Attitudinal Evaluation among Gender Ingroups and Out-Groups in Facebook Humorous Memes: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the attitudinal evaluative meanings underlying gender identities constructed in Facebook humorous memes and compares these assessments across gender groups. The study adopted a socio-cognitive discursive view of gender as a social identity. The principles of the social identity theory allow to examine the intergroup and intragroup relations among men and women groups and subgroups and their effect on their attitudinal assessment of each other.

Employing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis on 24 memes created by male and female creators, the research revealed that multimodal metaphors were the most employed method for transmitting attitudinal meanings, followed by lexical items, and then symbolic attributes and monomodal metaphors. Male social actors were positively evaluated for their normality and negatively for their propriety, tenacity, and veracity. Female social actors were positively evaluated for their normality and propriety, yet negatively for their capacity, tenacity, veracity, and propriety across both male and female creators. With differences observed between evaluations by male and female creators. Furthermore, both genders negatively evaluated their own in-group, raising questions about the underlying motivations behind the creation of memes that hold negative connotations towards one's own social cohort. The findings suggest that these evaluations may be linked to the socially constructed ideals of masculinity and femininity, as well as the complex interplay of social identity dynamics and the reproduction of gender norms within the realm of meme creation.

Keywords: multimodal discourse analysis, appraisal theory, metaphors, Facebook, memes, gender identity, socio cognitive constructions, social identity

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الاتجاهات التقييمية بين المجموعات الجندرية الداخلية والخارجية في المحتوى الفكاهي (الميمات) على الفيسبوك: تحليل مقارن

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الملخص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة الاتجاهات التقييمية التي تكمن وراء الهويات الجندرية المُنشأة في الميمات الفكاهية على فيسبوك، كما تقارن الدراسة كيف تختلف تلك الاتجاهات عبر مجموعات الجندر (الرجال والنساء). تبنت الدراسة الرؤية الاجتماعية المعرفية التحليلية للجندر كهوية اجتماعية. تسمح مبادئ نظرية الهوية الاجتماعية بفحص العلاقات بين مجموعتي الرجال والنساء وبين المجموعات الفرعية لكل منهم وتأثير تلك العلاقات على اتجاهاتهم التقييمية تجاه بعضهم البعض.

قامت الدراسة باستخدام منهج التحليل النقدي للخطاب متعدد الوسائط على ٢٤ ميمًا تم إنشاؤها بواسطة كل من الرجال والنساء، كشفت الدراسة أن الاستعارات متعددة الوسائط كانت الطريقة الأكثر استخدامًا لنقل الاتجاهات التقييمة، تليها العناصر اللفظية، ثم السمات الرمزية والاستعارات أحادية الوسائط. تم تقييم الفاعلين الاجتماعيين الذكور بشكل إيجابي فيما يتعلق بالاعتدالية وسلبياً فيما يتعلق بالملاءمة، المثابرة، والمصداقية. تم تقييم الفاعلين الاجتماعيين الإناث بشكل إيجابي فيما يتعلق بالاعتدالية والملاءمة، لكنهم قُيموا بشكل سلبي فيما يتعلق بالقدرة، المثابرة، المصداقية، والملاءمة. ظهرت تلك التقييمات في الميمات المُنشأة من صانعي الميمات من كلا الجنسين مع وجود اختلافات بين الاتجاهات التقييمية لصانعي الميمات الرجال والنساء. علاوة على ذلك، قيّم كلا الجنسين مجموعتهم الداخلية بشكل سلبي، مما يثير تساؤلات حول الدوافع الكامنة وراء إنشاء ميمات تحمل دلالات سلبية تجاه الجماعة الاجتماعية الداخلية الخاصة بهم. تشير النتائج إلى أن هذه التقييمات قد تكون مرتبطة الايدولوجيات المُنشأة اجتماعيًا للذكورة والأنوثة، وكذلك التفاعل المعقد لديناميكيات الهوية الاجتماعية وإعادة إنتاج الأعراف الجندرية في السياق الاجتماعي الميمات.

الكلمات الدالة: تحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط، نظرية التقييم، الاستعارات، فيسبوك، الميمات، الهوية الجندرية، البناءات الاجتماعية المعرفية، الهوية الاجتماعية.

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1. Study Overview and Theoretical Framework
1.1 Introduction

The conceptualization of sex and gender, and the relationship between them, has been a subject of ongoing scholarly debate. While various theoretical frameworks have been proposed, no single approach appears adequate to fully capture the complexities of gender. The multilayered approach offers a middle ground, reconciling the divergent perspectives. The critical realist view, which recognizes sex as a real biological foundation for gender, is compatible with the multilayered approach. This perspective acknowledges that gender is not simply reducible to sex, but is also shaped by socio-cultural constructs and discursive practices.

Scholars have emphasized the discursive nature of gender, highlighting its socio-cultural dimensions and the role of prevailing ideologies and gendered practices in its construction. In this context, the media play a prominent role in (re)constructing and (re)challenging gender representations. Researchers have primarily focused on issues of recognition and respect in various media forms.

The emergence of the internet and social media has opened up new spaces for gender construction, leading to novel trends and dynamics. Memes, as units of popular culture widely shared on social media, are considered carriers of cultural narratives, including gender representations. 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 social identity theory provide a valuable framework for exploring the attitudinal and evaluative meanings underlying gender identities as constructed in Facebook humorous memes. This theoretical approach considers social identities as socio-cognitive representations held by individuals who identify as members of a particular group. Since these socio-cognitive representations serve as the basis for categorizing and comparing people, it is essential to consider the concept of gender otherness when examining the attitudinal evaluative meanings among gender groups in humorous memes. Men and women, as distinct social groups, often maintain a

sense of superior in-group identity by positioning the out-group as the "other" through a hierarchical relationship that favours the in-group over the out-group. It is important to note that the current gender order, which is characterized by hegemonic masculinity, has led to the emergence of different types of masculinity within the male group and varying forms of femininity within the female group. These sub-groups within the broader gender categories interact in complex ways. Social groups typically strive to maintain a positive distinctiveness, and they may employ various means to achieve this, including the use of sexist humour that positively distinguishes the in-group from the out-group. This dynamic is rooted in the human tendency to value and reinforce one's own group identity in relation to perceived out-groups. Sexism exhibits a multidimensional and ambivalent nature, encompassing both hostile and benevolent forms. While women are often more negatively impacted by sexism due to their generally less dominant social positions, previous studies have asserted that men are also subject to gender inequalities, as different groups of men may receive disparate treatment. Furthermore, it is essential to consider the relationships between the subgroups within each broader gender category, as each gender group can have distinct examples of varying masculinities or femininities.

Accordingly, this study is particularly interested in analyzing the dynamic attitudinal meanings underlying gender identities as they are socially constructed in Facebook humorous memes. These socio-cognitive representations, as reflected across gender groups, have the potential to capture the diverse voices and perspectives within the gender spectrum.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite the rising influence of social media and internet culture on public perceptions, research on the portrayal and evaluation of gender identities in online humour, especially memes, remains limited. Memes, as a socially constructed public discourse, necessitate an analysis of new trends in gender identity construction. Most existing studies focus on the representation of men and women as broad categories, yet there is a need for a more detailed examination of the interpersonal dynamics and attitudinal language used both within and between these gender groups and their subgroups. Furthermore, while

memes are widely shared on platforms like Facebook, much of the existing research has concentrated on dedicated meme websites. Given Facebook's significant popularity in Egypt as a social media site that fosters meme culture.

Hence, this study aims to explore the attitudinal evaluative meanings underlying gender identities in humorous Facebook memes and to compare these evaluations across major gender groups and their subgroups.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to:

1. Explore the attitudinal judgment evaluation of men and women groups in Facebook humorous memes.

2. Compare how the attitudinal judgment evaluation of men and women groups differs based on inter and intra gender groups dynamics.

3. To analyze the various methods used in Facebook memes to convey attitudinal evaluative meanings.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study broadens the scope of existing research by utilizing multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine attitudinal evaluative meanings related to gender groups, considering the varied modes of representation present in memes. By investigating these gendered evaluative meanings within the specific context of Egyptian society, the study fills a notable gap in the literature as interpretations of gender identities and descriptions of masculinities and femininities have been predominantly framed through a Western perspective or by foreign scholars focusing on the Egyptian and Arab regions. This research aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of gender constructs that are unique to the Egyptian sociocultural context.

Gender issues have recently risen to prominence in both Egypt and the global arena. Achieving gender equality is a key sustainable development goal of the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.) and a vital element of Egypt's 2030 sustainable development agenda (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, n.d.). Memes, often laced with humor, sometimes perpetuate sexist attitudes by belittling certain gender groups, thereby fostering gender prejudice and perpetuating power imbalances and gender inequality. This study

highlights how some humorous memes articulate gendered evaluative meanings, prompting the public to think more critically about these memes and to recognize the implicit messages within what might appear to be mere entertainment on social media. By doing so, it aims to raise awareness about the potential sexist undertones that these memes might carry.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

1.5.1 Social Identity Theory *(Tajfel, & Turner, 1979; Hogg, 2016)*

Social identity theory is developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. It describes intergroup relations, as well as conflict and cooperation between groups. It developed over time to become a broader social psychological theory of the role of self and identity in group and intergroup phenomena in general. There are three cognitive processes responsible for evaluating others as in-group and out-group. These processes are:

1.5.1.1 Self-Categorization. Categorization is a normal cognitive process by which people group things together. Human groups are categories that people mentally symbolize as prototypes. Prototypes are sets of interrelated attributes that identify overall similarities within, in addition to differences between groups. Hence, prototypes attributes maximise the group's entitativity. If a prototype is shared by many people in one group, it turns into a stereotype

People often make categorisations in binary manner where one of the categories is in-group. In-group prototypes are influenced by the intergroup comparative context. The process of categorising someone has predictable consequences including depersonalization of that individual in regard of the attributes of a certain prototype. Also, on the basis of categorisation, the in-group members perceive themselves in terms of the defining attributes of that in-group. Thereby, self-categorisation extends beyond transforming one's self-conception to produce normative behaviour among members of a group. Moreover, the absolute awareness of the presence of an out-group is enough to evoke inter group competitive or discriminatory responses by the in-group.

1.5.1.2 Social Identification. People adopt the identity of the group they have categorized themselves as members of. Social identity can be identified as an individual's knowledge that he belongs to specific

social groups, along with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership. Social groups, regardless of their size and structure, provide their members with a shared identity that describes and evaluates who they are, what they are assumed to believe, and how they shall behave. Social identities also underline the distinctiveness of the in-group from relevant out-groups within a social context. Social identity might be positive or negative based on the evaluations of those groups that contribute to an individual's social identity. Individuals seek to achieve and maintain a positive social identity.

1.5.1.3 Social Comparison and Identity Management Strategies. Positive social identity is mainly based on favourable comparisons made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups. People tend to make these comparisons to ensure that their own group is positively distinctive and evaluated more favourably than the out-groups through emphasizing the positive traits of the in-group in compare to the perceived negative traits of the out-group. As a result, social groups attempt to differentiate themselves from each other. The aim of differentiation is to gain or maintain superiority over the out-group on certain dimensions. Thereby, any such act is mainly competitive. Social competition can lead to several consequences. The losing groups is assumed to be hostile to out-groups' victors as their relationship were conflictual. However, when winning and losing groups establish shared group evaluations regarding competitive superiority and inferiority, the losing group might comply to the superiority of the wining group, as long as the terms of the competition are perceived as the legitimate and the competition itself is considered fair based on these terms.

 If social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals might adopt different strategies to manage their identity. Blanz et al. (1998) has listed a taxonomy of identity management strategies as put forward by Albert (1977), Masters and Keil (1987), Tajfel (1978), and Tajfel and Turner (1979). These strategies are classified based on being individual or collective and behavioural or cognitive.

1.5.1.3.1 Individual Mobility. It depends on a belief in permeability. Permeability refers to the ability to navigate between different social groups with ease and adaptability. Consequently, individuals of lower

status groups may opt to abandon their group to integrate into and get acceptance from the higher status out-group. Nevertheless, the permeability of borders between social groups is a significant challenge, leading to the expulsion of persons who have made attempts to cross across (Tajfel, 1978). The strategy can be categorised as entirely individualistic, as it pertains to the evaluation of an individual's own social status but not the broader assessment of the low-status group as a whole. Furthermore, the process of joining a new group often leads to changes, which might result in significant behavioural consequences (Blanz et al., 1998).

1.5.1.3.2 Assimilation. It is the process where a low status social group adopts similar characteristics and behaviours to a high-status outgroup. The definition of assimilation as either an individual or a societal approach lacks unanimity among social identity theorists (Blanz et al., 1998). However, Blanz et al. (1998) conceptualise it as an individual behavioural strategy, specifically referring to a particular subset of individuals from a low-status group who have transitioned to the outgroup (referred to as individual mobility). This perspective does not necessarily suggest the complete dissolution of the previous ingroup, as Tajfel (1978) proposed in his conceptualization of assimilation.

1.5.1.3.3 Individualization. It describes transitioning from social to personal self-categorization (Turner et al., 1987). It occurs when people inside a group begin to perceive themselves not just as group members, but as distinct individuals who are not influenced by judgements about the group (Ng, 1989). It is an individualistic method as it involves individuals distancing themselves from their negative social identity, but the assessment of other members of the group stays unaffected. Moreover, it is categorised as cognitive in nature, since individuals inclined towards individualization typically do not overtly exhibit their lack of affiliation with a social group (Blanz et al., 1998).

1.5.1.3.4 Competition. A social change belief framework is predicated upon acknowledging the lack of 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). According to

Turner (1975), a distinction can be made between Social Competition and Realistic Competition. 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. However, Realistic Competition is associated with self-interest and involves group objectives that are negatively interdependent. It involves competing for resource allocations that benefit the ingroup. Both are considered collective strategies, as they involve group members enhancing their own status by enhancing the status of their ingroup. In addition, both strategies exhibit distinct behavioural characteristics, since they include engaging in active competitive conduct among groups (Blanz et al., 1998).

1.5.1.3.5 Social Creativity Strategies. Social creativity refers to the actions and behaviours that individuals do in order to redefine the societal value of their own group and its characteristics. This is sometimes followed by efforts to establish parallels with groups of lower social standing, while consciously avoiding comparisons with groups of higher social status (Tajfel, 1978). According to Blanz et al. (1998), social creativity tactics encompass both collective and cognitive approaches.

There exist two strategies relevant to alterations in the favoured comparison dimension. The Re-evaluation of Comparison Dimension strategy involves the reversal of the evaluation of the status defining comparison dimension, while maintaining the positions of the two groups on this dimension. The New Comparison Dimension strategy involves the rejection of comparisons based on dimensions that suggest negative results for the ingroup. Instead, it encourages comparisons based on a new dimension in which the ingroup enjoys a better status position compared to the relevant outgroup (Tajfel, 1978).

Two more strategies are associated with altering the subject of comparison. The strategy of Superordinate Re-categorization pertains to the process by which ingroup and outgroup can be combined into a novel shared ingroup. Individuals belonging to both the previous ingroup and the previous outgroup delineate their identities based on a shared, superior-level ingroup. They endeavour to establish a favourable social identity by engaging in social comparisons with

other superior-level outgroups. Additionally, the strategy of Subordinate Re-categorization involves enhancing self-assessment by dividing the original ingroup into two or more subgroups. The newly formed lower-level ingroup is then considered to possess a higher status compared to the newly formed outgroups (Gaertner et al., 1993).

Lastly, the strategy of the New Comparison Group, as discussed by Tajfel (1978), is an additional social creativity technique that involves altering the focus of comparison. Based on it, individuals belonging to low-status groups opt to identify a new outgroup that occupies a lower status position compared to their own ingroup, specifically in terms of significant dimensions of comparison. This choice is made in order to facilitate downward comparisons.

1.5.1.3.6 Temporal Comparison and Comparison with Standard. The temporal comparison strategy involves altering the time referent of the comparison. Subjects have a tendency to avoid making comparisons with other social groups and instead choose for parallels with themselves in the past (Albert, 1977). Comparison with Standard refers to a strategy through which individuals avoid comparing themselves with other groups, but instead compare their own group with established standards. These standards refer to socially shared objectives or norms. Individuals are capable of positively evaluating their ingroup, irrespective of their disadvantaged position in relation to the outgroup, where there exists a satisfactory approximation to these objectives (Masters & Keil, 1987). Both strategies primarily focus on the cognitive modifications of the parameters of the status-defining comparisons. Furthermore, both of these reactions are considered collective alterations of the object being compared, as indicated by Blanz et al. (1998).

1.5.1.4 Othering and Cultivation About the Other. Othering goes hand in hand with social identity, as othering is the process by which a group defines itself, creates an identity, and distinguishes itself from other groups. It refers to attributing negative characteristics to other individuals or groups of people in order to distinguish them as representing that which is diametrically opposed to them. It encompasses making broad generalizations or stereotypes about

groups of people. Othering has an affect component in which those who are othered are irrationally feared, if not hated. (Rohleder, 2014) According to the cultivation theory, media can create a mental image in the mind of the users about the other through presenting and cultivating stereotypical and national images of a group or people. This mental image affects the social interaction among people in different social groups. In other words, this image determines whether a person or group would deal positively, negatively, or neutrally towards the other person or group, particularly when that other belongs to a different culture, gender, race, or religion. The cultivation theory has diverse applications to several fields including sex roles, violence, race, religion, beauty standards, and political orientations (Mosharfa, 2015).

1.5.2 Applying the Theory to the Study

Social identity theory allows to examine intergroup and intragroup relations among men and women groups represented through gender identities constructed in humorous memes. This theory describes the cognitive processes explaining the ways people's self-concepts are based on their membership in social groups and how this affects their attitudes and behaviours towards members of the in-group and the out-groups. According to Koller (2012), evaluation reveals the norms and values component of a certain socio-cognitive representations of social actors and the associated emotions. Thus, the principles of the theory help to explore the interpersonal relationships dynamics underlying the attitudinal language resources used among gender groups to evaluate each other, as represented in the memes.

According to theory, social groups compete for positive distinctiveness and use various means to achieve so. One such means is othering, so it helps to investigate how each gender group construct their identities in memes through emphasizing positive things about themselves while derogating the other out-group, thus, the ingroup is established as superior in compare to inferior out-group, thereby, the out-group is subjected to gender prejudice. Since each gender group has different exemplifiers of various types of masculinities or femininities, it is useful to take into consideration that othering might not only happen between men and women as general social groups,

but it can take place between the subgroups of each broad gender group.

1.5.3 Research Questions

The study aims to explore the following research questions:

RQ1: How women are evaluated (positively/ negatively) in memes created by women in compare to memes created by men?

RQ2: How men are evaluated (positively/ negatively) in memes created by men in compare to memes created by women?

2. Literature Review

2. 1 Interplay of Sex and Gender Frameworks

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.

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 Gender Identity as a Socio-Cognitive Construct

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 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

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

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 Group Dynamics and Social Identity

Social representations allow individuals to categorize people and objects, compare and explain behaviors, and objectify them as part of their social setting (Moscovici, 1988). Representations make objects, people, and events we encounter conventional by giving them a specific form, localize them to a specific category, and progressively establish them as distinct and shared cognitions. They are prescriptive as they are imposed on us through social structures and traditions. Although we incorporate them into our individual minds, we rethink collective cognitions as individuals (Moscovici, 1984).

Social categorization and social comparison are main pillars of the development of social identity. The categories to which individuals are exposed shape their perspectives and attitudes toward various social groups (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. Thus, it is critical to understand the various social groups and social settings in which they participate (AbdulMegied, 2022). Social comparison is a social action used to compare one group to another. There must be relevance and proximity in order for the comparison to take place. Social identity serves as a source of loyalty and the definition of one's self-concept. When a person is assigned a membership, there is emotional significance and an increase in self-esteem. Self-esteem is regarded as a foundation for self-definition; it is essential for self-concept. When a person considers their own self-esteem, they begin to distinguish themselves from others and compare themselves in order to discover their own unique social identity (Trepte, 2006).

Although the goal of social groups is to boost self-esteem, they can also amplify discrimination against others. Every group has its own paradigm within which it operates, as well as a paradigm of actions, characteristics, norms, perceptions, and values. Social groups

encourage favoritism and discrimination within the same group based on one's level of belonging and commitment to a particular group. Also, people who disagree with a specific group's paradigm are ousted and outcast as the others. (Trepte, 2006).

2.2.2.1 Otherness. Othering is the process itself through which a difference is transformed into otherness to create and 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 Conceptualization of 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 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 Ambivalent 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 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 Social 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 (Popa & Gavriliu, 2015). 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 & Gavriliu, 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).

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 status 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 Humorous 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 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).

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 Identity 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 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

The research employs multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to answer the study's research questions that explore the attitudinal evaluative meanings underlying the gender identities constructed in

Facebook humorous memes while comparing how they differ among gender groups. Since MCDA is concerned with investigating meaning derived from discourse that employs multiple semiotic resources (Çoşkun, 2015), it allows for consideration of how visual and verbal language modes collaborate in memes to construct evaluative meanings. MCDA is a synthesis of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and multimodality as different fields of applied linguistics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021). CDA seeks to find hidden aspects in the social systems, such as power and hegemony, in order to denaturalize discourse and disclose hidden ideologies (Fairclough, 2013). CDA describes, explains, and criticises the ways dominant discourses influence socially shared knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies indirectly (Van Dijk, 2000).

More specifically the study deploys Van Dijk's (1993; 2006; 2015) framework. Van Dijk (1993) emphasises social cognition as the intermediary between text and society. As a result, Van Dijk (1993; 2000) proposed the notion of ideology square to examine discourse comprehension and production and their link to the society. Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory serves as the foundation for the ideology square. It contends that in-group favouritism and out-group derogation exist as social practises in discourse (Van Dijk, 2000). It describes discourse strategy of emphasizing positive aspects of Us and negative aspects of Them, while de-emphasizing negative aspects of Us and positive aspects of Them (Van Dijk, 2014).

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 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 centered on gender issues; b) containing a metaphor; c) having interaction on it; d) being relevant to the research questions; e) being clear and easy to understand; f) being relevant to the users by referring to something they can relate to.

Afterwards, for validity purposes, the collected memes were checked by four other academic researchers and gender consultants[1]

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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

separately. Each one evaluated the memes independently on a five points Likert scale consisting of five 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. 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).

The top four memes with the highest score from each account were selected for analysis. However, the number of memes meeting the criteria of selection from M.S account was less than four, so one additional meme was selected from L.I account and another was selected from N.S account. Selection was also guided by data saturation, ensuring thorough analysis by examining both frequency and depth (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). The final sample size was 24 memes[2].

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. Since Van Dijk (2014) stressed that his framework does not provide a step-by-step procedure for discourse analysis, the study used the appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2008) in integration with Forceville's (2006) multimodal metaphor framework as approaches to conduct MCDA.

This study deploys the attitude sub-system of the appraisal framework, developed by Martin and White (2008), to analyse meanings that reveal meme creators' evaluative involvement in the memes and to uncover interpersonal relationships between gender groups underlying the attitudinal language resources. The appraisal framework categorises attitudinal meanings into three basic subtypes. These subtypes are a) affect which is positive or negative sentiments expressed as emotional responses of social actors to behaviour,

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[2] Memes can be accessed through the QR code

text/process, or phenomenon; b) appreciation which refers to evaluations of things such as human creations, performances, natural phenomena, objects, artefacts, texts, states of affairs, and processes in terms of their assigned social value; c) judgement which refers to positive and negative evaluations of human behaviour and character in terms of ethics, morality and other systems of conventionalized or institutionalised rules.

For limitation purposes, the study mainly focuses on judgment. While affect focuses on how social actors feels and appreciation focuses on things related to them, judgment directly focus on how the social actors' character and behaviour, thus, it is more relevant in the context of the study. There are two types of judgements: those concerned with social esteem and those concerned with social sanction (Martin & White, 2008). Social esteem judgements are based on normality, capability, and tenacity (Martin & White, 2008). Social esteem is typically policed orally, with humour frequently playing a vital role (Eggins & Slade, 2006). Sanction judgements are based on veracity and propriety. Social censure is more frequently formalised in writings that govern how people should behave (Martin & White, 2008). Zhang (2018) categorises judgement lexical realisation in written text as adverbial, attribute, epithet, nominal, and verbs.

The appraisal framework distinguishes between the explicit inscription of attitudinal meanings using attitudinal lexical items and the transmission of attitude through various methods of implication and association, referred to as attitudinal invocation (Martin & White, 2008). Provoked attitude is a form of invoked attitude. It refers to the use of lexical metaphor to initiate positive or negative evaluation. Metaphor is one of the discursive strategies (Van Dijk, 2006). It is defined as understanding and experiencing one thing through the lens of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). According to the cognitive viewpoint, metaphor's mechanisms reside in the mind apart from language. As a result, every kind of communication can be interpreted as a metaphor if it can elicit a metaphorical thinking or concept (El Refaie, 2003). So, metaphors can be cued visually, vocally, or both. This study depends on Forceville's (2006) multimodal metaphor framework for analysing multimodal and monomodal metaphors in Facebook humorous memes. According it, monomodal metaphors are

those in which the target and source are represented exclusively or mainly in one mode, whereas multimodal metaphors are those in which the target and source are represented exclusively or predominantly in distinct modes. Focusing on metaphors analysis within the context of this study allow to yield useful insights, as one of the main attributes of memes is intertextuality. Memes usually rely on other texts or instances of talk in complex and innovative ways (Zibin, 2022). Memes contain metaphors as a common element in their making (Huntington, 2016).

The study also takes into consideration representational resources in visual representations as a way that might invoke attitudinal meanings. According to Feng (2017), participant attributes is a form of attitudinal meanings metonymically created by visual processes, which correspond to the judgement category in Martin and White's (2005) appraisal system. Feng (2017) considers a person's evaluative traits as frequently metonymically built through their visual analytical features, or through the features they cause in other objects. Characters are considered carrier, outer physical attributes or any physical object recognisable as someone's property are considered possessive attributes, and the characters' inner conceptual attributes are possessive attributes that acquire symbolic value.

Meme creators usually depend on pre-exisitng images from different resources; thus, limiting their control over all aspects of the image, including social actors physical attributes. However, they possess the ability to purposefully edit clipart to these images to convey specific connotations. So, while multimodal metaphors analysis helps to identify invoked attitudes through comparing the context of the memes with that of their original sources, thus, understanding the meme in lens of these sources, representational resources allow focus on significant visual attributes edited to the original image as symbols invoking evaluative traits of the social actors.

The use of different approaches to analyse and interpret the data helps to achieve theory triangulation to assure validity (Carter et al., 2014).

4. Results of the Study
4.1 Answering Research Questions
4.1.1 Judgment Attitudinal Resources of Male and Female Social Actors

The MCDA analysis of 24 memes[3], revealed an array of positive and negative attitudinal resources used to judge men and women gender groups in mems created by men and women. The following table presents these attitudinal meanings and the methods used for their transmission.

Table4.1: Judgment Attitudinal Resources of Male and Female Social Actors

Gender of the meme creator	Evaluation of male social actors			Evaluation of female social actors			
	Lexical items (total = 5)	**Multimodal metaphors (total = 18)**	**Monomodal metaphors (total = 1)**	**Lexical items (total = 6)**	**Multimodal metaphors (total = 19)**	**Monomodal metaphors (total = 1)**	**Symbolic attributes (total = 2)**
Woman	Unaffectionate (مبقيتش حنين) (-)	Bothersome (-) Dependent (-) Effeminate (-) Guardian Self-absorbed(-) Unaffectionate(-) Womanizer (-)	Ideal partner (+)	Gentle (رقيقة) (+) Good dancing (رقصك كان حلو) (+) Late (متأخرة)(-) Spinster (العانس) (-)	Aggressive (-) Bully (-) Clingy (-) Confrontational (-) Feigning good manners (-) Irrational (-) ** Selfish (-)	Unmannered (-)	Aggressive (-)
Man	Beautiful (جميل) (+) Dawly "international" (دولي) (+) Mistaken (غلطان) (-) Very simple (بسيط جدا) (+)	Apathetic (-) Attractive (+) *** Confrontational (-) Cursory (+) Dominant (-)*** Not serious about the relationship (-) Rude (-)	N/A	Good wife (زوجة صالحة) (+) Grumbler (صيوحة)(-)	Alluring (+) Attentive (+) Bothersome (-) Controlled (-) Feigning affection (-) Gloomy (-) Irrational (-) Obstructive (-) Subordinate (-) ** Thoroughly (-) Unfaithful (-) Unrealistic (-)	N/A	Masculine (-)

(The (+) refers to positive evaluation while the (-) refers to negative evaluation. Assessments with no signs had neutral connotations. The number of (*) refers to the frequency of the item across memes)

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[3] Memes numbered from 1 to 12 are created by women, while memes numbered from 13 to 24 are created by men.

As the previous table showed different methods have been used to transmit attitudinal meanings. It is worth mentioning that the same social actor can be evaluated multiple times and in different ways in the same meme. In memes created by women, the total of evaluated male social actors is 8 while the total of evaluated female social actors are 12. In memes created by men, the total of evaluated male social actors is 11 while the total of evaluated female social actors are 10. Metaphors, specifically multimodal metaphors, was the most used method, followed by lexical items, then symbolic attributes. The following table describes the source, target, mode, context, and reference of each metaphor used in the memes.

Table4.2: Description of Metaphors used for Judgment Evaluation of Social Actors

Meme no.	Source	Target	Mode	Reference
1	Mostafa	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Haha w Tofaha movie
	Manaweshy	Female social actor		
	Mostafa is a bothersome kid who persistently annoys Manaweshy by snooping around the house. Manaweshy is the elderly family head whom the family resort to for solving family conflicts and providing guidance to them, however, he seems selfish and not caring. The man behaviour of not calling the woman is compared to Mostafa annoying behaviour. The woman selfishness and lack of empathy towards the stressed male social actor is compared to Manaweshy selfishness towards his family.				
2	Nesma	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Haramya fi KG2 movie
	Hassan	Male social actor		
	Hassan, a colleague of Nesma's father, is responsible for her until her father's release from jail. The woman's irrational behavior of blocking anyone who likes her, despite desiring a relationship, is compared to Nesma's irrationality as a child. The man's involvement in the woman's affairs is likened to Hassan's role as her guardian.				
3	Ahmed	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Alf Mabrook movie
	Ahmed was lashing out in anger and behaving aggressively towards everyone he encountered on the street. The woman is compared to Ahmed to indicate that she is likely to act violently with her future lover.				
4	Ghazy Eldosry	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Viral image
	An internet image of Ghazy Eldosry in a bridal gown, suggesting his marriage to another male, has garnered significant negative social media commentary, indicating a societal refusal for such act. This image is used in memes to ridicule men with traditionally feminine behaviors. The man is compared to Eldosry for his perceived effeminacy, shown in his decision to marry a woman chosen by his mother.				
5	Dancer (رقاصة)	Female social actor	Monomodal metaphor	

Attitudinal Evaluation Among Gender Ingroups and Out-Groups in Facebook Humorous Memes: A Comparative Analysis

Meme no.	Source	Target	Mode	Reference
	In the context of Egyptian culture, a dancer connotes depravity and moral deficiency. Therefore, comparing the daughter to a dancer to suggest her evaluation as unmannered for arriving home three minutes late after 10 pm			
	Cat	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Viral image
	Cat memes are a popular internet culture, often evoking warmth or hilarity due to cats' expressive faces and bodies that convey human-like emotions. The cat in this meme shows an annoyed expression, so the mother is compared to it, highlighting her displeasure that her daughter arrived home late. So, the metaphor conveys mainly an affect instead of judgment.			
6	Hassan	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Abo Ali movie
	Salma	Female social actor		
	Hassan and Salma were involved together after escaping from the police. Salma was deeply attached to him, desiring his protection, while Hassan was indifferent, preferring they part ways. The woman need for the man affection is compared to Salma clingy behaviour while them man indifferent behaviour is compared to Hassan unaffectionate manner.			
7	Omar	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Omar w Salma movie "part two"
	Salma	Female social actor		
	Omar was showing affection to his wife, Salma, by cuddling her. Salma suddenly became irrationally angry and quarreled with him when another woman drove by, mistakenly assuming he was flirting with her. The irrational anger of the woman towards the other woman, for advising her to divorce her abusive husband, is compared to Salma's irrationality. Similarly, the second woman confusion towards the first woman reaction is compared to Omar's confusion towards Salma's reaction. So, for the second woman the metaphor conveys mainly an affect instead of judgment.			
8	Prince (امير)	Male social actor	Monomodal metaphor	
	This word implies an evaluation, suggesting "Prince Charming" or an ideal partner. The man is compared to a prince, indicating he is an ideal partner as claimed by his promises.			
	Abd Elmgeed	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Bent Esmha Zat series
	Zat	Female social actor		
	The scene depicts Zat overwhelmed with household responsibilities while Abd Elmgeed is portrayed as dependent on her and unwilling to help with household tasks, instead making demands. The man is compared to Abd Elmgeed to indicate his dependency, while the woman is compared to Zat to highlight her feeling of being overwhelmed. So, for the woman the metaphor conveys mainly an affect instead of judgment.			
9	Fawaz	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	El Zawga El Rabaa series
	Sameha	Female social actor		
	In this scene, Sameha was dancing for her husband, Fawaz, in their bedroom. Fawaz, being a polygamist, so comparing the man to him implies that he is a womanizer. The man and the woman are likened to Fawaz and Sameha, suggesting they are attracted to each other, contrary to the man's claim of barely knowing her.			

Attitudinal Evaluation Among Gender Ingroups and Out-Groups in Facebook Humorous Memes: A Comparative Analysis

Meme no.	Source	Target	Mode	Reference
10	Asley	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	El Almany movie
	Asley is portrayed as a thug, acting cruelly by laughing at a story another thug tells him about stealing a girl, electrocuting her, and blackmailing her family to secure his release from prison. The behavior of the woman, laughing at the man for crying in front of her friend, is compared to Asley's behavior, indicating she is a bully.			
11	Ken	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Toy Story movie "part 3"
	Barbie	Female social actor		
	In this scene, Barbie deceives Ken into revealing information about her friends, ties him up, and tears his outfits to interrogate him. Ken is portrayed as self-centered, prioritizing his interests over others' welfare. Similar to Barbie's confrontational behavior, which included aggressiveness in dealing with the situation, the woman is confrontational in terms of resisting being controlled by her husband in her choices. The man is likened to Ken, highlighting his self-absorption as he seeks to control his wife's behavior rather than consider her needs.			
12	Sayed	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	El Ashash movie
	Zeina	Female social actor		
	Zeina works as a dancer and she was dancing at a public wedding in this scene. The woman is compared to Zeina to suggest that her refusal to dance for the man, citing it as against good manners, is insincere. She feigns good manners but in fact she does not mind dancing in public and receiving compliments from him for her dancing. Zeina and Sayed are attracted to each other, so comparing the man to Sayed and the woman to Zeina indicates their mutual attraction.			
13	Asfour	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Al Ragol Al Enab series
	Asfour tells a girl who has a crush on him that he is considering loving her but is actually disgusted. He also has a crush on another girl. The man's behavior of telling the woman he is thinking of a relationship but fears finding a better woman is compared to Asfour's behavior, suggesting he is rude and not serious about getting into relationship with her.			
14	A man fed into mouth	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Viral image
	A woman's hand feeding into mouth	Female social actor		
	The image depicts a close-up of a woman's hand feeding a man. It is a viral image used to illustrate the characteristics of an affectionate or attentive wife. The woman is compared to her, suggesting she is attentive and subordinate to her husband. The man is compared to the man in the image, indicating he is the dominant one in the relationship.			
	A dancing woman	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Viral image
	The image shows a woman dancing. Dancing is known for being used as a seductive activity. The woman is compared to the dancing woman to indicate that she is alluring.			
	Kamal	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	El Aar movie
	Roqa	Female social actor		
	The meme features two images from different scenes depicting Roqa and her husband Kamal. Roqa is a subordinate to the dominant Kamal, with her life revolving around his			

Meme no.	Source	Target	Mode	Reference
	commands. She was willing to sacrifice herself to please him, serving him in every aspect and prioritizing his satisfaction over her own. In the two scenes, she is shown serving him by giving him a foot massage and a back massage. The woman is compared to Roqa to suggest she is subordinate and attentive to all his needs, while the man is compared to Kamal to indicate his dominance.			
15	Chris Jericho	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	WWE wrestling promo
	In this video, Jericho delivers a wrestling monologue while displaying a giant sheet of paper listing the 1,004 holds he knows. The woman is compared to him to suggest she is thoroughly, paying excessive attention to detail about a small trip she took and expressing herself wordily.			
	The Rock	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	WCW wrestling promo
	In this video, The Rock delivers a typical wrestling monologue. However, his image is collaged with Chris Jericho's monologue and has become a viral meme on the internet. The person compared to Chris Jericho is depicted as thorough, while the person compared to The Rock is depicted as cursory.			
16	A man wearing an oxygen mask	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Viral image
	A woman laying on his chest	Female social actor		
	The image, whose source remains undetermined, is viral on the internet and is commonly used in memes to depict a man in distress, wearing an oxygen mask, while the woman, who appears affectionate, is actually causing his distress. The woman is compared to her in terms of feigning affection towards the man, while the man is compared to him in terms of being distressed. So, for the man the metaphor conveys mainly an affect instead of judgment.			
17	Sherief	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Boshkash movie
	Sherief was a bothersome child who talks rudely to his uncle. In this scene, Sherief is depicted tied up on the floor as his uncle did so to control and avoid his disturbances. The woman is compared to Sherief, indicating she is bothersome for asking the man to go out, and that she is controlled by the man whom she must ask permission to go out, which he ultimately refuses.			
18	Haridi	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Morgan Ahmed Morgan movie
	In this scene, Haridi, like in all his other scenes in the movie, acts without caring about his surroundings, appearing indifferent or unresponsive. The man's behavior of acting indifferently towards his friend's birthday is compared to Haridi's demeanor, suggesting that the man is apathetic			
19	Adel Emam	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Viral image
	The viral image, source unknown, features actor Adel Emam frowning. It is used to depict obstructive behavior, where individuals refuse requests or ideas without clear reasons, hindering progress. The woman is compared to him to indicate that she is obstructive, refusing the value of the Jack card and questioning the Queen card's value, thus, hindering the flow of the game and her relationship with the man social actor as she lashed out in anger without a logical reason.			

Attitudinal Evaluation Among Gender Ingroups and Out-Groups in Facebook Humorous Memes: A Comparative Analysis

Meme no.	Source	Target	Mode	Reference
20	An attractive woman	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Ewaa Weshk movie
	A man with masculine body	Male social actor		
	A man with masculine body	Male social actor		
	A man with masculine body	Male social actor		
	In this scene, an attractive woman is depicted as unfaithful, flirting with three men in front of her husband. The men, with masculine bodies, also seem attracted to her, surrounding her with smiles. The woman's attraction to the three singers on her wedding day is compared to her attraction to the men, indicating her unfaithfulness. The three men are compared to the muscular men, showing their attraction to the woman. Their fame as singers is likened to the muscular men's attractiveness, indicating they are perceived as attractive by women.			
21	Jalal	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	El Dada Dody movie
	Dody	Female social actor		
	In this scene, Major General Jalal discovers his children's nanny, Dody, has been hiding a criminal record. He becomes enraged and starts hitting her. The woman's fear of her manager is likened to Dody's fear of Jalal, indicating the man's dominance and control over the woman, who is subordinate and compelled to obey his commands, much like Dody was with Jalal as her boss.			
22	Taha's mother	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Wesh Egram movie
	In this scene, Taha's mother acts irrationally while speaking to the mother of the girl he wants to propose to. She apologizes for a previous misunderstanding and asks for approval for the marriage, but also accuses the bride of having a bad reputation. The woman is compared to Taha's mother to suggest she is irrational, like when she contradicts herself by expressing love to a man one night and then being disinterested the next morning due to hormonal fluctuations			
23	Haha	Male social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Haha w Tofaha movie
	Haha's sister	Female social actor		
	The woman's unrealistic perception of herself as secretive, despite being known for complaining, is compared to Haha's sister's unrealistic belief that she is envied for her wealth, leading her to fear Haha's envy. The man's confrontational and rude manner of telling the woman that customers consider her a complainer is compared to Haha's confrontational and rude way of telling his sister about their financial struggles.			
24	Assalya	Female social actor	Multimodal metaphor	Kalm Mama movie
	Assalya attends a wedding with a gloomy expression without justification, implying she is generally a gloomy person rather than just temporarily sad. The woman is compared to her to suggest she is always gloomy at home in front of her parents.			

As shown from the previous table, the memes borrowed from multiple sources to convey new messages related to gender identity construction. These sources included Egyptian movies, social media

viral images, Western movies, and Western shows. Allusions to these sources were mainly evident through memes images, as the memes' images were mainly viral images or screenshots from movies, series, or television shows. Other allusions were embedded in the memes' captions. This was mainly evident in sources related to viral sayings audio of viral videos, songs, and viral posts.

4.1.2 Instances of Positive and Negative Judgment Evaluation of Social Actors

Social actors were evaluated either positively or negatively across memes as shown in the following figure
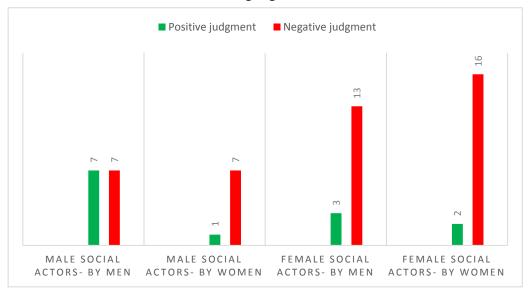

Figure4.1: Judgment Evaluation of Social Actors

It can be noted that the instances of negative judgment were higher for both male and female social actors across memes created by both men and women. Taken into consideration the number of male and female social actors evaluated by memes created by each of men and women, it can be inferred that male social actors had the highest instances of positive judgment in memes created by men and the highest instances of negative judgment in memes created by women. However, female social actors had the highest instances of both positive and negative judgment in memes created by men. It's important to note that if the same social actor is evaluated multiple times with the same attitudinal meaning, it is counted as one evaluation. For instance, in meme no.

14, the male social actor was assessed twice as dominant using two multimodal metaphors, which was counted as one instance of negative evaluation.

4.1.3 Judgment Evaluation Categories

Judgment evaluation of male and female social actors can be categorized as follows:

4.1.3.1 Normality. Male social actors were only positively evaluated in terms of their normality in terms of different aspects in memes created by men and women. Male social actors were evaluated in terms of their quality as a romantic partner. This was evident through the depiction of a male social actor as an ideal partner in meme no.8 created by a woman, however, such evaluation was used in a sarcastic way to show contradiction between the ideal partner he promises to be and the reality of him not acting as such. They were evaluated in terms attractiveness to women through depicting three male social actors as attractive for being famous and masculine in meme no.20. Male social actors were positively evaluated in terms of their normality in a more general way in memes created by men through the depiction of a male social actor as international or significant in meme no.18, and as beautiful and simple for being cursory in meme no.15.

Female social actors were positively evaluated in terms of their normality in terms of different aspects in memes created by both men and women. They were evaluated in terms of their quality as a romantic partner in meme no.14 created by a man. This was evident through the depiction of a female social actor as a good wife and alluring. Similar to describing the female social actor as alluring, another female social actor dancing was evaluated as good in meme no.12 created by a woman. Such evaluation emphasizes the focus on the woman appearance.

Female social actors were subject to negative assessments pertaining to their normality across multiple dimensions in memes created by both men and women. Within memes created by women, these appraisals were linked to their behaviour of returning home late, as depicted in meme no. 11, their unmarried status, as she was referred to as spinster as in meme no. 15. Conversely, memes crafted by men cantered on evaluating female social actors based on their verbosity, as exemplified in meme no. 34, where they were depicted as

thoroughly. Additionally, female social actors were evaluated in terms of their femininity, with meme no. 43 describing one woman as masculine due to her perception of gender equality. The visual depiction of the female social actor with masculine arms served as a symbolic attribute, as the arms were edited purposefully to the image. Such symbolic attribute indicated that she is masculine. Female social actors were also evaluated as grumbler within work context in memes no.23. Similirly, a female social actor was evaluated as gloomy but within the family context in meme no.24.

4.1.3.2 Capacity. Female social actors were only negatively evaluated in terms of their capacity in memes created by both men and women. In memes created by women, female social actors were evaluated as irrational for being self-contradictory in the realm of relationships in meme no.2 and for tolerating an abusive husband in meme no.7. Similarly, female social actors were evaluated as irrational in memes created by men. They were depicted as such in the realm of relationships for her inconsistent feeling towards a man in meme no.22.

4.1.3.3 Tenacity. Male social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of their tenacity only in memes created by women. Male social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of tenacity in the realm of relationships. In meme no.8, a male social actor was depicted as dependent for relying on the female social actor to do the household responsibilities. In meme no.4, a male social actor was depicted as effeminate for allowing his mother to control his marriage choices. In meme no.8, a male social actor was depicted as dependent for relying on the female social actor to do the household responsibilities.

Female social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of their tenacity memes created by both men and women. They were evaluated in terms of their tenacity as a romantic partner through the depiction of a female social actor as clingy in meme no.6 created by a woman.

As for memes created by men, female social actors were depicted as subordinate wife in meme no.14 and controlled in meme no.17. while in meme no.21 the female social actor was evaluated as a subordinate to the manager within the context of work.

4.1.3.4 Veracity. Male social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of their veracity in one meme created by a man, through

depicting a social actor as not serious about the relationship in meme no.13.

Female social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of their veracity in memes created by both men and women. In meme no.12 created by a woman, the female social actor was depicted as feigning good manners for showing contradictory behaviour between refusing to dance privately for a man and feeling flattered by his compliment to the way she danced in public.

In some memes created by men, female social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of their tenacity in the context of romantic relationships. In meme no.16, the female social actor was depicted as feigning affection towards her lover while being the one actually causing him harm. Finally, in meme no.23 created by a man, the female social actor was depicted as unrealistic for claiming the she is secretive while everyone considers her as a whiner.

4.1.3.5 Propriety. Male social actors were negatively evaluated in terms of their propriety in multiple memes created by both men and women. They were negatively evaluated in terms of their propriety as a romantic partner for different reasons. In memes created by women, male social actor was depicted as bothersome in meme no.1, unaffectionate in meme no.6, womanizer in meme no.9, self-absorbed for prioritizing imposing control over the woman over fulfilling her needs in meme no.11.

In memes created by men, male social actor was evaluated within the same realm of romantic relationships as rude in meme no.13 for telling his lover that he is afraid to find a better woman than her to get into a relationship with, as dominant over his wife in meme no.14 created by a man, as mistaken in general without specifying a certain context in meme no.15, such depiction was used sarcastically as the meme shows that he is the one being distressed by her.

Male social actors were also negatively evaluated in terms of their propriety while dealing with women within work context in two memes created by men. In meme no.21, the male social actor was depicted as dominant for controlling the female employee in an aggressive way. In meme no.23, the male social actor was depicted as confrontational for telling his female colleague that she is called a whiner by the customers.

In one meme created by a woman which is meme no.2, the evaluation of the male social actor in terms of propriety had more like a neutral connotation. The male social actor was evaluated as guardian for the female social actor, such evaluation can be considered positive if it means that he takes care of her and attentive to her needs, but can be considered negative of it means that he is controlling or dominant over her.

Female social actors were positively evaluated in in terms of their propriety as romantic partners in memes created by both men and women. In meme no.3 created by a woman, the female social actor was depicted as gentle with her lover. In meme no.14 created by a man, the female social actor was depicted as attentive to her husband needs.

Female social actors were also negatively evaluated as romantic partners for multiple reasons in memes created by both men and women. As for memes created by women, female social actors were depicted as selfish for only caring to receive attention from the man regardless of him being stresses and overwhelmed at work in meme no.3, as aggressive without specifying a reason for such aggressiveness, implying that this is their general behaviour or attitude in meme no.3.

As for memes created by men, female social actors were depicted as bothersome for circumventing male control over her in meme no.17, and unfaithful to her groom by being attracted to other men in meme no.20.

Female social actors were also evaluated as aggressive in other contexts different than romantic relationships in memes created by both men and women. As for memes created by women, a female social actor was evaluated as an aggressive mother towards her daughter as she curses her in meme no.5. The visual depiction of the female social actor holding a slipper serves as a symbolic attribute, indicating her possessive association with the slipper and her intention to employ physical punishment as a means of disciplining her daughter for arriving home slightly late. These symbolic attributes collectively convey the inner conceptual attribute of the female social actor's aggressiveness. In the same meme, the daughter was depicted as unmannered, such evaluation was represented as reflecting the

mother's perception of her for coming home late. Also, in meme no.10, the female social actor was depicted as bully for mocking the male social actor for crying while talking with another woman.

In meme no.19 created by a man, the female social actor was depicted as obstructive because of her opinions regarding gender equality.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of the Results

The study aimed to explore the attitudinal evaluative meanings underlying the gender identities constructed in Facebook humorous memes while comparing how they differ among gender groups. The results of the MCDA of 24 memes created by male and female creators revealed that multiple methods have been used to transmit attitudinal meanings. Multimodal metaphors was the most used method, followed by lexical items, then symbolic attributes and monomodal metaphors. This comes in line with ElShami et al. (2023) and Younes and Altakhaineh (2022) results showing that multimodal metaphors were employed pervasively, as memes producers want to achieve maximum contextual effects while preventing uncertainty that could lead to misinterpretation.

Judgment evaluation of male and female social actors was mainly related to their normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity, and propriety. Male social actors were positively evaluated in terms of their normality in memes created by men and women, while negatively evaluated in terms of their propriety in memes created by both men and women, in terms of their tenacity only in memes created by women, and in terms of their veracity in one meme created by a man. In one meme created by a woman the evaluation of the male social actor in terms of propriety had more like a neutral connotation. Female social actors were positively evaluated in terms of their normality and their propriety in memes created by both men and women, while they were negatively evaluated in terms of their normality, their capacity, their tenacity, their veracity, and their propriety in memes created by both men and women. 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).

Both male and female social actors were negatively evaluated by the other gender group. Moreover, male social actors had the highest instances of positive judgment in memes created by men and the highest instances of negative judgment in memes created by women. These phenomena can be 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).

However, both male and female social actors were also negatively evaluated by their ingroup. It can be noted that in general the instances of negative judgment were higher for both male and female social actors across memes created by both men and women. Moreover, female social actors had the highest instances of both positive and negative judgment in memes created by men. These insights raise 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 socially constructed ideals of masculinity and femininity (Charlebois, 2010; Connell, 1987; 2009; Inhorn, 2012), 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.

For example, in memes created by women, women were negatively evaluated in terms of capacity as irrational and in terms of tenacity as clingy in the realm of relationships. According to the gender and power theory, the interconnection between irrationality, emotionality,

and intensified emotional expression is closely linked to ideals of hegemonic femininity (Baczynski, 2016; Charlebois, 2010; 2012; Connell, 2009). This contributes to the normalization of the perception of women as irrational, depicting it as a biologically inherent gender trait, thereby positioning such depictions as positive rather than inherently negative. Women were also negatively evaluated in terms of propriety as bully for mocking the male social actor for crying while talking with another woman.

Moreover, there were instances of positive evaluation of female social actor by male creators although they represent an outgroup. For example, female social actors were positively in the realm of relationships in terms of their normality as a good wife and alluring and in terms of their propriety as attentive to husband needs. However, these positive assessments are merely related to woman traditional role as a wife. So, the motivation of men to evaluate women positively in this regard can be encouraged by benevolent sexism which is linked to gender stereotypes related to traditional sex roles, protective paternalism, and complementary gender differentiation aspects (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim et. al, 1995).

Similarly, male social actors were negatively evaluated in the realm of relationships in terms of their veracity as not serious about the relationship and in terms of their propriety as rude. Male social actors were also negatively evaluated in terms of their propriety while dealing with women within work context. They were evaluated as dominant and confrontational. These behaviors align with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, as outlined by gender and power theory, encompassing roles as participation in non-egalitarian relationships and involvement with multiple partners without a commitment to monogamy (Charlebois, 2010; 2012; Inhorn, 2012; MacDonald, 2014; Jozkowski, 2022).Women are expected to adhere to male authority and dominance (Atia, 2015; El-Feki & El-Zanaty, 2017; Mensch et al., 2003). The alignment of these characteristics with hegemonic masculinity elucidates the rationale behind men associating these traits with their social cohort. This association carries a positive connotation, promoting in-group favouritism.

Additionally, there was an instance of positive evaluation of a male social actor by a female creator although he represents an outgroup. In

meme no.8, the male social actor was positively evaluated in terms of normality as ideal partner, however, this can be justified by the female creator use of such evaluation in a sarcastic way to show contradiction between the ideal partner he promises to be and the reality of him not acting as such. This sarcastic intention is further confirmed by the negative evaluation of him in terms of tenacity as dependent.

Furthermore, the results showed how the intragroup dynamics influence the evaluation of gender subgroups within the same main gender group. According to Connell (1987; 2009), each gender group has different exemplifiers of various types of masculinities or femininities, thus, different gender subgroups might exhibit different gender practices and perception of ideals of masculinities and femininities. This was evident in how female social actors are depicted evaluating other female social actors in memes. For example, in meme no.7 a female social actor was negatively evaluated as irrational for tolerating an abusive husband by another female social actor, who in turn got negatively evaluated by the first female social actor as unmarried for advising her to challenge her state of subordination by seeking a divorce from the abusive husband. In meme no.5 a female social actor was negatively evaluated by her mother in terms of her normality as late in returning home and her propriety as unmannered for doing so, while the mother was negatively evaluated as aggressive for how she deals with the situation. Meme no.3 further shows an illustration 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 she describes as gentle, thereby presenting aggressiveness as an ideal gender practice she aspires to emulate, contrasting with the conventional notion of women embodying gentleness as an ideal feminine practice.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

While the findings offer valuable insights about gender identity construction in Facebook humorous memes within the Egyptian

societal context, there are some important limitations that should be addressed in future research. The cross-sectional design used in the study limits the ability to observe changes over time; thus, a longitudinal approach in future studies could provide more significant insights into the evolution of gender identity within meme culture across different time frames. Additionally, the relatively small sample size of analyzed memes constrains the generalizability of the findings, indicating a need for larger samples in subsequent research.

A major limitation of this study was the constrained data collection process due to the lack of comprehensive information about the meme creators. This study only considered the gender of the creators, as obtaining detailed demographic data such as age, marital status, and socioeconomic status proved challenging. Future studies should seek to engage more directly with meme creators through surveys or interviews, which would allow for a richer analysis of how the diverse backgrounds of creators influence gender identity construction in digital contexts.

Moreover, the study focused exclusively on memes shared on Facebook, chosen for its high user engagement in the Egyptian context. However, memes circulate across multiple social media platforms, each with distinct user demographics and interaction patterns. Expanding future research to include other platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Whatsapp could reveal platform-specific dynamics in gender identity construction.

Another significant limitation is the public nature of the memes analyzed. Publicly shared memes may be influenced by social desirability bias, leading creators to omit or selectively present certain attitudes. Future research should explore memes in more private or semi-private settings, such as WhatsApp groups, to capture a broader spectrum of gender identity representations.

Additionally, this study did not investigate the audience's perception and interpretation of memes. Future research could delve into how different user groups perceive and interpret memes and how these interpretations are shaped by their social and cognitive backgrounds. Understanding the interaction between meme creators and their audiences could provide valuable insights into the role of memes in shaping and reflecting gender identities.

5.3 Conclusion

This study revealed significant insights into the attitudinal evaluative meanings and methods used by male and female creators in Facebook humorous memes. Multimodal metaphors emerged as the predominant method for conveying attitudinal meanings. Both male and female social actors were subject to a spectrum of evaluations based on normality, capacity, tenacity, veracity, and propriety.

A key finding is the prevalence of in-group favoritism, where both male and female social actors were negatively evaluated by the other gender group. Male social actors received the highest instances of positive judgment from male creators and negative judgment from female creators. However, negative evaluations within gender groups also surfaced, with both male and female creators depicting their own gender in derogatory terms. This reflects complex intergroup dynamics influenced by socially constructed ideals of masculinity and femininity. Varying perceptions of ideal gender practices leading to conflicting evaluations within the same gender group. Additionally, the study uncovered instances where positive evaluations of the opposite gender group were present, yet these often adhered to traditional gender roles, suggesting an underlying benevolent sexism.

Overall, the findings underscore the pervasive influence of social identity dynamics in meme creation and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, providing a nuanced perspective on the role of memes in shaping and reflecting societal attitudes towards gender.

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