

# Exploring COVID-19 Arabic Humorous Comments in Social Media: Linguistic Analysis of Facebook Comments Using the General Theory of Verbal Humor

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**Abstract**—This paper investigates the Arabic verbal humorous comments pertaining to COVID-19 on social media. The main objectives of the paper are to identify the distinct categories that are highlighted in those comments disseminated between March and September 2020, on the AlMamlaka and Roya Jordanian Facebook accounts. Additionally, the study examines the claim of Attardo and Raskin's (1991) that the "target" is an optional Knowledge Resource in the General Theory of Verbal Humor. The research design employed in this study is descriptive qualitative. The researchers conducted a thematic analysis to analyze 15 comments, applying the General Theory of Verbal Humor of Attardo and Raskin (1991). The analysis revealed eight emerging categories: governmental, gender, COVID-19, lockdown, behavior, conspiracy, geographical, and facemask jokes. The study found that humorous comments conform to the six Knowledge Resources of the General Theory of Verbal Humor. The most prominent logical mechanism used in the comments was irony and sarcasm, enabling Jordanians to shed light on hidden issues to express their reactions and feelings. The study also found that identifying the target in a humorous comment is crucial in determining the various categories of humorous comments. The research opens avenues for further exploration into the utilization and interpretation of humor in diverse cultural settings, during other natural disasters, and its impact on understanding humorous content.

**Index Terms**—Coronavirus, Facebook, Jordanians, knowledge resources, verbal humor

## I. INTRODUCTION

Humor has emerged as a crucial coping mechanism for individuals dealing with the anxiety and stress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ogunbge & Omolabi, 2020). It provides a means of expressing anxieties and taking control of an uncontrollable situation, thereby promoting psychological well-being (MADA & Gomoescu, 2020). Additionally, humor has also been effective in challenging those in positions of power, including government officials, and providing a psychological lifeline in difficult situations (Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021). Jordanians have a history of using humor and satire to cope with challenging circumstances, and the COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. Social networking in Jordan aided in alleviating pandemic anxieties (Hussein & Aljamali, 2020).

Several researchers have conducted studies on the use of humor in Jordanian social media and political commentary. Ali and Faraj (2022), for example, analyzed COVID-19 humor in Jordanian social media hashtags and identified two types of humor: language-based and reference-based humor. The linguistic devices, including phonological, syntactic, and semantic aspects, are analyzed in the language-based humor, while cultural and religious references are employed in the reference-based humor. Puns and wordplays were the most commonly used humorous elements, and the humor reflected Jordanian culture and traditions.

Additionally, Al-Daher et al. (2022) conducted a study on the jokes circulated on Jordanian social media using GTVH during the pandemic between March and October 2020. The study revealed that the jokes adhere to the six KRs of GTVH theory and addressed ethnic jokes, governmental decisions, the effect of restrictions, sexist jokes, the virus, miscellaneous offensive jokes, the year 2020, and remote education.

Moreover, Al-Qudah and Hait (2022) analyzed 25 online jokes made by Jordanians during the COVID-19 pandemic using Berger's (1993) rhetorical techniques. They found that Jordanian social media users employed various rhetorical

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strategies such as satire, pun, irony, exaggeration, definition, ignorance, rigidity, disappointment, allusion, and absurdity to convey humor and highlight political, social, and psychological themes prevalent during the pandemic in Jordanian culture.

Furthermore, Lulu et al. (2021) analyzed linguistic features in Jordanian cartoons related to COVID-19. They found that the cartoons reflected Jordanians' attitudes and opinions about the pandemic, including dissatisfaction with the government's response and concern for their health and safety.

More, Hussein and Aljamali (2020) utilized Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework to examine the role of humor on Jordanian social media during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing its efficacy in alleviating anxiety, fostering community, and emphasizing the cultural context in understanding the socio-semiotic aspects of COVID-19 humor. Barahmeh's (2020) doctoral dissertation investigated how Jordanian comedians used social media to create political humor. Using Bakhtin's carnivalesque framework, the research identified five main characteristics and revealed that Jordanians used humor to cope with political power and socio-economic inequalities and to criticize, ridicule, and mock the government on social media.

Prior research on Jordanian humor has primarily focused on linguistic features and employed various frameworks for analysis. Al-Daher et al.'s (2022) investigation of Jordanian jokes is however more relevant to the current study. Both studies investigate COVID-19-related humor on Jordanian social media during a specific period and use the General Theory of Verbal Humor as a framework for their analysis. They identify some similar categories of humor related to the pandemic (government, COVID-19, effects of restrictions, sexist jokes) and emphasize the role of humor in coping with the pandemic and expressing anxieties, frustrations, and fears. While several other studies have explored humor in Jordan, they have emphasized different themes and issues.

This study aims to address these gaps by identifying the categories prevalent in the selected Facebook accounts. The analysis will be accomplished by utilizing six Knowledge Resources (KRs) from the General Theory of Verbal Humor proposed by Attardo and Raskin (1991).

By applying this framework, the study will explore the impact of the pandemic on the Jordanian society, including challenges faced by the government, the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy theories, and the gender and cultural implications of the pandemic. It delves into the portrayal of men and women and examines the influence on family relationships. Additionally, the study highlights the effective use of irony and sarcasm as logical mechanisms by commentators in Jordan to approach a challenging situation in a light-hearted manner. These mechanisms will be explored to understand how commentators effectively communicate their messages and evoke laughter amidst difficult circumstances. The current study will build upon existing knowledge and contribute new insights into the specific categories of humor prevalent on the mentioned Facebook accounts. The research will provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of humor as a coping mechanism, shed light on the societal impact of the pandemic, and reveal how individuals navigate challenging situations through humor.

## II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### A. *The Concept of Humor*

The word "humor" originates from a Latin word with a bodily fluids connotation. Many scholars attempted to explain it. Lynch (2002) for example, defines humor as an "intended or unintended message interpreted as funny" (p. 423). Graham (1995), on the other hand, views humor as a pervasive phenomenon that refers to funny, humorous, and positive aspects of our life. The current study will be based on the comprehensive definition of Attardo (1994), who defined humor as "any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses, or is felt to be funny" (p. 4). In this regard, Verbal humor is understood as formed through language or text (Attardo, 1994; Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Raskin, 1985). Accordingly, humorous comments on Facebook are considered as verbal humor.

### B. *Theoretical Approach to Humor*

#### General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH)

Attardo and Raskin (1991) revised and expanded the Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) into the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). The new suggested theory consists of six parameters or Knowledge Resources (KRs) representing a verbal joke model: the Script Opposition (SO), the Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative strategy (NS), and Language (LA). This categorization is advantageous in two things. Firstly, it facilitates an understanding the connection between lines. Secondly, it enables the identification of the patterns of lines' occurrences in relation to one another and the texts as a whole. This link between the lines allows for the identification of thematic or formal relationships between lines.

- *The Knowledge Resources*

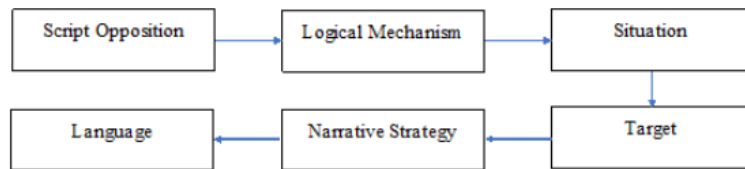


Figure 1. The Hierarchical Structure of Knowledge Resources (Attardo, 2002)

1. *Script Opposition (SO):*

The concept of Script Opposition (SO) involves two opposing scripts related to a particular element. According to Attardo (1994), SO is an essential component of humor in any text. Scripts can be opposed lexically using negation or antonyms (e.g., alive vs. dead). Attardo (1994) identified three types of script opposition based on the real and unreal situations presented in the text: actual vs. non-actual, normal vs. abnormal, and possible vs. impossible. In addition to these, Raskin (1985) introduced a set of general script oppositions, including life vs. death, good vs. bad, obscene vs. non-obscene, high vs. low stature, and money vs. no-money.

2. *Logical mechanism (LM):*

The Logical Mechanism (LM) plays a vital role in connecting scripts within a joke, generating humor that fulfills the desire for laughter. It resolves the incongruity triggered by the humorous text in the reader's mind. Pasaribu and Kadarisman (2016) propose different logical mechanisms, including twisting prepositions, twisting idiomatic expressions, twisting homonymy, twisting figurative language, absurd interpretation, absurd neologism, false analogy, word repetition, fallacious reasoning, and insult or put-down humor.

3. *Situation (SI):*

The third Knowledge Resource is the situation (SI) in which the joke occurs. As defined by Attardo (2017, p. 131), the situation refers to "the overall macro script that describes the background in which the events of the text of the joke take place". Attardo (2017) asserts that the situation has nothing to do with the context of the telling joke. The situation of the joke includes objects, activities, instruments, and props needed to tell the story.

4. *Target (TA):*

The Target (TA) refers to the group or individual who is the subject of the humor, also known as the "butt of the joke", the ones whom a joke ridicules. However, some jokes may not have a specific target, and may not be intended to ridicule anyone. Therefore, Target is an optional knowledge resource.

5. *Narrative Strategy (NS):*

The Narrative Strategy (NS) is concerned with the narrative organization of the humor, or the format in which a joke is presented. Attardo (1994) mentioned that any humor should be placed in the narrative organization form, such as question-and-answer dialog, narrative, or conversation. Each of these formats has its unique structure, and the selection of the narrative strategy depends on the type of humor and the audience's characteristics.

6. *Language (LA):*

The Language (LA), as a Knowledge Resource, deals with the humor's text wording and the placement of the functional elements that create humor. It encompasses all the critical information for the text verbalization.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, analyzing linguistic aspects of Jordanian verbal humor on Facebook during the COVID-19 pandemic, utilizing a thematic analysis approach guided by the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). The data consisted of humorous comments from the AlMamlaka and Roya Facebook pages, collected between March 2020 and September 2020 using the Facepager tool. The researcher coded the comments as humorous or non-humorous based on the definition of humor, the researcher's intuition as a native Arabic speaker, and humor features suggested by Nastri et al. (2006) as shown in Figure 2.



The script opposition in this joke is between the commentator's scientific and rational explanation for the end of the virus and the opinion of the "scholars" who have a more simplified and unrealistic view. The joke is based on the contrast between a reasonable explanation and unrealistic expectations. The situation is that the Minister of Health Saad Jaber said in a televised interview that the virus will dry and die within two weeks. While Ishaq Adnan described the coronavirus as a hyena if it enters our house and we leave the door open it will leave soon. The targets of the joke are the Minister of Health and Ishaq Adnan making illogical statements. The narrative strategy is a comparison between the two opinions, using irony to mock the unrealistic view. The language used is informal and sarcastic, conveying the intended humorous tone of the joke. The Setup is "Honestly, according to my mental and scientific capabilities, it will end as soon as a vaccine is found, or the virus develops itself automatically until it gradually weakens until it disappears". The Punchline is "however, in the opinion of the scholars: Two weeks can dry up and die. It can also come out of the door as a hyena comes out of the house when the door is left open".

### B. Gender Jokes

Gender-based humor is another common category, with comments mocking traditional gender roles and expectations. They are loaded with inappropriate humor about men, women, husband and wife, mother and father, etc. The commentators portray the scenario through the use of humor. Following are the gender-based jokes:

Women:

#### Comment 03 (Roya):

ام يانس هيه الوحيد يلي فايغه مثل الصرصور ولا يتهدا الا تطلع □

#### Translation:

"Um Yanis (the woman with the prayer dress) is the only one moving around like a cockroach always trying to leave home".

The commentator uses a metaphor to describe a woman's behavior during a strict lockdown. The metaphor compares the woman to a cockroach, implying that she is always active and determined to go outside despite the lockdown restrictions. Iqbal et al. (2020) explored "Wives as Talkative Creatures, Wives as Authoritative Creatures, Wives as Violent and Troublesome Creatures, Wives as Stupid Creatures, and Wives as Bad and Ugly creatures".

In this joke, the opposing scripts are "woman in prayer dress" and "active outside during lockdown", active/inactive. The logical mechanism is a simple verbal technique of irony. The situation is inferred as women who were breaking lockdown rules. The narrative strategy is a simple statement without any additional narrative structure. The language used in the joke is simple and straightforward, with the punchline placed at the end for emphasis. The joke is making fun of people who broke the rules during the lockdown and went out, despite being prohibited from doing so. It specifically targets women who, according to the joke, would wear prayer dress and go out. The joke is humorous because it is unexpected and ironic, as the person who is supposed to be engaged in spiritual activities is the one who can't resist going out, while everyone else is following the rules and staying indoors. The setup of the joke is that during the lockdown, women would break the rules by wearing prayer dress and going out. The punchline of the joke is "The woman with the prayer dress is only one who is really active. She can't feel good till she goes out".

Man

#### Comment 04 (Roya):

الرجل حاليا يمر بأصعب أيام في التاريخ، الحكومة بدهاش ياه في الشغل، ومرته بدهاش ياه في البيت، والشرطه بدهاش ياه في الشارع ☹️☹️☹️

#### Translation:

"The man is currently going through the most difficult days in history. The government doesn't want him at work, his wife doesn't want him at home, and the police doesn't want him in the street".

The script opposition in this joke is between the expectation that a person will be wanted by various authorities, and the actual scenario in which the person is unwanted by all. The logical mechanism in this joke is the repetition of the phrase "does not want him" to create a sense of increasing difficulty for the man. The situation in this joke is a man going through a difficult time during the covid-19 lockdown because he is unwanted by the government, his wife, and the police. The target in this joke is the man, who becomes the "butt" of the joke by being unwanted by everyone. The narrative strategy in this joke is a statement that describes the situation of the man during the covid-19 quarantine. The language in this joke is straightforward and uses simple phrases to create a clear and concise scenario. Setup is "The man is currently going through the most difficult days in history". Punchline is "The government does not want him at work, his wife does not want him at home, and the police does not want him on the street".

### C. COVID-19 Jokes

This is another category with many comments poking fun at the virus's infection, symptoms, poor health system to control it, the quarantine, the false theory about it, the different waves of COVID-19, and the change of perception because of the pandemic. Following are the illustrative examples:

The Infected Person

#### Comment 05 (AlMamlaka):

فايروس كورونا صار مثل المخدرات الي يصيدوا لازم يقولهم كل الاسماء يلي تعامل معهم ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️ .

#### Translation:

“Corona Virus became just like a drug dealership. The one, who is caught having it, must tell about everyone else he dealt with”.

The script opposition in this joke is between the usual association of the disease being caught and treated and the comparison to a drug dealership where the caught person must reveal information about others. The logical mechanism in this joke is the comparison between the act of being caught with the virus and being caught in a drug dealership. The situation in this joke is the scenario of a person being caught with the Corona Virus who has to reveal information about others. The target of this joke is the concept of being caught with the virus and having to reveal information about others. The narrative strategy of this joke is comparison. The language used in this joke is straightforward. The setup in the funny comment is "Corona Virus became just like drug dealership" and the punchline is "The one, who is caught having it, must talk about everyone else he dealt with." The setup sets up the comparison of the situation with Corona virus and drug dealership and the punchline delivers the humour by highlighting the similarity of the consequences of being caught with either.

*First and second wave of COVID-19*

**Comment 06 (AlMamlaka):**

ملاحظين انه موجة كورونا الثانية مالها بهجه زي الأولى وين العطلة وين تأجيل القروض وين الخبز لباب الدار يا عمي زمان كورونا كانت احسن 😊😊😊

**Translation:**

“Do you notice that the second Corona wave is not as joyous as the first, where is the postponement of loans, where is the bread at the door of the house. The first was kinder to us”.

The script opposition here is between the idea that the first wave of COVID-19 was better (because of the perks like postponed loans and bread delivery) and the reality of the current, less interesting second wave. The contrast between the two opposing scripts creates a humorous effect. The LM used here is a form of irony, which highlights the absurdity of the speaker's claim that the first wave of COVID-19 was better. By listing the relatively trivial benefits of the first wave (postponed loans and bread delivery), the speaker is highlighting the contrast between the supposed benefits and the more serious consequences of the pandemic. The situation is the pandemic, specifically the differences between the first and second waves of COVID-19. The target of the joke is the absurdity of comparing the two waves based on trivial benefits. The narrative strategy here is a simple comparison. The language used here is informal and colloquial, which contributes to the humorous effect. The setup is a rhetorical question posed to Setup: The setup is a rhetorical question posed to the reader, asking them if they have noticed that the second wave of the pandemic is not as interesting as the first wave, which implies that the first wave had some interesting or unique aspects. The punchline is a sarcastic and humorous statement that suggests that the first wave of the pandemic was better because it had things like postponed loans and bread delivery, which are not present in the second wave. The phrase "Man, Corona, in the past, was much better" adds to the humorous tone and exaggerates the idea that the first wave was more enjoyable than the current situation.

#### D. Lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to lockdowns across the world, causing significant disruption to daily life, boredom, frustration, and mental health issues. Zheng et al. (2020) noted that individuals in the quarantine may develop boredom, hostility, and fear related to COVID-19. Comments in this category reflect the collective experience of frustration during the lockdown, highlighting the adverse effects on family relationships, funny comments on months of lockdown, difficulties in disposing of the rubbish bags, and characters like Subhi and the grocer.

*Effects on Family Relationships*

**Comment 7 (AlMamlaka):**

انا ابوي صار مطلق امي الف مره بالحضر هاض 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

**Translation:**

“My father divorced my mother a thousand times during the lockdown”.

The lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the social relationships between listless husbands and wives because of tedious routines that resulted in tension at home (Al-Qudah & Hait, 2022). The script opposition in this joke is between the expected norm of a stable and long-term relationship and the reality of frequent "divorces" during the lockdown. The people became less tolerant of each other. The logical mechanism in this joke is the exaggeration of the frequency of "divorces" during the lockdown. The situation in this joke is the frustration and tension caused by the long-term quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. The target of this joke is the situation of quarantine and the stress it can cause on relationships. The narrative strategy in this joke is an assertion made by the speaker, providing a humorous spin on a difficult situation. The language in this joke is simple and direct, adding to the humor and light-heartedness of the situation. The use of the word "divorced" with the exaggerative number "a thousand times" contributes to the humor. The setup of the joke is the frustration of being in lockdown with a partner, and the punchline is the exaggeration of the father having divorced the mother a thousand times during the lockdown, implying that they may have had a difficult time being cooped up together for an extended period of time.

*Subhi and the Grocer*

**Comment 8 (Roya):**

عشان الواحد يعرف راسه من رجليه هسه فهموني بدنا نبليش نعد ١٤ يوم من صبحي وطالع ولا بعدنا على تقويم الخضرجي 🤔🤔🤔

**Translation:**

*"To be able to understand how the world is going on around us, I need to know whether we begin counting 14 days of quarantine, starting from Subhi or are we still on the grocer's schedule?"*

In this Joke, There is a script of normalcy in counting the days of a lockdown and the opposing script of confusion in counting the days of lockdown starting from Subhi or the grocer. The logical mechanism is the confusion in determining which of the two super spreaders to start counting the lockdown days from. The situation is the current state of the world where a lockdown is in place due to the spread of the coronavirus. The target is the Subhi and grocer who are among the super spreaders of Coronavirus. The narrative strategy is the use of a question to express confusion. The language used is straightforward, with the use of humor to express the confusion. The choice of words such as "schedule" adds to the humorous effect. The setup of the joke is the speaker's confusion about which individual should be used as a reference point for counting the lockdown days. The punchline is the statement "To be able to understand how the world is going on around us, I need to know whether we begin counting 14 days, starting from Subhi or are we still on the grocer's schedule?" This statement creates a humorous contrast between the seemingly trivial matter of counting days and the serious consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**E. Behavior**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, behavior-based humor has emerged as a prominent category in Jordanian social media. Such humor often revolves around people's behaviors during the pandemic, including non-seriousness, breaking the rules, and overusing sanitizers. Some comments are as under:

*Non-seriousness*

**Comment 9 (Roya):**

بالصين خزنو حالهم بالبيت بدون مونه 🤔 احنا خزننا المونه بالبيت ودايرين بالشوارع 🤔🤔🤔

**Translation**

*"In China, they stayed at home with no food supplies, we filled the house with supplies and kept roaming around in the streets".*

The script opposition in this joke is between staying at home without hoarding food (China) and hoarding food at home while walking the streets (Jordan). The logical mechanism in this joke is a comparison and contrast between the two countries' behavior during the pandemic. The situational context of the joke is the Covid 19 pandemic and how different countries responded to it. The target of the joke is the behavior of people in Jordan during the pandemic. The narrative strategy in this joke is a comparison/contrast between two situations. The language used in this joke is simple, direct, and concise, which emphasizes the contrast between the two situations. The setup of the joke is the comparison between the behaviour of people in China and Jordan during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the punchline is that people in Jordan hoard food at home and walk the streets. This contrasts with the behaviour of people in China who kept themselves at home without hoarding food.

*Non-seriousness*

**Comment 10 (Roya):**

هرب عنتره بن شداد من ثور ف سئل أين شجاعتك؟؟ أتخاف من ثور وانت عنتره؟؟ قال: وما يدري الثور أني عنتره. عزيزي المواطن فايروس

كورونا ما يدري ان كنت شجاع او ثور 🤔🤔🤔 خليك بالبيت

**Translation:**

*"Antara bin Shaddad fled from a bull, so he was asked, where is your courage?? Are you afraid of a bull while you are Antara?? He said: The bull does not know that I am Antara. Dear citizen, Corona virus does not know if you are brave or bull...Stay home".*

The script opposition in this joke is between being Antara (a famous Bedouin warrior) and being afraid of a bull and being a brave person and being affected by the coronavirus. The logical mechanism in this joke is the comparison of the bull and the coronavirus, both of which are indiscriminate in their effects. The situation in this joke is a conversation between Antara and someone who is questioning his courage. The target of the joke is the citizens who are not following the rules of the lockdown and are not taking the coronavirus seriously. The narrative strategy of this joke is a simple narrative structure, a question-answer dialogue. The language used in this joke is colloquial and conversational, and the wording of the punchline is "Dear citizen, Corona virus does not know if you are brave or bull so Stay Home". The setup of the joke is a reference to Antara bin Shaddad, a historical figure known for his bravery, who fled from a bull. The person is then asked about his courage and why he is afraid of a bull. The punchline is that Antara replied by saying that the bull doesn't know who he is, just like the Corona virus does not know if a person is brave or not, and the message is to stay home to stay safe. The humour comes from the comparison of the deadly virus to a bull and the idea that being brave or not doesn't matter in the face of the virus. The setup of the joke is a reference to Antara bin Shaddad, a historical figure known for his bravery, who fled from a bull. The person is then asked about his courage and why he is afraid of a bull. The punchline is that Antara replied by saying that the bull doesn't know who he is, just like the Corona virus does not know if a person is brave or not, and the message is to stay home to stay safe.

**F. Conspiracy**

The "Conspiracy" category contains comments that are related to doubts and suspicions about the government's role in the COVID-19 pandemic, questions about the origin of the virus, and even claims that the virus may not exist at all.

*Origin of Corona Virus*

**Comment 11(Roya):**

الله لا يوفق الصين، أول مره بصدرو لنا اشي أصلي

**Translation:**

*"May Allah not grant success to China, for the first time they issued something original to us".*

The script opposition in this joke is between the conventional notion of China producing low-quality, imitation goods and the reality that they have produced a highly impactful, original virus. The logical mechanism in this joke is irony and sarcasm, where the commentator is using humor to express their frustration and disbelief that China has produced something original, especially considering the negative impact it has had on the world. The situation in this joke is a commentary on the global outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and the belief that it originated in China. The target of this joke is China, and its reputation for producing low-quality, imitation goods. The narrative strategy in this joke is a short statement wishing ill fortune upon China for producing the virus. The language in this joke is informal and contains religious references, such as "May Allah". The use of religious references adds to the informality and cultural context of the comment. The setup of the joke is the belief that the corona virus originated from China and the things made in China are not original. The punchline is "May Allah does not grant success to China, for the first time they issued something that is original to us". This punchline is ironic and uses humour to mock China for creating a frustrating and affecting the whole world with a virus for the first time making something original.

*Existence of Covid-19 pandemic*

**Comment 12 (AlMamlaka):**

كورونا بخاف من اصحاب الاموال ويصيب الناس العاديين... شكله الفيروس بفهم بالسياسه ومابصيب السياسيين... الله يحميك بالوباء

**Translation:**

*"The epidemic is afraid of people who have money, it only affects ordinary people, the epidemic seems to understand politics and is afraid to affect politicians, God bless the epidemic".*

The commentator sarcastically questions the existence of the coronavirus through this comment. Humor automatically emerges in these cases given the release of tension following a momentary sense of disparity (Gibbs et.al 2014). The script opposition in this joke is between the idea that the epidemic affects only ordinary people, and the reality that it affects people of all social classes. The logical mechanism in this joke is a form of irony, as the speaker is making a statement that is the opposite of what is expected. The situational context of this joke is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected people all over the world. The target of this joke is the existence of COVID-19 pandemic, and the politicians are also targeted as they are depicted as being immune from the effects of virus. The narrative strategy in this joke is a simple statement, as the speaker is making a direct statement about the epidemic. The language used in this joke is simple, straightforward, and lacks embellishment, making it easy for the audience to understand. The setup of the joke is "that epidemic is afraid of people who have money,, it only affects ordinary people." The punchline is the statement "God bless the epidemic", which adds an element of irony to the joke, as it is an unexpected and sarcastic comment about a serious situation.

### G. Geographical

These comments are related to geographical areas, especially the city in Jordan, Irbid. The people of Irbid are criticized by the commentators because the Coronavirus in Jordan was spread from a wedding party in Irbid and pokes fun at the non-seriousness of the Irbid people. The comments are as follows:

*People of Irbid*

**Comment 13 (Roya):**

يزلمة هو عرس اربد كانوا يرقصو ولا يبيزقو على بعض

**Translation:**

*"It seems that people at Irbid wedding were not dancing with each other they were spitting at each other".*

When people do not abide by the laws of quarantine, detrimental consequences will happen, and it will affect the entire society (Al-Qudah & Hait, 2022). The script opposition in this joke is between the usual behavior of people at weddings (dancing) and unusual behavior (spitting on each other). This creates a humorous effect. The logical mechanism in this joke is the verbal technique of juxtaposition, which creates a contrast between two contrasting scripts (dancing vs. spitting). The situational embedding in this joke is the spread of the virus starting from a wedding in Irbid city of Jordan. The target in this joke is the attendees of the wedding in Irbid city. The narrative strategy in this joke is a simple statement. The language in this joke uses casual and informal language to convey humor. The setup is "Man, were the wedding of Irbid attendees dance or spit on each other". The punchline effect comes from the incongruity of the two actions presented (dancing and spitting), which are usually not associated with each other and are typically thought of as opposite actions in a social context, creating a script opposition.

**Comment 14 (AlMamlaka):**

اربد سيتي سينتر عاملين سحب ع سياره كيا والانسانيه جمعاء كلها هناك

**Translation:**

*“City Centre shopping mall in Irbid is doing lottery and the prize will be a Kia car. So, all human beings are over there”.*

The script opposition in this joke is between the lockdown imposed to prevent the spread of the virus and the carelessness of the people of Irbid. The logical mechanism in this joke is the alarming situation that all people in Irbid are ignoring the lockdown to participate in the lottery, implying the absurdity of their behavior. The situation in this joke is the lottery being held at the City Centre shopping mall in Irbid, despite the lockdown. The target of this joke is the people of Irbid, who are portrayed as ignoring the lockdown to participate in the lottery. The narrative strategy in this joke is a simple statement. The language in this joke is straightforward, with word choice and placement emphasizing the absurdity of the situation. The setup is that there is a lockdown in Jordan due to the spread of the corona virus, but people in Irbid city are not taking it seriously. The punchline is that the City Centre shopping mall in Irbid is doing a lottery and the prize is a Kia car, and all human beings are over there, implying that people in Irbid are disregarding the lockdown and gathering at the mall in large numbers.

#### H. Facemask

This is also one of the emerging categories of inappropriate verbal humorous comments on AlMamlaka and Roya Jordanian Facebook accounts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. It expresses the people annoyance caused by the facemask.

##### Comment 15 (AlMamlaka):

وزير تربيه كايين حاكي يرجو من الاهل بتغير كامامات لاطفالهم كل يوم وحده راده عليه انا ابني كلسونو (👤) بالموت ليغيرو بدك يغير كامامات

##### Translation:

*“The Minister of Education asked parents to change masks for their children every day.*

*One of them replies: It takes me ages to change his underwear, how can I change his mask?”.*

Face masks have been one of the hotly debated topics since the news about the new coronavirus started spreading (Dynel, 2020). The script opposition in this joke is between the request made by the Minister of Education and the reality of the situation faced by the person making the reply. The request to change masks daily is seen as difficult as the child is not ready to change even his underwear. The logical mechanism in this joke is the comparison between the two requests, which highlights the incongruity between them. The situational context is the COVID-19 pandemic and the request made by the Minister of Education during a speech. The parent and their kid are the participants in the situation. The target of the joke is daily mask changing. The parent making the reply is poking fun at the request and highlighting its unrealistic nature of it. The narrative strategy in this joke is a question-and-answer dialogue between the Minister of Education and the parent. The language used in this joke is colloquial and informal. The setup is “The Minister of Education requests in his speech that parents should tell their children to change masks every day during the coronavirus pandemic.” While the punchline is “A parent replies, “I spent the whole week trying to convince my kid to change his underwear and you're asking them to change their face mask daily”.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the humorous comments made by the Jordanian population during the COVID-19 pandemic to cope with and mock the situation. It focused on identifying the categories emphasized in these comments between March and September 2020, specifically on the AlMamlaka and Roya Jordanian Facebook accounts. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed, utilizing the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) by Attardo and Raskin (1991) for thematic analysis. The analysis revealed jokes about government, gender, COVID-19, lockdown, behavior, conspiracy, geographical areas, and facemask. The study also found that COVID-19 jokes aligned with the six knowledge resources (KRs) of GTVH theory. Irony and sarcasm were identified as prominent humor strategies used to highlight the challenges faced by Jordanians during the pandemic. The study further highlighted the importance of the “Target” knowledge resource in categorizing and understanding different humorous comments, challenging Attardo's claim that it is optional.

Many of the themes identified in the humorous COVID-19 content in Jordan also have equivalents, albeit with variation, in worldwide COVID-19 humor (Thelwall & Thelwall, 2020; Al-Daher et al., 2022; Chibuwe & Munoriyarwa, 2022; Cancelas-Ouviña, 2021; Meder, 2020; Khan et al., 2020; Norstorm & Sarna, 2021). Moreover, studies specific to the COVID-19 pandemic in Jordan (Al-Daher et al., 2022; Hussein & Aljamali, 2020; Lulu et al., 2021; Ali & Faraj, 2022; Al-Qudah & Hait, 2022) have similarities in the concept of humor with the current research, concurring that humor serves as a coping mechanism, and that political, social, and psychological themes are prevalent in COVID-19-related humor in Jordan.

For future research, it would be interesting to investigate the impact of humorous content on social media on people's behaviors and attitudes toward the pandemic and other societal issues. It would also be valuable to explore how humor is utilized and interpreted in different cultural settings, including diverse responses to natural disasters and its influence on understanding humorous material.

Practically, these findings can contribute to a better understanding of the role of humor in coping with crises such as pandemics and incorporate this knowledge into public health messaging and communication strategies. Governments should prioritize evidence-based pandemic response plans, transparent reporting of data, and equal distribution of

resources, while individuals must take personal responsibility to adhere to preventative measures and combat stigmatization of the virus, to effectively mitigate the social, political, and cultural implications of the pandemic.

The study's limitations include its narrow focus on verbal humor within a specific timeframe and context, analyzing only comments from two Jordanian TV channels on COVID-19 news, and excluding other forms of humor and non-humorous comments. Despite these limitations, this study offers valuable insights into the social, political, and cultural effects of the pandemic on Jordanian society, and the research methodology used can serve as a model for future studies.

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