Asia Pacific
Academy of Science Pte. Ltd.

Research Article

Gender mainstreaming campaign as a casualty of the online gender-based humor: A discourse analysis

Jason V. Chavez[1,*], **Jhordan T. Cuilan**[2]

[1] *Research Operations Office, Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University, Zamboanga City 7000, Philippines*
[2] *Department of English, Benguet State University, Benguet 2601, Philippines*
* Corresponding author: Jason V. Chavez, jasonchavez615@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Cultivation of gender-based humor in social media encourages contrarian language to gender mainstreaming. Gender-based humor posed threat on how to deliver equitable gender mainstreaming campaigns through online. The goal of this study was to determine how gender-based humor impact gender mainstreaming campaign in sociolinguistic sense. There were 14 participants in the focus group discussion providing collective narratives on proliferation of gender-based humors in social media. The participants were language teachers, Gender and Development (GAD) coordinators, and GAD advocates. Discourse analysis indicated that language use in social media hampers the delivery of gender mainstreaming campaigns. Social characterization and social distinctions were prominent components of the humor language, which then cultivated gender normativity. Gender-based humor perpetuate stereotypes, promote discriminatory practices, and reinforce power imbalances through linguistic means. In larger scale, humor language influences the reproduction of humor culture in social media. Gender mainstreaming slows down because of massive cultivation of social belief systems. The problem lies on how gender stereotypes are normalized in society through language use.
Keywords: cultivation; discourse markers; gender-based humor; gender mainstreaming; message patterns; social media

1. Introduction

Sharing humors in social media is now a digital phenomenon. Humor, a fundamental aspect of memes, typically elicits laughter and induces feelings of wellbeing among individuals[1]. Although it is often described to be a positive form of communication, humors become a gateway for gender stereotypes in social media. Humor often relies on stereotypes as a foundation, which can potentially perpetuate detrimental social norms[1,2]. This aspect raises concerns regarding the potential negative implications associated with such humorous portrayals. Hence, this study wanted to describe how gender-based humors in social media can impact gender mainstreaming campaigns. Essentially, this study aimed to describe possible mechanisms that delimit the mainstreaming of gender sensitivity initiatives.

In line with the direction of this study, linguistic imbalances are important to study because it gives understanding on the concept of inequalities and imbalances in the society. This study focused on the dynamics of language use in social media which requires in-depth theoretical and narrative analysis.

The incorporation of humor has been observed to play a crucial role in the communication strategies employed by digital users, thereby significantly enhancing the potential of their messages to achieve viral status[3]. The prevalence of online memes primarily revolves around the depiction of popular culture and everyday experiences, with a notable emphasis on themes related to sex and gender [2,4]. Stereotypes play a significant role in humor as they serve as crucial markers for the construction of in-group identity and the establishment of social boundaries[2,5].

In the initial study conducted by Chavez and Del Prado[6], social media users thought that "it is normal" or "it is part of our lives" highlighting the normalization of gender-based humors in social media. In certain cases, the judgment of normalization, has been shown to correspond with the perceived severity of their content, such as the degree of harshness, insensitivity, and potential for causing emotional distress. Consequently, language and social norms are barriers for gender mainstreaming because people reiterate social distinctions and beliefs[6,7].

Women are often victims of sexist humor in social media[8]. Women are frequently subjected to stereotypes and media portrayals that depict them as exhibiting irrationality, dependence, weakness, and emotional instability in comparison to men. Consequently, men are often perceived as the more legitimate and dominant participants in social media[9,10]. It is worth noting that the stereotypical depiction of women in online can potentially contribute to the perpetuation of the "patriarchal ideology of women as enemies"[11] and the notion of "women who hate each other"[10]. The memes appear to have a notable impact on promoting or, at the very least, cultivating a disposition of acceptance towards sexism, as they effectively diminish the perception of its harmfulness, derogatory nature, or offensiveness[2,8].

In cultivation theory, individuals who are exposed to various forms of media tend to interpret and perceive social realities based on the way these realities are portrayed within the media landscape[12]. In early cultivation studies, televisions have a stabilizing effect on societal patterns, leading to a propensity for resistance to change[12,13]. This study used this perspective to analyze how discourse markers in gender-based humors served as barriers for gender mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has simple objective, i.e., it …transforms society positively through the elimination of discriminatory laws, norms and practices[14].

Prejudiced norm theory suggests that the use of disparaging humor creates a social atmosphere that supports and encourages prejudice and discrimination through transgression of established boundaries of social acceptability[5]. It could be that gender mainstreaming is challenging to achieve online because of language use and reiteration of social norms in social media. The presence of humor in communication had a notable impact on reducing the perception of sexist attributes associated with the conveyed message, while humors also heightened level of tolerance towards instances of sexual misconduct and sexism[15].

This study was an extension of the research conducted by the authors about discourse markers and message patterns of gender-based humors in social media. The initial results indicated that "perceived inequality was firm to the language and expression of the gender-based humor"[6]. This study extended the previous study conducted on gender-based humors in social media. It is believed that how gender-based humors being reiterated in social media has implications on how people react on gender mainstreaming campaigns. GAD is an essential concept to be discussed in sociolinguistic perspective. This study looked on how linguistic dynamics became a barrier in achieving gender sensitivity initiatives.

2. Theoretical framework

This study used the theoretical perspectives of Prejudiced Norm Theory (PNT) and Cultivation Theory in developing the concepts of this study.

2.1. Prejudiced norm theory

Utilization of disparaging sexist humor has the potential to facilitate the manifestation of unfavorable attitudes and the acceptance of violence directed towards women. In the realm of social psychology, Ford and Ferguson[5] put forth the Prejudiced Norm Theory (PNT), wherein they posit that the utilization of disparaging humor fosters an environment conducive for prejudice and discrimination. This is achieved by pushing the boundaries of what is deemed socially acceptable, thereby providing an avenue for individuals or groups (ingroups) to openly exhibit their biases towards those who are different from them (outgroups). In the context of sexist humor, it is observed that such humor establishes a social norm characterized by levity, thereby implying the potential acceptability of discrimination and the endorsement of acts of violence targeting women[16,17].

As Ford and Ferguson[5] clarified in their overview of PNT, "…humorous communication activates a conversational rule of levity—to switch from the usual serious mindset to a nonserious humor mindset for interpreting the message. Therefore, people are likely to interpret disparagement humor in a nonserious, humor mindset unless internal or external cues suggest that it is inappropriate to do so".

Moreover, the study conducted by Woodzicka et al.[18] revealed that the lack of confrontation towards sexist humor can be attributed to its perceived lesser severity when compared to other forms of discriminatory messages conveyed through humor. Racist statements were found to be perceived as more offensive and confrontational when compared to sexist messages[16,17]. In their study, Mallett et al.[15] discovered that humor has the effect of diminishing the perception of sexist attributes associated with the communicated message. This outcome leads to increased acceptance of the message, reduced confrontational responses, and heightened tolerance towards displays of sexual harassment and sexism.

The phenomenon of ingroup identification plays a significant role in moderating the perceived humor of jokes. The argument is supported by several studies conducted recently[16,17,19–21]. Individuals who exhibited a diminished sense of identification with their ingroup were found to have a greater likelihood for gaining enjoyment from engaging in disparaging humor targeting the said ingroup.

According to Abrams and Bippus[22], research conducted in the field of sexist humor studies has revealed an interesting phenomenon. Specifically, women who exhibit a strong identification with their gender are more susceptible to the negative effects of critical messages directed towards them, as compared to women who have a lower gender identification[16]. This phenomenon suggests that individuals tend to exhibit ingroup biases, leading them to prefer humor that belittles the outgroup to a greater degree.

2.2. Cultivation theory

A few studies looked at how the controversy stoked long-growing concerns about social media's potential to affect audiences' perceptions and conduct instantly and directly. Traditional media still has a significant impact, but social media may have an even greater impact[23–28].

The concept of cultivation theory posits that the portrayal of a particular subject matter in the media can exert a significant influence on individuals, leading them to perceive the issue as more prevalent and representative of the actual world at large. This theory recognizes the dynamic nature of media's impact, as it has the potential to shape and cultivate viewers' perceptions and beliefs about various societal concerns[27,29–32]. In cultivation studies, children who engage in extensive television viewing may internalize the notion that boys are inherently inclined towards exhibiting characteristics of dominance, assertiveness, and power. This phenomenon can be attributed to the frequent portrayal of male characters embodying such qualities on screen[33].

As Gerbner et al.[34] explained, "…Most of those with certain social and psychological characteristics, dispositions, and world views-and fewer alternatives as attractive and compelling as television-use it as their major vehicle of cultural participation. The content shapes and promotes their continued attention. To the extent that television dominates their sources of information, continued exposure to its messages is likely to reiterate, confirm, and nourish (i.e., cultivate) their values and perspectives".

Most of the literature in cultivation theory were adapted more on mainstream media e.g., films, television, and this study is one of the few that integrated cultivation theory in social media, especially in the context of gender-based humor. In cultivation theory, the construction of the value system, which encompasses ideologies, assumptions, beliefs, images, and perspectives, is largely influenced by television[35]. In the concept of gender-based humor, social media posts could influence how people perceive gender stereotypes.

Cultivation is the process of socialization involves various agents through which individuals acquire knowledge and internalize societal norms. In this context, media, including various forms of mass communication, play a significant role in shaping adolescents' understanding of gender norms within society[36,37]. From a media psychological standpoint, this shows that certain characteristics of social media could facilitate cultivation processes comparable to those identified in the historical setting of mainstream media[38].

3. Research objective

The goal of this study was to determine the effects of discourse markers and message patterns of online gender-based humors to gender mainstreaming. This study collected narratives on what aspects the gender-based humor exert significant impact on gender mainstreaming. Discourse markers of gender-based humors include normalization of gender inequality, tolerating sexist jokes, and promotion of discrimination towards gender. These aspects might have social implications in gender mainstreaming.

1) Assess the effects of the dominant discourse markers and the message patterns of online gender-based humors to the mainstreaming campaign of gender and development.
2) Determine what aspects of gender-based humors made gender mainstreaming challenging to achieve.

4. Methods

This study explored the effects of gender-based humors in gender mainstreaming campaign. This study developed in-depth analysis on how gender-based humors in social media could impact the gender mainstreaming campaign through analyzing the narratives of social media users and language teachers. This study analyzed the discourses present in social media and extract valuable insights on how its message delimits the gender mainstreaming campaigns.

4.1. Population and sampling technique

The sampling technique employed in this study was purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method commonly used in qualitative research[39–41]. This method involves selecting participants based on specific criteria that align with the research objectives, allowing for a targeted and purposeful selection process[42]. It is utilized by researchers to deliberately identify and select individuals who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to provide valuable insights and information pertaining to the specific topic being investigated.

The individuals included in the sample for this research study were specifically identified as active users of social media platforms, spending a minimum of four hours per day to online engagement. The participants in this study exhibited diverse gender orientations and profiles, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration

of the various sources of humor expressions found online. This study used several characteristics, e.g., persons in authority, GAD advocates, language teachers. These were the main criteria this study used to describe the demographics of the participants.

There were 14 participants in this study as presented in **Table 1**. They spend at least 4 h a day in social media. They actively engage in social media through messages, sharing, commenting, and posting. The basic profile of the participants is presented below.

Table 1. Basic information of participants.

Code	Name	Gender	Age	Demographic
Participant 1	Leslie	Female	31	GAD advocate; higher education teacher; married; 2 daughters; Roman Catholic
Participant 2	Dawn	Female	28	Language teacher in higher education; single; Roman Catholic
Participant 3	Ahmad	Male	29	Language teacher in high school; married; 1 son; Muslim
Participant 4	Jade	Female	41	GAD coordinator; 2 daughters, 1 son; married; Roman Catholic
Participant 5	Choi	Gay	27	Language teacher in higher education; single; Roman Catholic
Participant 6	Victoria	Female	39	GAD advocate; high school teacher; 2 sons; married; Muslim
Participant 7	Yan	Female	37	GAD coordinator; single; Roman Catholic
Participant 8	Charlie	Male	43	Language teacher in high school; 3 son, 1 daughter; married; Roman Catholic
Participant 9	Joan	Female	35	GAD coordinator; high school teacher; single; Roman Catholic
Participant 10	Ronan	Gay	39	GAD advocate; high school teacher; single; Roman Catholic
Participant 11	Shan	Male	29	Language teacher in higher education; single; Roman Catholic
Participant 12	Lorna	Female	32	GAD coordinator; 1 daughter, single; Roman Catholic
Participant 13	Dennis	Male	45	GAD advocate; higher education teacher; 2 sons; married; Roman Catholic
Participant 14	Raven	Male	35	Language teacher in higher education; single

4.2. Research instrument

The instrument in this study was the guide questions based on the objectives. This study carried out focus group discussions to gather the narratives from the participants. Below table present the research instrument used in this study.

Focus group discussions (FGD) on dominant effects of discourse markers: To determine the effects of the dominant discourse markers and the message patterns of online gender-based humors to the mainstreaming campaign of gender and development (to be participated by language teachers, advocates, heads of GAD offices with bases from preliminary results). The interview guide questions are presented in the **Table 2** below.

Table 2. Guide questions for FGD on the effects of discourse markers and message patterns to GAD mainstreaming.

Discourse markers	FGD Question 1	FGD Question 2	FGD Question 3
Defaulting jokes as normal	What are the effects of the dominant discourse markers to GAD mainstreaming?	How will the discourse markers affect GAD mainstreaming?	How should we neutralize or mitigate the effects of the dominant discourse markers to GAD mainstreaming?
Tolerating sexist jokes			
Perceiving that inequality in gender is reality			
Discourse message patterns			
Language promoting discriminatory practices	What are the effects of these message patterns to GAD mainstreaming?	How will these message patterns affect GAD mainstreaming?	How should we neutralize or mitigate the effects of these message patterns to GAD mainstreaming?
Language reproduction of gender bias			
Gender-stereotyping in language use			
Disempowering tool to personal images			

4.3. Data gathering procedure

To collect data for the study, a rigorous data gathering procedure was employed, encompassing both focus group discussions and individual interviews. The focus group discussions were conducted with a group of participants who were purposefully selected based on their experiences pertaining to the subject matter under investigation. The discussions were organized in a structured manner, which fostered the opportunity for open-ended inquiries and facilitated dynamic exchanges among the participants. The recorded sessions were carefully transcribed to accurately capture the intricate details and subtleties of the conversations.

The FGD offered valuable opportunity to explore and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the unique experiences and perspectives of each participant. The FGD was conducted with the consent of the participants, following ethical standards throughout the research process.

The focus group discussion was conducted in a conducive setting that was convenient to the participants and allowed them to openly express their experiences. The researcher diligently upheld a neutral position during the entirety of the data collection procedure, displaying an unwavering commitment to impartiality. This was achieved by engaging in active listening and employing probing techniques to elicit additional information whenever deemed necessary.

4.4. Data analysis

The primary data in this study was the narratives from focus group discussion. The transcriptions were reviewed and coded to identify key themes and narrative patterns. Thematic analysis was used to systematically analyze the data and identify common ideas and responses. The findings were compared to other responses.

In thematic analysis, there were six important components that needed to be followed—familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing[43]. In this study, the responses of the participants were grouped based on their common themes and interpreted narratively. This further simplified complexities in their statements and expressions.

This study also collected data from social media sites to triangulate the narratives with some gender-based humors. Because this study presented language use and effects, it is important to also present some examples of gender-based humors in social media. This allowed extraction of valuable language use ethics and standards.

5. Results

Objective 1. Assess the effects of the dominant discourse markers and the message patterns of online gender-based humors to the mainstreaming campaign of gender and development.

Theme 1: Gender stereotyping in career development

Four of the participants in focus group pointed out their concerns on how gender-based humors in social media can affect how people view career development. Some participants cited examples like being president or pilot. These gender-based humors in social media can impact how most people perceive careers. In that sense, they believe that humors can direct someone to normalize gender stereotypes of some works.

"It is very evident that we are still not able to achieve equality. Even in academe, there is inequality because we are not able to tackle gender stereotyping and gender biases. For example, you are a woman, you cannot be a president of the university, why not?" [**Participant 2**]

"It is necessary to intensify the gender mainstreaming especially in courses that gender stereotyping is prevalent." [**Participant 12**]

"People believed that if a gay will lead the country, it will be a great failure for the country. These are some of the tolerating sexist jokes." [**Participant 3**]

Theme 2: Self-perception

Five of the participants in focus group believe that gender-based humors can influence self-perception of a person. This was an important direction for analysis because GAD is also focusing on empowering people within communities. It turns out that gender-based humors severely impacted how people perceived themselves. Some participants said that these humors are traumatic and causing people to self-isolate.

> *"Psychological effects of dominant discourse markers, like short-term. This could include the perception to oneself, you'll lose confidence to yourself. When these jokes are pertaining to you, you'll lose your confidence as a person."* [**Participant 14**]
>
> *"In short term, you'll be angry. It has a domino effect because people will believe even if it is not true. In that case, when you react on these jokes, people will keep on doing it."* [**Participant 8**]
>
> *"It is traumatic to the person; it can affect how people perceive themselves. It has a social effect on them, and that they are less likely to socialize. They isolate themselves."* [**Participant 4**]

Theme 3: Social characterization

Five of the participants in focus group pointed out how gender-based humors caused social characterization. People in social media developed words that described people as a joke. Because humors in social media is a dynamic culture, it often resulted to new descriptions to people. These descriptions are being used oftentimes to make fun of someone on the internet. These words have specific connotations to them which people continuously used.

> *"The humors have characterization. People tend to look at these people and create certain ideas related to them. They will give them attribution to something, say, Marites [name called for a gossiper]."* [**Participant 1**]
>
> *"I think that why humor become trending because people can relate to it. For example, it's not wrong being gay, so why you will be offended? We tend to create image to ourselves about certain gender, we stereotype them as this."* [**Participant 5**]
>
> *"When we see males joining with girls, we always perceive them as gay. Even if they are masculine, if a male is joining with girls, he is gay. When a girl, we perceive her as tomboy [lesbian]."* [**Participant 7**]
>
> *"For me, jokes really exist, it's normal. We use Karen [racist] or Marites [gossiper]. There is also new now, Raul, a name used to bully a gay [often spoken with deep male voice]. So, if we don't know the meaning of these words, do not use it. Or might as well, don't use it even we know."* [**Participant 9**]

Objective 2. Determine what aspects of gender-based humors made gender mainstreaming challenging to achieve.

Theme 1: Humor culture

Some of the participant explained important contexts of gender-based humors in social media. One participant argued that it is difficult to understand humors because people differed their perceptions about it. He also emphasized that this is an important concern because it certainly contextualized how gender-based humors are developed.

> *"Discrimination in social media may not be tangible enough to be understood by us. How many people are being caught because of cyberbullying? Like how liable the person is when he jokes? Some will view it as a joke, and some will not. That is the time humors have ethical dilemma because it is not clear what are the possible actions that a person should follow."* [**Participant 10**]

"I think, how people act in social media based on what they hear, read, or see. So, when a person is frequently exposed in gender-based humor, it makes them believe that it's normal, and that they can also do that." [**Participant 6**]

Theme 2: Humor Dynamics

Three of the participants expressed their concerns on how gender-based humor is evolving throughout time. The humors in social media are dynamic language that has its own syntax and linguistic components. Some people used humors as a form of insult, and this happens even with gender-based humors. These aspects of gender-based humors complicate more how gender mainstreaming can be implemented.

"If they see these humors as normal, oh it's normal to joke like this, it has discriminatory undertone. So, the meaning changes. The humors in social media evolve, there are explicitly offensive becoming implicitly offensive because you don't know the context—someone is insulting you. So, if we don't stop this, if we just allow this to happen, it will really delay the success of GAD." [**Participant 11**]

"If we allow this to happen all the time or occasionally, it will really hamper mainstream success. Whether it's small, incidental, and you let it be, tolerate it anyway they are humans, it will breed, it will connect-connect and will cultivate a culture that is tolerant like it's okay." [**Participant 13**]

6. Discussion

Objective 1. Assess the effects of the dominant discourse markers and the message patterns of online gender-based humors to the mainstreaming campaign of gender and development.

This study yielded important effects of gender-based humors to the gender mainstreaming. These effects had several characteristics that needed to be investigate further to develop strategic processes. The narratives of the participants opened new discussions on which aspects gender-based humors became prominent and how these can potentially impact the gender campaigns within the community.

For instance, one participant said that *"we are still not able to achieve equality"* [**Participant 2**] expressing concerns on how prevalent discriminatory speech and language use in social media are. Gender-based humors became a channel to explicitly express stereotypes because people perceived it as "normal." Notably, gender-based humors are form of statements that aim to entertain people, but some used it to spread discriminatory statements. This study presents **Table 3** with some of the gender-based humors that are collected from social media feeds.

Table 3. Gender-based humor in social media memes.

Posts		Expression
So you're a female doctor?		Females are not fit of being a doctor.
Women's world cup??? Ain't nobody got time for that.		Women should not participate in sports.

Table 3. (*Continued*).

Posts		Expression
They say a women's work is never done. Maybe that's why they get paid less…		Women are not commitment to their words and deserve to receive low wages.
Gender is a social construct. I was born a transgender.		Gender orientation is a choice.

Assessing the effects of gender-based humors was broad process. However, the narratives from the participants shed light on different angles to be investigated e.g., career development, personal and self-perception, and social characterization. These aspects appeared to be prominent effects that might delimit people to support gender mainstreaming within communities.

Although gender mainstreaming has been in the system of policy development across the world, there was limited assessment done on how it can be implemented in social media. One main barrier of gender mainstreaming is patriarchy. As Cameron[44] argued, "patriarchal social relations remain deeply embedded in almost all societies" and explained language can be "an instrument of male power over women, used to silence, misrepresent, belittle, and harass." In case of media, it appears that informative, entertainment, and promotional content is becoming more sexualized, making it harder to achieve gender equity on a daily basis[45]. In a small-scale study of Anggraheni et al.[46], 22% of women experienced hate speech in social media.

At a conversational level, individuals employ gender cues as a determining factor in shaping their behavioral responses towards others during social interactions[47]. Humorous communication is crucial in the establishment of normativity and normality[48]. Naturally, humor changes norms by breaking them and promoting new perspectives[49]. Bergmann[50] posited that tendentious jokes are dangerous because they perpetuate and amplify existing stereotypes "for fun" without allowing them to be seriously rethought. It is important to acknowledge the power imbalances and structural inequities prevalent in the society when considering the impact of ethnic jokes[51,52]. These jokes are not only harmful but also have the potential to create divisions within social dynamics. Specifically, individuals who do not find such jokes entertaining may be perceived as outsiders, further exacerbating the existing social disparities[51]. This explains why gender-based humor in current days become barrier for gender mainstreaming because *"…they will give them attribution to something"* [**Participant 1**] and *"it can affect how people perceive themselves"* [**Participant 4**].

Psychological research in sexist humor, which encompasses humor that perpetuates stereotypes and demeans individuals based on their sex or gender, substantiates the viewpoints of those who associate humors with adverse social consequences[53,54]. Sexist humors yield consequences on individuals' perceptions of others, specifically with regards to their gender, as well as their likelihood to engage in discriminatory behaviors[51,54]. Therefore, it can be inferred that the impact of sexist humor can significantly influence the self-perception of the targeted demographic within the specific social context in which the humor is generated[51].

In this study, intensity of gender-based humor in social media might hamper the gender mainstreaming. For instance, it has been determined that normalization of gender-based humors often results to reproduction of this behavior. As one participant said, *"…humor become trending because people can relate to it"*

[**Participant 5**]. It turns out, gender-based humors were simple form of statements that become relatable to others. Oftentimes, this mechanism engaged people to develop humor-encompassing behaviors. This note aligns with previous research[51–53] that has demonstrated the adverse consequences of employing disparaging humor, which contributes to the development and normalization of inequitable social dynamics.

The challenge of addressing problematic and stereotyping humor, whether it is propagated through institutionally like songbooks, in social spaces such as student-run bars, or in everyday interactions like classrooms, poses significant barrier for equity initiatives[51]. In social media, stereotyping humor is severely normalized because of in-group shared culture. For instance, group contexts have the potential to cultivate a psychological phenomenon known as a "us versus them" mentality, thereby promoting a sense of bonding among individuals within the group[55,56]; men form bonds with other members of their group by participating in sexual misconduct against woman (or several women) if group norms accept it[21,56,57].

There were several examples on how people use gender-based humors to characterize someone. One humor explains *"...when we see males joining with girls, we always perceive them as gay"* [**Participant 7**], certainly, *"when you react on these jokes, people will keep on doing it"* [**Participant 8**]. This social complexity further highlighted the challenge on how to manage gender-based humors in social media. Gender-based humors oftentimes gather people with common norms. It became challenging because people share norms which enabled them to be explicitly discriminatory.

Gender-based humor in online spaces can have significant effects on gender mainstreaming campaigns and perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes. The normalization of gender-based humor can contribute to the reproduction of discriminatory behaviors and hinder efforts towards achieving gender equity. The challenge lies in addressing problematic and stereotyping humor, as it is often normalized in social media and shared within in-group cultures, reinforcing discriminatory norms. Managing gender-based humor in social media poses a complex challenge in promoting gender mainstreaming and addressing inequitable social dynamics.

Objective 2. Determine what aspects of gender-based humors made gender mainstreaming challenging to achieve.

This study had important narratives on how gender-based humors made it challenging to achieve gender mainstreaming in social media. It was indicated that gender-based humors, in essence, have specific thematic mechanism that enable people to distribute and expand people's norm. This is an important discourse because it showed how challenging it can be to extend gender mainstreaming in social media because of its saturated gender stereotyping potentials.

One participant said that *"...discrimination in social media may be not tangible enough to be understood by us"* [**Participant 10**]. Although this does not mean that gender discrimination should be normalized, it points out how challenging gender mainstreaming to be achieved. Notably, Participant 10 was concerned about the complexity of gender-based humor culture in social media that delimits the mainstreaming campaign.

Humor culture in social media has detrimental effects on mainstreaming efforts. Aside from its capacity to recreate humors that present discriminatory behaviors, humor culture cause people to tolerate humors and accept them as part of normal conversations. This has major implications on how to deliver mainstreaming campaigns because when people accept something as norm, even with policies, people would deliberately break these policies.

Gender-based humors made it challenging for gender mainstreaming to be adopted in social media. For instance, one comment in **Table 4** said that "it is very difficult to be discriminated… because what they say is

true" indicated discrimination cultivates acceptance of gender normativity. Social media has the potential to magnify stereotypical portrayals of individuals living in poverty, consequently diminishing their prospects in terms of economic and educational advancement. The practice of categorizing individuals into distinct groups, namely the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' involves evaluating their proficiency in the domain of online impression management. Similarly, gender-based humors also magnify normative expressions e.g., gays are weak, women are dependent to men, because people in social media used generalized expressions to share group stereotypes. Word use, like "facts," reinforce the information about gender, while the use of strategic generalization stresses a humor generally applies to people in certain group[64]. This is challenging for gender mainstreaming to be achieved because language use is a powerful tool in reiterating gender stereotypes.

Table 4. Gender-based humor in social media posts & comments.

Posts		Expression
Lgbt+culture is having your group of friends slowly get gayer and gayer each year until you forger straight people exist.	lgbt+ culture is having your group of friends slowly get gayer and gayer each year until you forget straight people exist @gayassmemepage	Gender preference is influenced by others
My straight friends love my jokes though	My straight friends love my gay jokes tho	Group of friends love gay jokes.
None of my straight friends are this straight [comparing with online video's humor]. They love my bad gay jokes.	None of my straight friends are this straight. They love my bad gay jokes.	People post "dark" humors in social media.
It is very difficult to be discriminated about gender, you are not able to fight for yourself because what they say is true. [Translated from Filipino]	Sobrang hirap madescrimanate about sa gender parang di ka nalang makapalag dahil tama ang sinasabi nila Translate to English	What people say about your gender is true.

Online spaces are known to be an effective grounds of gender stereotypes. Media content is highly suitable for facilitating social learning processes due to its characteristic inclusion of simplistic and frequently one-dimensional models of rules and behaviors that are frequently seen[58,59]. This has been shown in televisions and media contents whereby exposure to television content elicits the activation of associated schemas. In cultivation theory, this process of activation leads to the reinforcement and increased accessibility of specific schemas or cognitive frameworks, thus impacting an individual's perception and interpretation of the world[59]. This explains why *"[gender-based humors] will cultivate a culture that is tolerant like it's okay"* [**Participant 13**].

In this study, several mechanisms of gender-based humors emerged as channel for discrimination and stereotyping. For instance, one participant said that *"…if they see these humors as normal… it has discriminatory undertone"* [**Participant 11**]. This indicates that while gender-based humors remain normalized, it cultivates behaviors that reinforce gender stereotypes. This note was aligning with previous studies in gender stereotyping and discrimination in social media. As Lomotey[60] concluded, humors "…camouflaged and discreetly perpetuated negative stereotypes and ideologies about gender (among others) and were therefore morally objectionable". Philosophically, people do not only hear jokes but also reiterate them[61]. Memes emerge during instances of challenging prevailing narratives. Through their participatory nature of recreation and mutations, memes facilitate the resolution of ideological conflicts and the reestablishment of a normative narrative[62–64].

The language used in gender-based humors has implications to gender mainstreaming. Sexist jokes reinforce the existing patriarchal structure within societies, thereby perpetuating the unequal power dynamics favoring men over women[65,66]. Language become a tool to infer gender stereotypes and mobilize power dynamics. The role of language in the context of humor lies in its responsibility for accurate articulation of the joke and the subsequent delivery of the punch line[67]. Women are commonly portrayed in material reality as "the second sex"[68], and that language is meant to maintain gender distinctions[66]. This demonstrates why *"...there are explicitly offensive [humors] becoming implicitly offensive because you don't know the context— someone is insulting you"* [**Participant 11**]. Humors in social media change because of dynamic language use which cultivates gender normativity. Message patterns and discourse markers were significant mechanisms of language use in humors because it presents discriminatory undertone.

The cultivation theory explains how exposure to gender-based humors reinforces specific cognitive frameworks and impacts individuals' perception and interpretation of the world, thus contributing to the acceptance of gender-based humor as the norm. Normalization cultivates behaviors that reinforce gender stereotypes and discrimination. Language plays a crucial role in gender-based humor, as sexist jokes and language perpetuate unequal power dynamics favoring men and maintain gender distinctions. The use of strategic generalization and discourse markers in humor language reinforces gender norms and presents discriminatory undertones. Gender-based humor in social media hinders the achievement of gender mainstreaming by perpetuating stereotypes, normalizing discrimination, and mobilizing power dynamics through strategic language use.

7. Conclusion

The study highlights several aspects that contribute to these challenges. Firstly, gender-based humor has a thematic mechanism that allows for the distribution and expansion of gender norms, making it difficult to extend gender mainstreaming efforts. The complexity of gender-based humor culture in social media limits the effectiveness of mainstreaming campaigns. Gender-based humor hampers gender mainstreaming by perpetuating stereotypes, normalizing discrimination, and mobilizing power dynamics through language use. The study emphasizes the need to address these aspects in order to promote gender equality and create an environment that is more inclusive and supportive of gender mainstreaming initiatives.

The use of humor reinforces the reproduction of discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes, which can hinder efforts towards achieving gender mainstreaming efforts. Managing and addressing stereotyping humor in social media poses a complex challenge in addressing inequitable social dynamics. In-group cultures further reinforce discriminatory norms, making it difficult to address and manage gender-based humor effectively. However, although this study indicated how language use can influence reiteration of gender stereotypes and discriminatory messages through humors, there is a need to determine how do language teaching neutralizes the mechanisms of social norms and its cultivation in social media.

Author contributions

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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