7. ke apka dost jab 'fail ho jaye tu dukh hota hai,...\
8. ...laikin ziada dukh us waqat hota hai jab apka dost <L2 ^top L2> pay ho. @ (3.0) /

Translation:

Boy A: Whenever result is about to disclose, I start looking for my result from the end of the list because I am certain of the fact that my result will be at the end of the list. [Laughter]

Actual sense of loss comes when you fail the exams and your friend is at the top. That pain, in real could not be expressed in words. [Laughter]

Boy B: Brother! You want to say that it hurts when your friend fails, but it hurts more when he tops. [Laughter]

Analysis:

The conversation between Boy A and Boy B showcases teasing humor with masculine jabberwocky, fostering solidarity among University friends. Through playful banter and clever remarks, they exhibit a lighthearted and witty tone. Boy A's initial confidence about his results subtly suggests a power dynamic, but Boy B's humorous response balances it amicably. The shared laughter and affectionate use of terms like "Brother!" reflect their friendly relationship. This banter helps create a sense of camaraderie and comfort between the boys, enhancing their bond as friends. The overall tone of the conversation is supportive and understanding, allowing them to navigate the emotions associated with exam results in a positive and engaging manner.

7. The following conversation of boys is regarding the food they get in hostel. The group is of five students, among which two are talking hilariously about the ironic way of food representation versus the real food they get.

1. Boy A: Tumhẽ pta hai.. kia likha hota hai,\
2. "Biryani: 'Pulao" @(4.0)/
3. jab tasverẽ insan dekhta hai tu mun mẽ~ pani aa jata hai, \
4. lekin jab samne <L2 'chicken L2> ata hai...\
5. ...tu hath daal ke hum ko 'boti wahã say dhondhni parti hai, @@@ /
6. <L2 ^chicken L2> kahã gaya, /
7. milta ^šhorba hai, /
8. kiũ.. Yasir bhai! \
9. Boy B: Ya=ar! Yahã: aisa bhi hota hai,... /
10. ...wesy <L2 'mix L2> sabzii nãm likha hota hai, /
11. laikin us mẽ~ eik 'aadha ^mattar hota hai.... @@@ /
12. Boy A: Wo bhi 'dhondhna par̄ta hai, \
13. kahã gaya mattar! Kahã gaya! @@@@ /

Translation:

Boy A: You know what is written on menu, "Biryani Pulao". When a person sees the pictures of food, his mouth waters but when the chicken comes in front of us, then we have to search for the chicken's meat that where is chicken. [Laughter] All we get is broth, what you say, brother Yasir!

Boy B: Oh dear! It also happens that the name of the dish is mix vegetable but all it has is one or a half pea seed. [Laughter]

Boy A: That we also have to search that where is pea, where it is! [Laughter]

Analysis:

The conversation between Boy A and Boy B exemplifies teasing humor with the use of jabberwocky, fostering camaraderie among friends. They engage in playful banter, poking fun at food items named in the menu. The humorous tone revolves around the struggle of finding the main ingredients, like chicken or peas, in the dishes they order. This lighthearted banter creates a sense of solidarity between them, as they share laughter and inside jokes. The teasing humor

reflects a friendly power dynamic, with both boys playfully exchanging witty remarks without malice. The use of jabberwocky, such as "Biryani Pulao" and "mix vegetable," adds to the amusement and lightens the conversation. The affectionate use of terms like "brother Yasir" indicates their close friendship and camaraderie. Overall, the conversation demonstrates a positive and supportive tone, where the boys comfortably engage in banter and laughter.

8. This chunk is the conversation of the same group of boys, the very next day. They are talking about the difficulties of the hostel life implying teasing humor and jabberwocky, which is the hallmark of male conversation to extract fun from the aimless dialogues.

1. Boy A: Mujhe tu apne ^kapre 'istari krne ka bhi nahi: pata tha... /
2. Boy B: ...Mujhe bhi 'nahē pta tha, @ /
3. mujhe idher aa ke pata chla hai...\
4. Boy C: ...^Acha: aap log ab ^hostel mẽ aa gae hē~,... /
5. ...ab apko ^maza aye: .. ya na ae: .. /
6. ab ap ny rehna 'hostel mẽ hi hai, /
7. ^baat tu 'sach hai 'mager.. ^baat hai ^ruswaai ki. @@@@ /
8. mery bhai 'guzara kro ab 'hostel mẽ, / @@

Translation:

Boy A: I didn't even know how to press my clothes.

Boy B: I either, didn't know, I came to know after coming here. [Smirk]

Boy C: Ok, now that you are in hostel, you may enjoy it or not, now you have to live with it. This is a truthful phenomenon but the notorious one. [Laughter] My brother! Now you have to sustain here. [Short laughter]

Analysis:

The conversation among Boy A, Boy B, and Boy C showcases a light-hearted badinage and bon mot, fostering brotherhood among hostel friends. Boy A and Boy B humorously admit their lack of knowledge about pressing clothes, and Boy C playfully remarks that now they have to deal with it while living in the hostel. The teasing tone reflects a friendly power dynamic, with no ill intent, as they jest about the realities of hostel life. The laughter and smirks indicate their shared understanding and comfort with each other. Despite the notorious nature of the situation, the friends find amusement in the shared experience.

9. Hostel life, as seen in the conversation of boys is the most discussed topic. This excerpt is again about the issues of hostel life which the students are discussing in an amusing manner. They are teasing each other playfully in a self-deprecating manner by making fun of their own miseries.

1. Boy A: Jo ^hostel mẽ rehte hē~, \
2. 'maloom hi hoga kis tarah hamari ^zindagi 'guzarti hai,... \
3. ...mary liye sabse ^muškil 'lamha.. jo 'hostel life mẽ hota hai... /
4. ...o khanday k waqt o .@ \
5. Is tarah 'lambi 'lambi linē lagi hoti hē~,... \
6. ...aur banda itna ^šhadeed tang [hota hai 'udhar]-- /

7. Boy B: [^Apko kia 'btaũ:] /
8. ^Bhai! 'Yahã: tu ^jarabẽ bhi khud dhoni parti hẽ~. @@@@ /
9. Boy C: @@@ Kia ^ba=at hai! /

Translation:

Boy A: The people who live in hostel, know better about how we spend our life. The most difficult moment for me in hostel life is during the time of meal. [Smirk] There are long queues and the person is extremely annoyed there. [Overlapping]

Boy B: What to tell you, brother! Here we even have to wash our socks. [Laughter]

Boy C: [Laughter] What a marvel!

Analysis:

In this brief and light-hearted conversation, Boy A, Boy B, and Boy C engage in teasing humor about hostel life. Boy A mentions the difficulties during meal times, and Boy B adds humor by talking about the task of washing socks. Boy C joins in the laughter, showing solidarity with their shared experiences. The jabberwocky is evident as they use terms like "extremely annoyed" and "What a marvel!" to playfully emphasize their feelings. The power dynamic is friendly and equal, with all friends participating in the teasing banter.

10. Fear of exams is a monster but boys can easily deal with it by their jabberwocky and bon mot. This piece of conversation is about the discussion of exams between university friends and how they cope up with this monster in their own way. Here again teasing is used as self-deprecation by the boys, as compared to the girls who rarely use self-deprecation to create humor.

1. Boy A: Jab hum <L2 ^paper L2> mẽ baithe hote hẽ~, \
2. tu humẽ ye bhi nahẽ pta hota, /
3. ke kis <L2 ^subject L2> ka <L2 ^paper L2> hai.... @@@@ /
4. Boy B: ...Ye: tu tha 'apka! /
5. ab 'mẽ~ apko btata hũ:.. ^apna <L2 'experience L2>, @@ /
6. mẽ~ aisi 'tyyari krta hũ.. ke mujhe <L2 ^answers L2> saare aaty hẽ~, /
7. laikin ye nahẽ pta hota ke ye <L2 'answers L2> konse <L2 ^questions L2> ke hẽ~. @ (1.0) /
8. <L2 'questions L2> ka pta nahẽ hota!! @@ /
9. @@ laikin <L2 ^answers L2> mujhe 'sare aaty hẽ~, /
10. tu ye 'waqai boh=at ^khofnaak 'merhala hota hai,... \
11. ...ke apko <L2 ^answers L2> sare aate hoon, /
12. laikin iske 'bawajood ap na likh sakẽ. @@@@ /

Translation:

Boy A: When we are sitting in exams, we don't even know that it is the paper of which subject. [Laughter]

Boy B: This was yours! Now I will tell you my experience. [Laughter] I prepare in a way that I know all the answers but I don't know that these answers belong to which questions. [Laughter] Don't know the questions!! [speaking while laughing] But answers, I know them

all. Then the situation becomes so crucial that you know all answers but still, you are not able to write. [Laughter]

Analysis:

In this conversation, Boy A and Boy B are engaged in teasing humor about their exam experiences. They are playfully joking about not knowing which subject's paper they are attempting and the struggle of knowing all the answers but not the corresponding questions. The tone is lighthearted and friendly, fostering solidarity between the participants as they share relatable reminisce with laughter. There are no prominent power dynamics; instead, they are interacting on equal footing, strengthening their bond as friends through their humorous exchange and jabberwocky. They are not doing any personal attack or criticism which is prominently seen in the conversation of girls.

### **Conclusion:**

In crux, teasing humor is a complex and multifaceted form of social interaction that serves various functions within interpersonal relationships. Cultural and contextual factors further influence the nature and patterns of teasing humor, highlighting the need for cross-cultural investigations. Understanding the intricacies of teasing humor contributes to our knowledge of social dynamics, communication patterns, and the construction of social bonds within various interpersonal contexts.

This article has shed light on the dynamics of teasing humor within university friends' circles of Pakistan, considering the influence of gender and the Pakistani cultural context. The findings have revealed notable patterns in teasing humor among male and female students, highlighting the prominence of power dynamics in feminine nitpicking and the presence of solidarity in masculine jabberwocky. This claim of Hay (2000) has proven as entirely different perspective when seen in the context of Pakistani conversation of the same sex groups. Here feminine teasing is dominated by power dynamics as compared to masculine teasing where solidarity is fostered more than power dynamics in Pakistan. In same sex groups, Pakistani men engage in more teasing and self-directed wisecracks, while women engage more in teasing but tell fewer humorous stories about themselves.

According to the claim of Hay (2000), girls depict solidarity in teasing and boys depicts power dynamics in teasing but these results can be related to teasing humor by highlighting the complexities and potential pitfalls of using personal humorous remarks. The fear of introducing or reinforcing undesirable assumptions can lead individuals to be cautious with teases directed at others or self-targeted humor. Without a strong familiarity between participants, teasing may be interpreted as insults, and self-directed remarks may be misunderstood as confessions. In such cases, speakers may rely on additional presentational cues, such as prior humorous context or exaggeration, to clarify their humorous intent or pretense.

The researchers' findings have implications for creating inclusive social environments within universities where the analysis has proven that in Pakistani ambiance female are directed towards more bitter and invective teasing humor as compared to male. Moreover, female nitpick about others more than themselves and male imply jabberwocky instead of nitpicking and personal attacks. Recognizing the power dynamics in feminine nitpicking can help promote healthier dynamics and mitigate any potential harm or exclusionary practices. Similarly, acknowledging



the role of solidarity in masculine jabberwocky can foster a sense of belonging and cohesion within male friends' circles. However, it is important to note that these patterns are not universal and can vary among individuals and social groups. Future research should continue to explore the diverse manifestations of teasing humor, considering additional cultural, contextual, and individual factors that may influence its expression and interpretation.

Overall, this study advances our understanding of teasing humor within the Pakistani university context, highlighting the dynamics of power and solidarity in the expressions of feminine nitpicking and masculine jabberwocky, respectively. By providing insights into these gendered patterns, the research contributes to the broader literature on humor, gender, and social dynamics.

## **Appendix A**

### **Transcription Conventions: DuBois (1991) and Schmidt (2005)**

#### **Speakers:**

Speech overlap [ ]

#### **Transitional continuity:**

Final .

Continuing ,

Appeal ?

#### **Tone:**

Fall \

Rise /

Level -

Fall-rise √

Rise-fall ^

#### **Accent and lengthening:**

Booster !

Prosodic length :

Lengthening =

Primary accent ^

Secondary accent ‘

### Shortening:

Lowering volume ° °

### Pause:

Short ..

Medium ...

Latching (0)

Long ...(N)

### Vocal noises:

Laughter @

Increasing laughter @ (N)

### Specialized notations:

Duration (N)

Codeswitching <L2 L2>

### Phonetic transcription of Urdu phonemes:

Shhh ش ڄ

Aaen ایں ě

Aen آیں ε~

Aan آن ã

Oon اون ũ

### References

1. Attardo, S., & Raskin, V. (1991). Script theory revis (it) ed: Joke similarity and joke representation model.
2. Attardo, S. (2001). Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
3. Bales, R. F., & Parsons, T. (2014). Family: Socialization and interaction process. routledge.
4. Chen, G. H., & Martin, R. A. (2007). A comparison of humor styles, coping humor, and mental health between Chinese and Canadian university students.
5. Drew, P. (1987). Po-faced receipts of teases.

6. Du Bois, J. W. (1991). Transcription design principles for spoken discourse research. *Pragmatics*. Quarterly Publication of the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA), 1(1), 71-106.
7. Ervin-Tripp, S., & Lampert, M. D. (1992, April). Gender differences in the construction of humorous talk. In *Locating power: Proceedings of the second Berkeley women and language conference* (Vol. 1, pp. 108-117). Berkeley Women and Language Group, University of California Berkeley.
8. Fink, E. L., & Walker, B. A. (1977). Humorous responses to embarrassment. *Psychological Reports*, 40(2), 475-485.
9. Gironzetti, E. (2017). Prosodic and multimodal markers of humor. In S. Attardo (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and humor* (pp. 400–413). New York: Routledge.
10. Gironzetti, E. (2017). Multimodal and Eye-tracking Evidence in the Negotiation of Pragmatic Intentions in Dyadic Conversations: The Case of Humorous Discourse.
11. Goodman, K. R. (1992). *The Sign Speaks: Charlotte von Stein's Matinees. the Shadow of Olympus: German Women Writers around 1800*, 71-93.
12. Hay, J. (1994). Jocular abuse patterns in mixed-group interaction (Vol. 6, pp. 26-55). Wellington Working Papers in Linguistics.
13. Hay, J. (2000). Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women. *Journal of pragmatics*, 32(6), 709-742.
14. Kotthoff, H. (1998). Irony, quotation, and other forms of staged intertextuality. University of Konstanz. URL: [http://w3.ub.uni-konstanz.de/v13/volltexte/2000/471/pdf/471\\_1](http://w3.ub.uni-konstanz.de/v13/volltexte/2000/471/pdf/471_1).
15. Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Jabberwocky. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved July 20, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Jabberwocky>
16. Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Nitpicking. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved June 03, 2023, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nitpicking>
17. Norrick, N. R. (1993). *Conversational joking: Humor in everyday talk*. Indiana University Press.
18. Partington, A. (2008). *Teasing at the White House: A corpus-assisted study of face work in performing and responding to teases*.
19. Qiu, J., Chen, X., & Haugh, M. (2021). Jocular flattery in Chinese multi-party instant messaging interactions. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 178, 225-241.
20. Schmidt, R. L. (2005). *Urdu: An essential grammar*. Routledge.
21. Silverstein, J. L. (1997). Acting Out in Group Therapy: Avoiding Authority Struggle. *International journal of group psychotherapy*, 47(1), 31-45.
22. Talbot, M. (2003). Gender stereotypes: Reproduction and challenge. *The handbook of language and gender*, 468-486.
23. Ziv, A. (1984). *Personality and sense of humor*. (No Title).