

The Linguistic Implications of Facebook Nicknames for Jordanian Males and Females

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Abstract—Facebook allows users to easily share their thoughts and feelings with other users. This study attempts to investigate the linguistic behavior of Jordanian Facebookers' choice of nicknames in Arabic. In so doing, it gives a window onto the norms and values of the Jordanian culture in a way that interaction in most other kinds of situations does not. The data consist of 234 nicknames (71 males and 163 females), which were collected from 11 large Facebook groups. Also, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants to obtain their views on their use of nicknames. The results showed that the preferred category of nicknames for males is “animals reference” (23.4%), whereas “celestial bodies reference” is the least frequent type used. Females preferred using nicknames under “superiority reference” (17.3%), whereas “job reference” and “famous characters’ reference” are the least frequent types used. Overall, this study lends evidence to the view that gender influences linguistic choices, including nicknames. Significantly, the analysis also shows that both males and females tend to use terms that have a “pessimistic reference” more than those that carry an “optimistic reference”. Besides, the analysis shows that “flora reference” is a category that was often used in female nicknames. Essentially, it enriches knowledge about the Jordanian culture as it provides information about the general mentality, ways of thinking, and emotional and evaluative attitudes towards the genuineness of the people. Such knowledge can be of great benefit to learners of Jordanian Arabic as a foreign language.

Index Terms—Facebookers’ attitudes, gender variation, Jordanians, nicknames’ implications, onomastics, social media

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has developed in the last decade to the point where it has become ubiquitous, used by billions of people. The Social Media Research Group (2016) states that “social media are understood to be web-based platforms that enable and facilitate users to generate and share content, allowing subsequent online interactions with other users” (p. 3). People now use social media in their new phase of communication, the digital phase, to be in touch with their families and friends (Bader & Obeidat, 2020). Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and so on have billions of users daily. These sites vary from each other in that they use different communication instruments, such as photo and video sharing tools. Many people have friends on these sites who share common interests or affiliations, like shared religious, national, sexual, or racial attitudes and beliefs.

Remarkably, from an academic perspective, social media websites give researchers access to a great variety of participants and data. This enables researchers to collect a huge amount of accessible data for their studies. Then, they can learn more and analyze the behaviors and attitudes of participants regarding personal data shared on those sites. Also, researchers can analyze the data in tandem with social variables of the participants such as gender, age, etc. In this vein, Creswell (2014) stated that social media websites such as Facebook are considered audiovisual sources of data

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that can be used for analysis in qualitative and quantitative research. Moreover, according to Kádár and Haugh (2013), there are some benefits to using social media data in research. Social media enable us to get raw and natural data on human behavior and other information. They give the researchers easy access to a massive amount of data to analyze many different topics, such as nicknames. However, some challenges might confront researchers while using social media data. For example, it is sometimes difficult to collect the target data, especially in social media that is seldom created for research purposes, which means a large amount of data might be irrelevant or in formats that are difficult to analyze. Likewise, searching for data on social media might be time-wasting because one needs to spend a lot of time on those websites to obtain relevant data. Nonetheless, computer-mediated communication is one of the most noteworthy and popular data sources in discursive research (Kiyimba et al., 2019).

The Internet in general and social media in particular have been recognized as rich sources of information for people interested in many subjects. Researchers have seized this facility and utilized the online materials as data for their various research projects. For example, Alsamhan and Almutrafi (2022) investigated the sociolinguistic functions of code-switching among Arabic-English bilinguals in online written communication by Saudi Twitter users. In the same vein, Olivier (2014) explored the nature of 500 Twitter usernames and nicknames within the South African context. As a result, Facebook makes a significant contribution to data collection by simply posting a question about a specific phenomenon and receiving various responses and points of view. For instance, Jaber and Daana (2021) started collecting their data to explore the given names of cats in Amman, Jordan, by simply posting the question “If you have a cat, what is the name of the cat, and what is its kind?” on the Facebook page “*Ask Jordan*,” from which they collected about 153 names. Also, in Jordan, Bader and Obeidat (2020) collected one hundred comments from ten political posts to explore the types of impoliteness strategies Jordanian Facebookers use when commenting on some local political posts.

Facebook allows users to easily share their thoughts and feelings with other users, upload photos and videos, send messages, and keep in touch with family and friends (Bader & Obeidat, 2020). According to DataReportal (2022), the total number of monthly active users of Facebook reached 2.934 billion in July 2022, which equates to 36.8% of the total number of people on Earth, larger than the populations of China and India combined. In Jordan, Facebook is widely used as a social media tool through which people comment on posts or follow certain posts and comment on them (Bader & Obeidat, 2020). In August 2022, there were 7219200 Facebook users (67.3% of the population), with men accounting for 54.8% (“Facebook Users in Jordan - August 2022,” n.d.).

As for the main topic of this study, it has been noticed by the researchers that many Facebook users, especially females, tend to use nicknames as substitutes for their real names on their profiles. Nicknames on Facebook tend to be different from other nicknames in real life (Jadesi, 2022). On Facebook, users are the ones who grant themselves nicknames, whereas in real life, nicknames are often given to someone by others, such as friends, relatives, co-workers, and so on. Thus, we often find most nicknames on Facebook tend to be positive, although some of them might carry negative connotations that reflect the state of the referent or the bearer. On Facebook, nicknames are generally used by users to communicate something specific about their personality, character, or background. Besides, nicknames are sometimes used by users as a substitute for the proper name of a familiar person to remain anonymous, either as a way of not giving away their real identity or to deter people from contacting the nickname user (Van der Nagel, 2017). There could be many different motivations behind this.

This study aims at investigating the use of Facebook nicknames by Jordanians. First, it attempts to explore whether the nicknames of the Facebookers carry positive or negative communicative functions and what implications the nicknames convey. Also, it aims to contribute to the growing body of literature informing “name theory” or “onomastic”.

It aims to identify the constitutive, preferential, and impromptu rule-bound properties of nicknames and nickname use (Leslie & Skipper, 1990). It is hoped that the analysis of the nicknames of Jordanian Facebookers will encourage more comprehensive investigations of these nicknames in the future.

Language and culture are inseparable. The cultural context determines the way nicknames are given and used, so they are products of the culture and rooted in it, and they can reflect a cultural feature that is peculiar to one culture rather than another (Pour, 2009). Although nicknaming is a useful resource for communication, little research has been conducted in the Jordanian context, as far as the best knowledge of the authors of this study is concerned. Thus, the importance of investigating this topic stems from the increased interest of linguists in investigating the issues of interaction between language and culture. This study attempts to investigate the behavior of Facebookers' choice of nicknames in Jordanian Arabic. In so doing, it gives a window onto the norms and values of the Jordanian culture in a way that interaction in most other kinds of situations does not. Essentially, it enriches knowledge about the Jordanian culture as it provides information about the general mentality, ways of thinking, and emotional and evaluative attitudes towards the genuineness of the people. Such knowledge can be of great benefit to learners of Jordanian Arabic as a foreign language.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Names are studied under the science of onomastics (also called onomatology). Among its branches are “Anthroponomastics,” which studies personal names, and “Toponymy,” which studies place names (Al-Kubaisy, 2017;

Crystal, 2008). Crystal states that “in a looser usage, onomastics is used for personal names and toponymy for place names” (2008, p. 339). The term “nickname” can be traced back to the late Middle English period, when it was derived from an eke-name, which meant “an additional name” (Al-Sa’ati, 2012). Nicknames are informal, sometimes humorous, and based on a person’s real name or on an obvious characteristic or habit of that recipient. They are regarded as desirable, denoting acceptance, and are used to express affection, a form of compliment, or amusement (Adebileje, 2012; Jamalvandi & Jamalvandi, 2016). Conversely, a nickname may cause resentment when used offensively as a form of ridicule to express defamation of character. Furthermore, nicknames can be exploited, especially by criminals and wrongdoers who may use them to disguise their real identities (Jamalvandi & Jamalvandi, 2016).

In the context of information technology, a nickname is usually called a “nick” (Crystal, 2011, p. 70). The Internet is unmatched in the extent to which individuals assign themselves nicknames to conceal their identity, especially in chat groups, games, networks, and forums (Crystal, 2011). According to Adebileje (2012), nicknames are typically given to people rather than chosen by them, whereas Crystal believes that “the choice of a nick is a ritual act, demanded by the culture to which the individual aspires to belong, and, as with all naming practices, a matter of great complexity and sensitivity” (2004, p. 159). Examining the use of nicknames in different cultures, their evaluation, whether positive or negative, and their translation from one language to another have attracted the attention of researchers. For example, Jamalvandi and Jamalvandi (2016) investigated the use of nicknames by 200 male and female students in the context of Ilami Kurdish high schools. Through the use of descriptive statistics, the results of the study revealed that the participants relied heavily on the physical characteristics of people to develop nicknames. The results also showed that most of the nicknames were evaluated as neutral, followed by positive and negative evaluations, and that gender did not play any significant role in the use of nicknames.

Focusing on the cultural aspects and the intended meanings of nicknames, Adebileje (2012) studied the characteristics of nicknames in Yoruba culture. Using observations and structured interviews, the author analyzed 12 nicknames used by Yoruba brides for their in-laws. The results revealed that most of the nicknames coined by the Yoruba brides function as compliments (58%), whereas 17% of them were classified under the category of derogatory, and the remaining 25% had dual functions: compliments and insults. Moreover, the results of the interviews indicated that the intended meanings of the nicknames show the type of relationship between the brides and their in-laws and that the surface meanings do not always reflect the meanings intended by the Yoruba brides. Similarly, Akintola and Ayantayo (2016) investigated the pragmatic meaning of nicknames as used by Yoruba brides for their in-laws. Using interviews and the intuitive knowledge of the researchers, they analyzed 21 nicknames. The results of the study showed that nicknames in this context are used for eulogizing, respecting, and insulting.

Despite their frequent use, nicknames are sometimes not preferred by the addressees, as reported by Ermanto’s (2018) study, which examined the nicknames used in the coastal communities in Pariaman, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The author investigated nicknames in terms of their linguistic forms and the values of nicknames, whether positive or negative. The results revealed that the nicknames in the study are word- and phrase-shaped and that most of them have negative values. The author concluded that giving a negative nickname to someone is a kind of verbal violence, an act that should be eliminated from the life of the community.

In the Arabic culture, Wardat (1997) analyzed nicknames in Jordanian Arabic and found that the sociocultural practices of people were the reasons behind the existence of nicknames. He found that the choice of nicknames was determined by the physical appearance, societal rank, and occupation of the addressee. The results also showed that men were more likely to have a nickname than women. He attributed this finding to the protected social status that women enjoy in Jordan. Haggan (2008) investigated the nicknames given to Kuwaiti teenagers and found that, as evaluated by Kuwaiti undergraduates, derogatory nicknames were common, especially among women, despite the religious views against hurtful speech. Relying on data also collected from students, Al-Sa’ati (2012) investigated the use of nicknames, mainly in Mosul society in Iraq. The study was based on a questionnaire given to 50 male and 50 female freshmen at the English Department, University of Mosul. The study found that there are many types of nicknames related to job, place name, physical appearance, or those derived from a proper name, from the first and last parts of a proper name, *kunya* “teknonymy,” honorific, diminutive nicknames, etc. The study also found that males are likely to have more nicknames than females, whether they refer to physical appearance, tekonymy, a place, or nicknames according to job, whereas female students prefer to use diminutives or drop a letter.

III. METHODS

A. The Sample of the Study

Firstly, the list of nicknames of 234 Facebookers (71 males and 163 females) was collected from 11 large groups that contain thousands of users. For the classification of nicknames into male or female, the researchers, being linguists and native speakers of Arabic, relied on their Arabic linguistic knowledge and experiences to classify nicknames as masculine or feminine, since the gender system in Arabic is inflicted grammatically; that is, a nickname is categorized as feminine if it has a feminine marker, whereas masculine is not marked in Arabic. However, when ambiguity issues arise, the nickname is discarded. Secondly, a classification pattern was established by the researchers through classifying the nicknames into emerging themes.

B. Data Analysis

Facebook Data Analysis

The analysis of the dataset resulted in 22 themes, which were derived by analyzing the total of 422 terms recognized in the 234 nicknames of Jordanian Facebookers. Table 1 below represents the classification types using the letters A to V, followed by real-life examples.

TABLE 1
NICKNAME CLASSIFICATION TYPES ON FACEBOOK

| | Code | Classification | Example | Translation |
|----|------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | A | Aesthetic Reference | العيون الجميلة | The beautiful eyes |
| 2 | B | Place Reference | ابن الشمال | The son of the North |
| 3 | C | Pessimistic Reference | القلب المكسور | The broken heart |
| 4 | D | Optimistic Reference | الضحكة الجميلة | The cute smile |
| 5 | E | Ethical Reference | الحب الصادق | The sincere love |
| 6 | F | Colour Reference | الوردة البيضاء | The white flower |
| 7 | G | Animal Reference | اسد الجنوب | The lion of the South |
| 8 | H | Natural Phenomenon Reference | حمامة الجبل | The pigeon of the mountain |
| 9 | I | Emotions Reference | عاشقة الرومانسية | The romance lover |
| 10 | G | Profession or Career Reference | البرفيسور | The professor |
| 11 | K | Specific Action or Behavior Reference | الغزاة العدوانية | The aggressive deer |
| 12 | L | Famous Characters Reference | المحقق كونان | The detective Konan |
| 13 | M | Social Relationship Reference | ابن الشمال | The son of the North |
| 14 | N | English Language Reference | بنت كيوت | The cute girl |
| 15 | O | Reliance on God Reference | أسد الإسلام | The lion of Islam |
| 16 | P | Flora Reference | بائع الورد | The seller of flowers |
| 17 | Q | Superiority Reference | ملكة الورد | The queen of flowers |
| 18 | R | Celestial Bodies Reference | جار القمر | The moon's neighbour |
| 19 | S | Physical Reference | القلب الطيب | The kind heart |
| 20 | T | Time Reference | زهرة الربيع | The spring rose |
| 21 | U | Collectivism Reference | صقر العرب | The eagle of Arabs |
| 22 | V | Miscellaneous | الغزاة القصيرة | The short deer |

It is worth mentioning that repeated identical nicknames were excluded during the process of collecting data from Facebook for this study. However, for those nicknames composed of two or more terms, each term was classified and used for statistical purposes. For example, 'الوردة البيضاء' *the white flower* was considered both color-related and flora-related; therefore, it was incorporated in the tallies for two different onomastic categories, represented by type codes: F and P. This procedure was followed to classify the terms in the 234 nicknames of male and female Jordanian Facebookers investigated. The percentage of each onomastic type identified in the set of terms in the nicknames is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
THE FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE OF EACH TYPE OF TERM IN NICKNAMES

| Code | | Females | | Males | | Altogether | |
|------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|------------|-------|
| 1 | A | 18 | 6.1% | 2 | 1.56% | 20 | 4.7% |
| 2 | B | 14 | 4.8% | 7 | 5.46% | 21 | 5% |
| 3 | C | 20 | 6.8% | 10 | 7.8% | 30 | 7% |
| 4 | D | 7 | 2.4% | 1 | 0.78% | 8 | 1.9% |
| 5 | E | 1 | 0.34% | 7 | 5.46% | 8 | 1.9% |
| 6 | F | 11 | 3.75% | 4 | 3% | 15 | 3.5% |
| 7 | G | 27 | 9% | 30 | 23.4% | 57 | 13.5% |
| 8 | H | 13 | 4.4% | 5 | 4% | 18 | 4.2% |
| 9 | I | 17 | 5.8% | 6 | 4.7% | 23 | 5.4% |
| 10 | G | 0 | 0.00% | 9 | 7% | 9 | 2% |
| 11 | K | 22 | 7.5% | 1 | 0.78% | 23 | 5.4% |
| 12 | L | 0 | 0.00% | 4 | 3% | 4 | 0.94% |
| 13 | M | 9 | 3% | 3 | 2.34% | 12 | 2.8% |
| 14 | N | 6 | 2% | 2 | 1.56% | 8 | 1.9% |
| 15 | O | 4 | 1.4% | 3 | 2.34% | 7 | 1.65% |
| 16 | P | 27 | 9% | 4 | 3% | 31 | 7.3% |
| 17 | Q | 51 | 17.3% | 17 | 13.3% | 68 | 16% |
| 18 | R | 11 | 3.75% | 0 | 0.00% | 11 | 2.6% |
| 19 | S | 14 | 4.76% | 3 | 2.34% | 17 | 4% |
| 20 | T | 11 | 3.75% | 1 | 0.78% | 12 | 2.8% |
| 21 | U | 2 | 0.7% | 3 | 2.34% | 5 | 1.2% |
| 22 | V | 9 | 3% | 6 | 2.34% | 15 | 3.5% |
| | Total | 294 | 100% | 128 | 100% | 422 | 100% |

C. Interviews Analysis

In addition, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 male and female Facebookers who use nicknames to find out why. According to Kasper (2000), the interview is an asymmetrical speech event in which one party (the interviewer) asks questions about the life history, experiences, and attitudes and the other party (the interviewee) gives the answers. It thus has a genre-specific structure, unlike the conversation task. Also, the author emphasizes the significance of interviews as a method of collecting data in qualitative and quantitative research and argues that interviews are the second most regularly used data-gathering procedure in ethnographic research, in tandem with observations. Moreover, adopting interviews as a method for obtaining data in qualitative research is helpful since it provides data that describes the informants' conception of their behaviour and social reality. In this vein, May (2001) argues that using interviews to obtain data allows the researcher to ask participants about their perceptions of particular social behaviours in specific contexts.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The dataset analysis revealed that Jordanian females use nicknames on Facebook more than Jordanian males, with males using 71 nicknames. In comparison, females use 163 nicknames on their Facebook profiles. This finding is not in line with the results of Wardat (1997) and Al-Sa'ati (2012), that males have more nicknames than females. This indicates that the use of nicknames varies across cultures, as Al-Sa'ati's study was conducted on Iraqi participants, and across time, as Wardat's study was conducted in 1997. The interviews with Facebookers reveal that the participants use nicknames for several reasons, such as concealing their identities to make it difficult for others to find out who they are. Their nicknames on Facebook reflect their personality characteristics, attitudes, deep feelings, or things they like.

A. Men's Nicknames

The analysis of 71 Jordanian male nicknames on Facebook reveals 128 terms in total that were classified into 22 types according to the references they carry (see Table 3 below).

TABLE 3
THE PERCENTAGE AND NUMBERS OF TERMS' FREQUENCY IN MALE NICKNAMES

| No. | Code | Classification | Percentage | |
|-----|------|---------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| 1 | A | Aesthetic Reference | 2 | 1.56% |
| 2 | B | Place Reference | 7 | 5.46% |
| 3 | C | Pessimistic Reference | 10 | 7.8% |
| 4 | D | Optimistic Reference | 1 | 0.78% |
| 5 | E | Ethical Reference | 7 | 5.46% |
| 6 | F | Colour Reference | 4 | 3% |
| 7 | G | Animal Reference | 30 | 23.4% |
| 8 | H | Natural Phenomenon Reference | 5 | 4% |
| 9 | I | Emotions Reference | 6 | 4.7% |
| 10 | J | Job or Career Reference | 9 | 7% |
| 11 | K | Specific Action or Behavior Reference | 1 | 0.78% |
| 12 | L | Famous Characters Reference | 4 | 3% |
| 13 | M | Social Relationship Reference | 3 | 2.34% |
| 14 | N | English Language Reference | 2 | 1.56% |
| 15 | O | Reliance on God Reference | 3 | 2.34% |
| 16 | P | Flora Reference | 4 | 3% |
| 17 | Q | Superiority Reference | 17 | 13.3% |
| 18 | R | Celestial Bodies Reference | 0 | 0.00% |
| 19 | S | Physical Reference | 3 | 2.34% |
| 20 | T | Time Reference | 1 | 0.78% |
| 21 | U | Collectivism Reference | 3 | 2.34% |
| 22 | V | Miscellaneous | 6 | 2.34% |
| | | Total | 128 | 100% |

The analysis shows that "animal reference" (G) is the most frequent type used among male nicknames (23.4%), whereas "celestial body reference" (R) is the minor regular type used among male nicknames (0.00%). Jordanian males tend to use nicknames that include animal names such as lion, tiger, whale, eagle, horse, etc. and so on because these animals, in general, have symbols of strength, speed, pride, freedom, nobility, courage, etc. For example, the term "*asad*" (lion) is the most frequently used among other animal terms in Jordanian nicknames (11 times). In cultures across the Arab world, lions are popular symbols of strength, nobility, leadership power, courage, and stateliness. The popularity of these positive associations may also help to explain why the term "lion" appears in the nicknames of many Jordanian Facebookers. The category "superiority reference" (Q) is another type that is frequently used in nicknames among Jordanian male Facebookers (13.3%). Superiority is being superior, higher, or better than something else. Many Facebookers use words associated with power in their nicknames, such as prince, king, boss, etc. Using these terms might express their deep feelings of being superior to or better than others in some matters. For example, the word "prince" is the most frequently used among other superiority terms in Jordanian nicknames; it appears eight times. The

time “prince” symbolizes an outstanding male, especially in a particular group or class, or a male of high rank or standing in his class or profession.

Besides, the analysis shows that three terms appear once in classifications. Each one constitutes 0.78%, which are “optimistic reference” (D) (e.g., the cute smile), “specific action or behaviour reference” (K) (the aggressive deer), and “time reference” (T) (e.g., the spring rose). Surprisingly, the analysis shows that males tend to use terms with “pessimistic reference” (C) (e.g., the broken heart) more than those with “optimistic reference” (e.g., the cute smile) (D). Terms that have “pessimistic reference”, such as “sorrows,” “poor,” and “darkness”, appear ten times, which constitutes 7.8%, whereas terms that have “optimistic reference” appear once and constitute only 0.78%.

B. Nicknames for Females

The analysis of 163 Jordanian female nicknames on Facebook reveals 294 terms in total that were classified into 22 types according to the references they carry (see Table 4 below).

TABLE 4
THE PERCENTAGE AND NUMBERS OF TERMS IN FEMALE NICKNAMES

| | Code | | Females | |
|----|------|---------------------------------------|---------|-------|
| | | | | |
| 1 | A | Aesthetic Reference | 18 | 6.1% |
| 2 | B | Place Reference | 14 | 4.8% |
| 3 | C | Pessimistic Reference | 20 | 6.8% |
| 4 | D | Optimistic Reference | 7 | 2.4% |
| 5 | E | Ethical Reference | 1 | 0.34% |
| 6 | F | Colour Reference | 11 | 3.75% |
| 7 | G | Animals Reference | 27 | 9% |
| 8 | H | Natural Phenomenon Reference | 13 | 4.4% |
| 9 | I | Emotions Reference | 17 | 5.8% |
| 10 | J | Job or Career Reference | 0 | 0.00% |
| 11 | K | Specific Action or Behavior Reference | 22 | 7.5% |
| 12 | L | Famous Characters Reference | 0 | 0.00% |
| 13 | M | Social Relationship Reference | 9 | 3% |
| 14 | N | English Language Reference | 6 | 2% |
| 15 | O | Reliance on God Reference | 4 | 1.4% |
| 16 | P | Flora Reference | 35 | 12% |
| 17 | Q | Superiority Reference | 51 | 17.3% |
| 18 | R | Celestial Bodies Reference | 11 | 3.75% |
| 19 | S | Physical Reference | 14 | 4.76% |
| 20 | T | Time Reference | 11 | 3.75% |
| 21 | U | Collectivism Reference | 2 | 0.7% |
| 22 | V | Miscellaneous | 9 | 3% |
| | | Total | 294 | 100% |

The analysis shows that “superiority reference” (Q) (e.g., “the queen of flowers”) is the most frequent type used among female nicknames (17.3%), whereas “job or career reference” (J) (**example**) and “famous characters’ reference” (L) (e.g., “the detective Konan”) are the least frequent types used among male nicknames, in which they were not used even once in female nicknames. Jordanian females seem to use terms with a superiority reference, such as *queen* and *princess*. The analysis shows that the most frequent term with a superiority reference is *queen*, which was used 28 times, while the term *princess* was the second to be used and was mentioned 11 times.

As the data reveal, “flora reference” (P) and “animal reference” (G) are two categories that are often used in female nicknames. The analysis shows that the former category comprises 12% (35 times), whereas the latter constitutes 9% (27 times). The analysis indicates that “rose” was used 19 times and “flowers” was used 16 times. Flowers and roses symbolize pride, glorious femininity, refinement, thoughtfulness, and mature charm and are associated with beauty, youth, and pleasure. According to the analysis, the term *gazelle* (as an example) was used 20 times, while the term *pigeon* (as an example) was used seven times. The term *gazelle* in Arabic culture symbolizes youth, beauty, fineness, quickness, gentleness, awareness of surroundings, and unconditional love.

In addition, the analysis shows that Jordanian females tend to use terms that have a “pessimistic reference” (C) more than those with an “optimistic reference” (D). Terms with pessimistic references, such as *sorrows*, *loss*, and *darkness*, appear 20 times, which constitutes 6.8%, whereas words with optimistic references appear seven times and constitute only 2.4%.

C. Male and Female Nicknames

This section presents a comparative analysis of Jordanian males’ and females’ nicknames on Facebook. According to the findings, males are 23.4% more likely than females to use terms with “animal reference” (e.g., *gazelle*). Also, males use terms that have “job or career reference” (e.g., “???”) at 7% and “famous characters’ reference” (e.g., “The detective Konan”) at 3% more than females since those terms were not used a single time in females’ nicknames. Besides, terms that have “ethical reference” (E) (e.g., “sincere love”) were used in males’ nicknames at 5.46% more than in females’ ones at 0.34% (see Table 5 below).

However, terms that have a “flora reference” (e.g., “the seller of flowers”) were used significantly more in females’ nicknames (at 12%) than in males’ ones (which were used only at 3%). In addition, terms that have a “superiority reference” (e.g., “the queen of flowers”) were used more in females’ nicknames (17.3%) than in males’ ones (which were used only at 13.3%). Moreover, the analysis shows that Jordanian females significantly tend to use terms that have “specific action or behavior reference” (e.g., the aggressive deer) at 7.5%, “aesthetic reference” (e.g., the beautiful eyes) at 6.1%, and “time reference” (e.g., the spring rose) at 3.75% more than males do at 0.78%, 1.56%, and 0.78%, respectively. Notably, Jordanian females are 3.75% more likely than males to use terms that refer to “celestial bodies” (e.g., The moon’s neighbour) (see Table 5 below).

TABLE 5
A COMPARISON OF THE PERCENTAGE AND NUMBERS OF TERMS’ FREQUENCY IN MALES AND FEMALES’ NICKNAMES

| Code | | | Females | | Males | |
|------|---|---------------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | A | Aesthetic Reference | 18 | 6.1% | 2 | 1.56% |
| 2 | B | Place Reference | 14 | 4.8% | 7 | 5.46% |
| 3 | C | Pessimistic Reference | 20 | 6.8% | 10 | 7.8% |
| 4 | D | Optimistic Reference | 7 | 2.4% | 1 | 0.78% |
| 5 | E | Ethical Reference | 1 | 0.34% | 7 | 5.46% |
| 6 | F | Colour Reference | 11 | 3.75% | 4 | 3% |
| 7 | G | Animals Reference | 27 | 9% | 30 | 23.4% |
| 8 | H | Natural Phenomenon Reference | 13 | 4.4% | 5 | 4% |
| 9 | I | Emotions Reference | 17 | 5.8% | 6 | 4.7% |
| 10 | G | Job or Career Reference | 0 | 0.00% | 9 | 7% |
| 11 | K | Specific Action or Behavior Reference | 22 | 7.5% | 1 | 0.78% |
| 12 | L | Famous Characters Reference | 0 | 0.00% | 4 | 3% |
| 13 | M | Social Relational Reference | 9 | 3% | 3 | 2.34% |
| 14 | N | English Language Reference | 6 | 2% | 2 | 1.56% |
| 15 | O | Reliance on God Reference | 4 | 1.4% | 3 | 2.34% |
| 16 | P | Flora Reference | 35 | 12% | 4 | 3% |
| 17 | Q | Superiority Reference | 51 | 17.3% | 17 | 13.3% |
| 18 | R | Celestial Bodies Reference | 11 | 3.75% | 0 | 0.00% |
| 19 | S | Physical Reference | 14 | 4.76% | 3 | 2.34% |
| 20 | T | Time Reference | 11 | 3.75% | 1 | 0.78% |
| 21 | U | Collectivism Reference | 2 | 0.7% | 3 | 2.34% |
| 22 | V | Miscellaneous | 9 | 3% | 6 | 2.34% |
| | | Total | 294 | 100% | 128 | 100% |

Significantly, the analysis of all terms (422) in both Jordanian males’ and females’ nicknames shows that terms that have “superiority reference” (Q) (e.g., The queen of flowers) were the most frequently used in nicknames on Facebook among them at 16%, followed by terms that have “animals reference” (G) (e.g.,) at 13.5%. In contrast, terms that have “famous characters reference” (L) (e.g., The detective Konan) were the least frequently used at 0.94%, followed by “collectivism reference” (e.g., The eagle of Arabs) at 1.2%. Interestingly, the analysis shows that terms associated with three categories, which are “optimistic reference” (D) (e.g., the cute smile), “ethical reference” (E) (e.g., the sincere love), and “English language reference” (N) (e.g., the cute girl), had the same frequency: eight terms for each category and each constitutes 1.9%. Amazingly, the analysis shows that both males and females enormously tend to use terms that have a “pessimistic reference” (C) (e.g., the broken heart) at 7% more than terms that have an “optimistic reference” (D) (e.g., the cute smile) at 1.9% (see Table 6 below).

TABLE 6
TERMS' FREQUENCY IN MALES' AND FEMALES' NICKNAMES

| | Code | | Altogether | |
|----|------|---------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| 1 | A | Aesthetic Reference | 20 | 4.7% |
| 2 | B | Place Reference | 21 | 5% |
| 3 | C | Pessimistic Reference | 30 | 7% |
| 4 | D | Optimistic Reference | 8 | 1.9% |
| 5 | E | Ethical Reference | 8 | 1.9% |
| 6 | F | Colour Reference | 15 | 3.5% |
| 7 | G | Animals Reference | 57 | 13.5% |
| 8 | H | Natural Phenomenon Reference | 18 | 4.2% |
| 9 | I | Emotions Reference | 23 | 5.4% |
| 10 | G | Job or Career Reference | 9 | 2% |
| 11 | K | Specific Action or Behavior Reference | 23 | 5.4% |
| 12 | L | Famous Characters Reference | 4 | 0.94% |
| 13 | M | Social Relationship Reference | 12 | 2.8% |
| 14 | N | English Language Reference | 8 | 1.9% |
| 15 | O | Reliance on God Reference | 7 | 1.65% |
| 16 | P | Flora Reference | 31 | 7.3% |
| 17 | Q | Superiority Reference | 68 | 16% |
| 18 | R | Celestial Bodies Reference | 11 | 2.6% |
| 19 | S | Physical Reference | 17 | 4% |
| 20 | T | Time Reference | 12 | 2.8% |
| 21 | U | Collectivism Reference | 5 | 1.2% |
| 22 | V | Miscellaneous | 15 | 3.5% |
| | | Total | 422 | 100% |

V. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that Jordanian females use nicknames more than Jordanian males on Facebook (see Table 5 above). Nicknames are used to disguise the user's identity. The analysis of all terms (422) in both Jordanian males' and females' nicknames on Facebook reveals that terms that have "superiority reference" (Q) were the most frequently used in nicknames on Facebook among them at 16% (68 terms), followed by terms that have "animals reference" (G) followed by "collectivism reference" (U). In contrast, terms that have "famous characters' reference" (L) were the least frequently used. Regarding males' nicknames, the analysis reveals that "animal reference" (G) is the most frequent type used among male nicknames, whereas "celestial bodies reference" (R) is the minor regular type used among male nicknames, whereas "superiority reference" (Q) is the most frequent type used among female nicknames. Remarkably, "job or career reference" (J) and "famous characters' reference" (L) are the least frequent types used among male nicknames. Also, the analysis shows that the term "lion" is the most frequently used among other animal terms in the Jordanian males' nicknames. In contrast, "gazelle" is the most commonly used term among female nicknames. In addition, the analysis reveals that the most frequent term that has a "superiority reference" in females' nicknames is the term "queen," followed by the term "princess," whereas the term "prince" was the most frequently used among other superiority terms in Jordanian males' nicknames.

Significantly, the analysis also shows that both males and females tend to use terms that have a "pessimistic reference" (C) more than those that carry an "optimistic reference" (D). Besides, the analysis shows that "flora reference" (P) is a category often used in female nicknames. For example, the term "rose" was used 19 times, and "flowers" was used 16 times, whereas this category was not remarkably used in male nicknames. In general, except for the comparison between pessimistic and optimistic references, the analysis shows that most of the nicknames used by Jordanian Facebook users carry positive values, as evident in the frequent use of the nicknames in the category "animal reference" by males, in which terms such as *lion*, *tiger*, *whale*, *eagle*, and *horse* were used, entailing meanings of "strength, speed, pride, freedom, and courage," in addition to the females' preference of nicknames with "superiority reference" such as *queen* and *princess* are used by females.

Based on the findings of this study, gender seems to be a significant factor that influences the choice of the user's nickname, at least in Jordan. Further investigation is recommended for the use of nicknames by males and females on different social media websites and in different settings to complement the findings of this study and have a comprehensive, clear picture of the uses and functions of nicknames in Jordan but also in other countries.

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