



Laugh Labs and Their Treatment: Analysis of the Satirical Language of Leading Infotainment Programs of Pakistani News Channels

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Abstract

This study attempts to explore different kinds of jokes that are cracked in the leading infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels. Benign Violation Theory provides conceptual roots for the study which describes jokes as a benign violation of something. The systematic sampling technique is used to draw a sample from the infotainment programs that include Khabarnaak, Khabardar, Hasb-e-Haal, Syasi Theater, Sawa Teen, and Mazaaq Raat. Content Analysis is the method by which the data is coded into categories formulated by both deductive and inductive approaches. The results show that the frequency of using dark humor in the satirical language differs within and between the groups. Moreover, Khabarnaak cracked more jokes that were dark. On the other hand, Mazaaq Raat cracked the least dark jokes in its programs as compared to the other four leading infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels. The study also helps to find the reasons behind sending advice notices to all the broadcast stations of Pakistan by PEMRA to put a check on the content of these programs.

Keywords: *Infotainment, Satire, Comedy, Benign Violation, Content Analysis, Dark Humor.*

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Introduction

Mass media has evidentially become a concentrate and large genesis that have the vital importance of reaching millions of people at one time and its impact have captivated the scholars throughout the twentieth century. The main roles of mass media are to inform, educate and to entertain (Coronel, 2003). What if the role of information and entertainment combines? Here, the term 'infotainment' comes into the picture (Krefting, 2019). Humor is the dominant figure of these programs which is a genre and also an element of entertainment simultaneously (Oring, 2013). There are different genres of humor that are occupied by the infotainment programs. "The volume of political humor has increased fourfold since 1990" (Taylor, 2000).

The converging point of humor and satire is to elicit laughter (LeBoeuf, 2007). The leading news channels of Pakistan are on airing the programs based on infotainment purpose but the goal is not to inform the public as accurately or thoroughly as possible, but to entertain them to grab their attention and interest (Khalid, 2014).

These shows also include the sections in which different comedians mimic the politicians which usually humiliating in nature. It is also a matter of fact that these programs have got good viewership but they have always been in debate related to ethical issues (Raza, 2014).

Naeem Bukhari, who is a lawyer by profession in Pakistan, has hosted the top-rated infotainment show "Khabarnaak" in 2014 but quitted the job within no time. Later, he appeared on a TV and said:

“I quit hosting the show because I thought it had struck. Bhaands (comedians) are part of Punjabi culture but only at wedding ceremonies. You can’t have them every day. I think these programs will be shut down soon as like the “Punjabi Ghandasa Culture” in cinema got vanished. Hum Sab Umeed Se Hain was a successful show but after seven years, it went away. The (present) comedians don’t know what to say and what not to say. There will come a time when they will cross the nose and disappear. (ARY News, 2016, 01:25–02:27).”

Though the infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels are bilingual in nature, they are using satirical devices mostly in the Punjabi language to humiliate one another (Khan & Ali, 2016). These programs have been using the Punjabi language exclusively for humor which is in itself an illustration of prejudice to the speakers and the language itself as well as the non-Punjabi speakers, who have begun to link the language which presumably fitted only to crack jokes for fun, assuming that the speakers of Punjabi language are mostly engaged in similar activities. The chairperson of Punjabi department of University of the Punjab, Prof. Dr. Nabila Rehman has adequate reservations over it;

“These programs are distorting the essence of Punjabi language. The way infotainment programs use the Punjabi language is a very shameful act. Punjabi is used to be remembered as the language of Baba Bulle Shah and Waris Shah (the Sufi poets). I mean there is a decency in it. Even if the old Punjabi speaking veterans need to use abusive language, they always say (جا تیرا بیڑہ ترے) which means “go away, may God bless you!” Like all the other languages, Punjabi also discourages the use of

derogatory remarks to humiliate others". (Personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Humor has always been under strict scrutiny by the researchers in the light of moral obligations and responsibilities. And it is also observed that the trend in recent years has shifted to give information in a satirical form. Over a while, these programs are in the Punjabi language, though aired on national channels in Pakistan. Different types of satirical techniques have been employed by the programs. Especially the slapstick humor in the Punjabi language is very popular in Punjabi theater and used as the main medium in giving information and entertaining the audience. The recent development has also observed that the comedy actors from the theaters have taken the front seats in the infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels. Without proper training and lack of understanding of the nitty-gritty of the demand and need of the target audience in accord to the shift from theater to national televisions, the ethical dilemma raised another concern over these programs.

This study will help to analyze the text of the content of the selected programs by exploring what kind of different dimensions of humor is prevailing in the following programs.

Objectives of the Study

Recently PEMRA has issued an advice notice to all broadcast channels of Pakistan to put a check on the content of infotainment programs. Also, humor with satire is studied to check its ethical side most of the time. So, the primary objective of the study is to:

- measure the different types of jokes that are cracked in the infotainment programs of Pakistan.
- explore the frequency variation among the different infotainment programs.

Literature Review

A joke is a way to release tension. But if the saying goes wrong, they can easily backtrack and can hide behind the “I was just joking” cliché (Meyer, 2000, p. 312). But, “To claim that one is only joking does not free the joker from moral responsibilities” (Hietalahti, 2009).

Incongruity theory suggested that human beings happened to laugh at various situations in which different norms were violated that we expected or at least accustomed to. As it is said that the situation remains unfunny until or unless the component of surprise is flavored. It is the object-based theory that explains why people laugh at different jokes (Morreall, 1983). Another theory that also takes the object as the subject is the relevance theory of humor that was purposed in the late 80s. In the following principles that the humorous communication process doesn't involve the encoding, the transfer, and the decoding of the messages, but so many other elements as well that include context and inferences as well.

Humor appeals largely to linguistic assets like wordplay, pun, and metaphors, etc. But when it comes to the broader sense, humor is not getting itself confined to the use of linguistic devices only which is one of the greatest and seditious forces in our daily life. There are so many forms of humor in different cultures. The favorite targets of the ridicule, satire, and humor are the common

follies and weaknesses of human beings like the all-too-powerful, self-righteous, sanctimonious or arrogant, etc. It is also a matter of fact that even the Holy is not spared often.

Chovanec and Ermida (2012) argued that media and humor are such tangled phenomena that without resorting to the other, it is very hard to resort to tackle the one. The domination of humor is all around the media from the comic stripe to cartoons, through humorous adverts to internet gags, funny remarks in opinion articles, and editorials to sitcoms and infotainment programs which do thrive in the manifestation of humor.

The infotainment programs have been under the eye of the researchers for a long time. A lot of work is done on its effects with regards to political awareness because the masses perceive the content of the infotainment shows as trust-worthy and credible as well (Ford, 1997).

Nazir and Bhatti (2016) also found through the survey that the viewers of the following programs accepted satire as a credible and legitimate source of political awareness and these are also useful to generate political interest among the masses. From the following type of programs, entertainment, and infotainment needs are gratified by the audience (Katz, 1973; Robinson & Levy, 1986; Sherry, 2004).

According to Eijaz (2012), the infotainment programs of Pakistan news channels (especially political talk shows) used derogatory remarks, unethical humor, and satire to yield the laughter among the audience.

Connor (2010) conducted a study through a content analysis of infotainment programs and figured out the styles and

trends used in those programs. He also found that the information and the entertainment provided in this kind of program was so poor in quality. Connor conducted his study on the American program named Fox News' Bill O'Reilly, in which he observed that the subject used negative-connotation which involves symbolic language, name-calling, eristic-language, and fear appeals to boost their ratings. And the fact became darker as to know that the strategy was worked. O'Reilly concluded that the language, style, and format used by the programs is much beyond the old-fashioned concept of ethics.

Another study was conducted by the method of content analysis and found that the infotainment programs of Pakistan (Hasb-e-Haal and Khabarnaak) were objectified the political personalities in a humiliating way which purposed a big question about ethical limitations of freedom of expression (Ahmad, 2014)

Intentional humor is often constructed on gender, race, or ethnicity that target to ridicule which can be in the shape of prejudice which leads to the stereotypical conclusions about an entire group. In Pakistani society, numerous examples can be found which targets Sikhs, Pathans, Memons, and against women. The humorous examples in the discourse led to the formulation of different stereotypical shapes of these groups, above all alongside women, chiefly in the capacity of their role of wives. Moreover, there are two categories of humor, non-tendentious and tendentious. The first type of humor is self-deprecating which refers to one's self and his group. Whereas, the other one is called the tendentious which refers to humiliating

different individuals or groups. The latter is also called disparaging humor (Khan & Ali, 2017).

The existing literature review helped the study to understand the phenomena and also in the formulation of the content categories.

Theoretical Framework

Benign Violation Theory

Relatively the contemporary 'Benign Violation theory' bodies on the work of Tom Veatch, assimilate almost all of the existing theories of humor and suggests that the humor occurs if and only when these three circumstances are qualified;

1. "The situation is a violation" or it can be said, "something threatens one's sense of how the world ought to be" (McGraw, 2010, p. 2).
2. "The situation is benign" or "the threatening situation seems benign" (McGraw, 2010, p. 2).
3. "Both perceptions occur simultaneously" or "a person sees both interpretations at the same time" (McGraw, 2010, p. 2).

Other than the first clause of the recently born theory, second and third are needed to break the boundary from content analysis to other methods. For example, in the following theory, it is said that to yield humor, the violation of the norms must also seem as benign which means that it should be acceptable and safe. But the question arises, how the theory caters the confusion if one person finds a norm laughable and others could not. The theory answers that it lies in the demographics and different cultural

values. Like sexist jokes might be found as funnier by males than the women do (Haidt, 2001).

Relevancy of the theory with content analysis

This study asserts that if the audience laughs at a joke, they would have been found that joke benign (even if it is threatening in nature), as the theory suggested. The unit of analysis includes only those sentences which include a laughing sound or a smiling face at the end of a sentence. The following study will explore the first notion of the theory which is related to any violation (dark humor).

The combination of all the explored literature, the observation from the content itself, and by the expert's opinion of the research's supervisor, guided the study to posit the following research questions.

RQ 1. What kind of dark humor is being used in the leading infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels?

RQ 2. Are all the leading infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels similar in using the dark humor?

Methodology

The research has adopted content analysis as its method to probe out the answers to the research questions. The study considers all infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels as the population. From Media Logic (2016) report, the top-ranked programs (i.e. Khabarnaak, Khabardar, Siyasi Theater, Mazaq Raat, Sawa Teen, and Hasb-e-Haal) were selected from 23 February 2017 to 20 April 2017. For a certain period before and after that, the Panama issue was the center of the discussion on almost all channels. During the time the sample is taken, the

media channels of Pakistan gave adequate coverage to a variety of issues. From which one hundred and sixty-five episodes were chosen. Systematic sampling was used to draw sample and thirty-six episodes were selected, six from each program. The first program, Khabarnaak, contained 29 programs in sample frame and the study chose six of them by the following method; the approximate interval was 4 ($29/6$) which meant that the interval after the first random number should be four. The random number was one (selected by the Excel's random number generating function) and the next number must come after the interval of 4 so the episode which came at fifth after one was to be selected next. With the same systematic sampling, six episodes were chosen from the program Khabarnaak. The same strategy was used to select other episodes of other programs.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for the present study was a sentence that has a laugh track at the end or in between the completion of the sentence. This meant that a sentence was counted as a unit of analysis only if a laughter sound was played while the sentence is uttered with or without a smiling face or a group of smiling faces. The study will name that sentence as a joke.

Conceptualization and Operationalization

The conceptualization and operationalization of the categories are as follows;

Dark Humor

All unit of analysis which included in the following categories were considered as dark humor in the study.

- **Personal Attacks:** Personal Attacks in humor refers to “the use of satire to put someone down, whether it’s about their looks, personality, attributes or lack, therefore” (LeBoeuf, 2007, p. 3). In the present study, personal attacks are taken up to the following conditions.
- **Face:** Any Joke that is customized by involving someone’s facial features like ears, chin, teeth, nose, cheeks, forehead. For example, (جا جا کے تے اپنی شکل ویکھ شیشے وچ تے) (ڈر) Go and see your face in the mirror and get frightened.
- **Birth:** Any joke that is constructed on the procedure, the consequences, or the situation after someone is born.
- **Age:** Any unit of analysis that attempts to get laughter by cracking a joke about the age of the other comedian/individual. For example, (تیری عمران دے تے درخت) (ٹنگ پیہ) even the trees of your age got vanished.
- **Hair:** The jokes, which are customized by pointing on the hairs of individuals. These jokes may consist of the color of the hairs, the length, and also the bald head.
- **Cloth:** Any joke that attempts to get laughter by cracking a joke on the clothes of individuals. The category consists of the jokes of cloth’s quality, origin, and appearance on the body.
- **Skin Color:** As the very name suggests, a skin color joke is customized by attempting to hit the sentence on the skin tone of the individuals (or community).
- **Negative Habits:** Any joke that highlights the negative habits of the individuals (e.g. smoking, doing backbiting, etc.).

- **Height:** It can also be regarded as 'short people' or 'long people' jokes. In this category, the Jokes that revolves around the height of individuals.
- **Location:** Jokes that are cracked on the living locations of the individuals, the famous places from where the individuals belong, or the nationality of the individuals.
- **Name Calling.** The use of offensive names just to win an argument or to induce denial or condemnation is called name-calling. In the present study, any joke that involves any kind of offensive name will be counted here.
- **Threats.** Any Joke that smells agitation or gives a shut-up call will be counted here in the Threats' category.
- **Poverty:** Any joke that senses poverty for individuals in terms of money, help, or food (*without metaphors) will be placed here.
- **Caste:** A joke that is customized by explaining the bad connotations of a particular caste will be included in the caste's category.
- **High Weight:** Any joke that reflects someone fat, hungry, and habit of eating more than the usual person is placed in the High Weight's category.
- **Low Weight:** The list of jokes that are tailored to prove someone under-weight, ugly, eating less than the usual persons, and looking tiny in shape are counted in this category.
- **Degrade:** All the jokes that are customized to let the individuals feel embarrassed, showing self-pity, proving

someone mad, illiterate, and absent mind will be counted here in the Degrade's Category.

- **Others:** All the jokes that customized on the overall appearance of the individuals and did not qualify any of the other personal attacks' categories will be placed here.

Metaphors & Similes

The present study has taken both concepts as one construct because in both concepts the subject is being compared to another thing and the present study names the construct as 'Metaphors & Similes'.

The following sub-categories will fall under the umbrella of metaphors and similes.

- **Animals:** Any joke which reflects any resemblance between human beings and animals will be counted here.
- **Opposite Gender:** A joke that is shaped by resembling individuals to the opposite gender is counted here.
- **Personalities:** A joke that is shaped by resembling the individuals with any other personality of the same gender.
- **Food Items:** A joke that is shaped by comparing the individuals with the food items.
- **Machinery:** Any joke that attempts to resemble an individual (or a group) with machinery items like troops, computer-related things and the road making instruments, etc.
- **Medical Item:** A joke that has any resemblance to the medical items, preferably that happened to sell on the medical stores.

- **Others:** A joke that is shaped by using any simile other than the above mentioned will be counted here.

Use Abusive Language

Jay (2009), defined abusive as “Abuses are the sentences that are intended to make the target feel like they don’t deserve (worthy of) respect or love. It can involve name-calling and putdowns” (p. 85)

The present study divides the construct into two sub-categories;

- **Low Intensity:** Any joke that includes abuse that has less intensity but still considers to be abuse in society. It revolves around cracking jokes on others by having no self-respect (i.e. Go away you shameless person - اے جا - بغیرنا), an adjective that is used to describe a negative tradition of the individual (i, e. چول - !you idiot) which is uttered in the response of a lame joke or cursed someone (i.e. Just Go the hell - گرک بھیڑا تیرا - ہووے, May you lose everything you have - روے نہ ککھ تو اڈا).
- **High Intensity:** Any abuse that putdowns individuals with the use of different adjectives. High Intensity includes the jokes that are cracked by uttering the abuses about being the child of a disabled woman, ghosts, or calling someone an animal directly without any metaphor or simile.

Mimicry: If a comedian imitates the other comedian's voice/language, the joke will be included in this category.

Attacks on Professions: Any joke that reflects the bad image of any profession is counted here.

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Make fun of Diseases: Any joke that reflects someone sick from a disease will be counted here.

Make fun of Education: A joke which reflects the humiliation of education either on an individual level or at the institutional level will be counted here.

Make fun of Deaths: It involves the subjects that linked to death or the funeral of a relative, friend, or unknown to individuals that are normally considered severe or soiling to discuss.

Make Fun of Relationships: A joke that is customized by showing a relationship with the siblings, the relatives including the wife's relatives will be posted in this category.

Inter-Coder Reliability

DePoy and Gitlin (2010) defined inter-coder reliability as "it involves the comparison of two observers measuring the same unit" (p. 203). The inter-coder reliability of the present study is checked to ensure if all the units of analysis filled in the targeted field which is suggested by the study. To make is sure that inter-coder reliability is observed, Holsti (1969) formula is borrowed to check the inter-coder reliability of the present study which crops an average mark of 0.89.

Data analysis and discussion

RQ.1. What kind of dark humor is being used in the infotainment programs of Pakistani News Channels?

There are nine different kinds of dark humor which are being used in infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels that include Personal Attacks, Personal Attacks with and without

metaphor and similes, Mimicry, Use of Abusive Language, Attacks on Professions, Attacks on Education, Jokes about Diseases and Relationships and Makes Fun of Death. The details about the subtypes of the following types of jokes are shown in the other tables shown below with the frequency of every infotainment program of the sample. If we analyze the overall score of dark humor regarding different infotainment programs, as shown in table 1, Khabarnaak has used dark humor the most with the quantity of 988 jokes whereas Hasb-e-Haal is at no. 2nd with 905 jokes.

**Table 1: The frequency of Dark Humor in the Infotainment Programs
Pakistan**

	Frequency	Percentage
Khabarnaak	988	22
Hasb-e-Haal	905	20
Syasi Theater	871	19
Khabardar	702	16
Sawa Teen	636	14
Mazaaq Raat	395	9
Total	4497	100

Table 2: The Frequency of Different Dimensions of Dark Humor in the Infotainment Programs

Dark Humor	Khabarnaak	Khabardar	Syasi Theater	Mazaaq Raat	Sawa Teen	Hasb-e-Haal
Personal Attacks	523	404	560	210	429	552
Metaphors & Similes	227	135	131	116	110	176
Mimicry	57	21	27	3	19	5
Use of Abusive Language	45	50	37	1	12	29
Attacks on Professions	67	43	62	38	42	106
Attacks on Education	2	1	1	4	0	3
Diseases' Jokes	18	6	8	4	0	8
Relationship Jokes	28	32	33	10	21	25
Make Fun of Deaths	11	10	12	9	3	1
Total	988	702	871	395	636	905

Syasi Theater scores 871 and Khabardar is at no. 4 with 702 jokes that contain dark humor in his bag. Sawa Teen is at no 5th with a score of 636 and Mazaaq Raat uses the least dark humor with a score of 395 as compared to the rest of the leading infotainment programs of Pakistan. And the details about the sub-categories are shown in the charts below.

With 57, Kahabrnak is at the top in “mimicry”, 50 of Khabardar is the most in Use of Abusive Language. In Attacks on Profession, Hash-e-Hal is at the top with 106 jokes. Mazaaq Raat with 4 in Attacks on Education, Khabarnaak with 18 in Diseases’ Jokes, Syasi Theater with 33 in Relationship Jokes, and 12 in Make Fun Of Deaths are at the top in their respective categories.

Table 3: The Details of Personal Attacks in Infotainment Programs of Pakistan

Personal Attacks	Khabarnaak	Khabardar	Syasi Theater	Mazaaq Raat	Sawa Teen	Hasb-e-Haal
Face	35	26	29	11	14	19
Birth	2	3	14	2	2	3
Age	10	7	2	7	7	10
Hairs	4	1	7	8	5	0
Clothes	11	1	8	10	4	8
Skin Color	5	5	4	4	0	12
Negative Habits	43	25	38	30	5	22
Height	2	0	5	0	38	15
Location	43	23	28	5	3	23
Name Calling	14	4	5	3	15	27
Threats	59	40	31	13	25	17
Poverty	25	37	60	21	57	49
Caste	16	13	16	2	9	16
High Weight	30	15	70	6	8	43
Low Weight	18	8	24	7	0	46
Degrade	110	100	136	62	137	143
Others	96	96	83	19	100	99
Total	523	400	560	210	429	552

The Personal Attacks on Face is the first category in which Khabarar cracked 35, Syasi Theater's 14 in Birth, Khabardar and Hasb-e-Haal's 10 each in Age, 8 of Mazaaq Raat in Hairs, Khabardar's 11 in Clothes, 12 in Skin Color of Hash-e-Hal, Khabardar's 43 each in Negative Habits and Locations, 38 of Sawa Teen in Heights, 27 of Hasb-e-Haal in Name-Calling, 59 of Threats by Kahabrnaak, 60 by Syasi Theater in Poverty, 16 each of Khabarnaak, Syasi Theater, and Hasb-e-Haal in Caste, 70 of Syasi Theater in High Weights 46 and 143 of Hasb-e-Haal in Low Weight and Degrade respectively, and 100 of Sawa Teen in Others category are at number one in using different dimensions of Dark Humor of Personal Attacks in their respective categories.

Table 4: Frequency of Dark Humor Using Metaphors and Similes in Infotainment Programs of Pakistan.

	Khabarnaak	Khabardar	Syasi Theater	Mazaaq Raat	Sawa Teen	Hasb-e-Haal
Animals	56	42	54	11	24	40
Opposite Gender	19	19	11	10	15	6
Other Personalities	73	51	34	67	42	104
Food Items	22	6	4	3	6	9
Glossary	1	0	5	3	2	2
Machinery	30	8	14	10	12	7
Diseases	3	5	1	3	0	0
Others	23	4	8	9	9	8
Total	227	135	131	116	110	176

Dark Humor using Metaphors and Similes are further categories in eight concepts. In using metaphors revolving around Animals, Food Items, Machine Items, and jokes that are falling other than the following categories jokes, Khabarnaak cracked the most jokes (56, 22, 30, 23 respectively). 19 each by Khabarnaak and Khabardar in Opposite Gender, 104 of Hasb-e-Haal, 104 of Hash-e-Hal in Other Personalities, 5 of Syasi Theater’s Glossary Items, 5 of Khabardar’s Diseases’ Jokes are the most in their respective categories.

Table 5: Frequency of Dark Humor By doing mimicry, using abusive language, attacking education, and other professions, and making fun of relationships, diseases, and deaths.

Programs	Mimicry	Abuses		Attack on Professions	Attacks on Education	Diseases / Jokes	Make Fun of Relationships	Make Fun of Deaths
		High Intensity	Low Intensity					
Khabarnaak	57	9	36	67	2	18	38	11
Khabardar	21	4	46	43	1	6	32	10
Syasi Theater	27	3	34	62	1	8	33	12
Mazaaq Raat	3	0	1	38	4	4	10	9
Sawa Teen	19	0	12	42	0	0	21	3
Hasb-e-Haal	5	0	29	106	3	8	25	1
Total	132	16	158	358	11	44	159	46

By imitating others (Mimicry), Khabarnaak cracked the most (57) jokes. The High Intensity of Abusive language is more used by Khabarnaak than other programs. However, 46 of Khabardar were the most jokes of Low-Intensity Use of Abusive Language.

Hasb-e-Haal cracked 106 jokes which qualified in Attacks on Professions. The protagonist (Azizi) of the program used to appear as becoming different personalities (like Policeman, Doctor, etc.), and the other comedians crack jokes on the appearance and practices of the professions.

Out of a total of 11, 4 jokes were cracked by Mazaaq Raat about Attacks on Education, and 18 were cracked by Khabarnaak which was the highest number by any Infotainment Program of the sample.

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With 38 (out of 159) jokes, Khabarnaak made the most fun of relationships. Syasi Theater's 12 jokes (out of 46) are the most in numbers which made fun of deaths.

RQ 2. Are all the leading infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels similar in using the dark humor?

The use of dark humor varies within the groups and in-between the groups as well. As the tables below are showing that the personal attacks are not only fluctuating its sub-categories in a single program but also as compared to the other programs. For example, Mazaaq Raat has only used dark humor for one time in terms of the use of abusive language but the other programs have used it more frequently. Similarly, two of the selected programs have been scored above nine hundred marks but Mazaaq Raat has just scored less than four hundred as well as Sawa Teen which scored less than seven hundred jokes about dark humor. The detailed scores are shown in cross-tabulations (Table 6, and 7) which make the picture clearer.

**Table 6: Dark Humor & Infotainment Programs - Frequency's Cross
Tabulation**

Dark Humor	KN		KD		ST1		MR		ST2		HH		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Face	35	26	26	19	29	22	11	8	14	10	19	14	134	100
Birth	2	8	3	12	14	54	2	8	2	8	3	12	26	100
Age	10	23	7	16	2	5	7	16	7	16	10	23	43	100
Hairs	4	16	1	4	7	28	8	32	5	20	0	0	25	100
Clothes	11	26	1	2	8	19	10	24	4	10	8	19	42	100
Color	5	17	5	17	4	13	4	13	0	0	12	40	30	100
Negative Habits	43	26	25	15	38	23	30	18	5	3	22	14	163	100
Height	2	3	0	0	5	8	0	0	38	63	15	25	60	100
Location	43	34	23	18	28	22	5	4	3	2	23	18	125	100
Personal Attacks														
Name Calling	14	21	4	6	5	7	3	4	15	22	27	40	68	100
Threats	59	32	40	22	31	17	13	7	25	14	17	9	185	100
Poverty	25	10	37	15	60	24	21	8	57	23	49	20	249	100
Caste	16	22	13	18	16	22	2	3	9	13	16	22	72	100
High Weight	30	17	15	9	70	41	6	4	8	5	43	25	172	100
Low Weight	18	18	8	8	24	23	7	7	0	0	46	45	103	100
Degrade	110	16	100	15	136	20	62	9	137	20	143	21	688	100
Others	96	20	96	20	83	17	19	4	100	20	99	20	493	100
Animals	56	25	42	19	54	24	11	5	24	11	40	18	227	100
Opposite Gender	19	24	19	24	11	14	10	13	15	19	6	8	80	100
Personality	73	20	51	14	34	9	67	18	42	11	104	28	371	100
Metaphors & Similes														
Food Items	22	44	6	12	4	8	3	6	6	12	9	18	50	100
Glossary	1	8	0	0	5	39	3	23	2	15	2	15	13	100
Machinery	30	37	8	10	14	17	10	12	12	15	7	9	81	100
Diseases	3	25	5	42	1	8	3	25	0	0	0	0	12	100
Others	23	38	4	7	8	13	9	15	9	15	8	13	61	100
Mimicry	57	43	21	16	27	21	3	2	19	14	5	4	132	100
Use of Abusive Language														
High Intensity	9	56	4	25	3	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	100
Low Intensity	36	23	46	29	34	22	1	1	12	8	29	18	158	100
Professions	67	19	43	12	62	17	38	11	42	12	106	30	358	100
Education	2	18	1	9	1	9	4	36	0	0	3	27	11	100
Diseases	18	41	6	14	8	18	4	9	0	0	8	18	44	100
Relationships	38	24	32	20	33	21	10	6	21	13	25	16	159	100
Death	11	24	10	22	12	26	9	20	3	7	1	2	46	100
Total	988	22	702	16	871	19	395	9	636	14	905	20	4497	100

*Note: KN (Khabarnaak), KD (Khabardar), ST (Syasi Theatre), MR (Mazaqa Raat), ST (Sawa Teen), HH (Hasb-e-Haal), F (Frequency), P=Percentage

Table 7: Dark Humor & Infotainment Programs- Cross Tabulation by Percentage

		Within Infotainment Programs						
		Khabarnaak	Khabardar	Syasi Theater	Mazaaq Raat	Sawa Teen	Hasb-e-Haal	Total
Personal Attacks	Face	3.5%	3.7%	3.3%	2.8%	2.2%	2.1%	3.0%
	Birth	0.2%	0.4%	1.6%	0.5%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%
	Age	1.0%	1.0%	0.2%	1.8%	1.1%	1.1%	1.0%
	Hairs	0.4%	0.1%	0.8%	2.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.6%
	Clothes	1.1%	0.1%	0.9%	2.5%	0.6%	0.9%	0.9%
	Color	0.5%	0.7%	0.5%	1.0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.7%
	Negative Habits	4.4%	3.6%	4.4%	7.6%	0.8%	2.4%	3.6%
	Height	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	6.0%	1.7%	1.3%
	Location	4.4%	3.3%	3.2%	1.3%	0.5%	2.5%	2.8%
	Name Fun	1.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%	2.4%	3.0%	1.5%
	Threats	6.0%	5.7%	3.6%	3.3%	3.9%	1.9%	4.1%
	Poverty	2.5%	5.3%	6.9%	5.3%	9.0%	5.4%	5.5%
	Caste	1.6%	1.9%	1.8%	0.5%	1.4%	1.8%	1.6%
	High Weight	3.0%	2.1%	8.0%	1.5%	1.3%	4.8%	3.8%
	Low Weight	1.8%	1.1%	2.8%	1.8%	0.0%	5.1%	2.3%
	Degrade Personal	11.1%	14.2%	15.6%	15.7%	21.5%	15.8%	15.3%
Attack - Others	9.7%	13.7%	9.5%	4.8%	15.7%	10.9%	11.0%	
Animals	5.7%	6.0%	6.2%	2.8%	3.8%	4.4%	5.0%	
Opposite Gender	1.9%	2.7%	1.3%	2.5%	2.4%	0.7%	1.8%	
Personalities	7.4%	7.3%	3.9%	17.0%	6.6%	11.5%	8.2%	
Metaphors and Similes	Food Items	2.2%	0.9%	0.5%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%
	Glossary	0.1%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
	Machinery	3.0%	1.1%	1.6%	2.5%	1.9%	0.8%	1.8%
Diseases	Diseases	0.3%	0.7%	0.1%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
	Metaphors - Others	2.3%	0.6%	0.9%	2.3%	1.4%	0.9%	1.4%
Mimicry	5.8%	3.0%	3.1%	0.8%	3.0%	0.6%	2.9%	
Abuses	High Intensity Abuses	0.9%	0.6%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
	Low Intensity Abuses	3.6%	6.6%	3.9%	0.3%	1.9%	3.2%	3.5%
Professions	6.8%	6.1%	7.1%	9.6%	6.6%	11.7%	8.0%	
Education	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.2%	
Diseases	1.8%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.0%	0.9%	1.0%	
Relationships	3.8%	4.6%	3.8%	2.5%	3.3%	2.8%	3.5%	
Death	1.1%	1.4%	1.4%	2.3%	0.5%	0.1%	1.0%	
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

Discussion

The study started from the introduction to the infotainment programs and explored that different types of humor are being used by the infotainment programs and that are self-deprecating, (for example self-pity, the poor economic condition of oneself, etc.), and disparagement (like attacks on skin color, caste, and humiliation using different metaphors and similes). During the use of any of the two types, the comedians happen to break the severity by using the abusive language many times as well to get laughter on their jokes. The professions were also maligned and the personalities, who were not even present there. There were many of the other dimensions that are explored from the infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels. The total number of 36 programs had studied and 4497 jokes were quantified.

Eijaz (2012) discussed that there was a demand for giving the protagonist of *Hasb-e-Haal*, Azizi, the civil award due to its quality (p 15). But the present study found that *Hasb-e-Haal* is not an exceptional case in the race of using dark humor. The following program has scored 905/4497 which is the second-highest among the selected programs. Whereas, *Mazaaq Raat* is used the least dark humor with the score of 395/4497. The top in the list is *Khabarnaak* with a score of 988/4497 which is 21.97 percent of the total number of jokes.

The study endorses the work of Khan & Ali (2016) in which they had have identified different dimensions. Though, they didn't study those dimensions under the construct of dark humor. The present study did the honor along with identifying some

more extents of it. Some other scholars had also studied the different dimensions (Parrot 2013; Burmeister, & Carels, 2014; Ford, 1997; Fouts & Vaughan, 2002). The present study has explored all those dimensions along with the newly emerged at one platform and gauged their link with the selected programs. Oosterheld (2009) considered the toughest device of humor is the self-mockery and the present study has also found it in every program.

It also explored that there is a difference in using dark humor in the leading infotainment programs. For example, different programs have been using jokes that are an attack on a profession that attempted to distort the image of that particular profession but their frequency between the groups has been varied from program to program. This distinction can be observed in near to all kinds of jokes that have discussed in the study but can be seen visibly in the use of metaphors and similes and use of abusive language.

The relevancy of the study with benign violation theory unveils that as mentioned in the theory the personal dignity is hit in humor language which can be seen in the personal attacks' concepts of the study. Violations of social norms (as described in theory) in the form of negative habits, use of abusive language as a form of risqué jokes can also be visibly seen.

Conclusion

"You cannot not communicate", because it (language) is an integral part of human lives. Man is not born with the language inherently but learns from the surroundings. As the Chomskian

Model (n.d.) says, "A man is born with a faculty to acquire language to which he is exposed to" (p. 9).

Mass media has also become an integral part of human being's lives as well in the contemporary world. Different genres have been introduced over time including infotainment. The language of humor has always been under the discussion in terms of their ethical side. Similarly, the eyebrows have been raised on infotainment programs' language. It is also a matter of fact that the media performs an ideological manipulation in a subtle manner which does not let people realize that the track they are using to perceive reality is already been transformed. For this purpose, humor is the most useful tool to do the transformation more efficiently than any other means.

The study attempted to shed some light on what kind of satirical language used in humor which has been violated social and moral norms while cracking the jokes in the infotainment programs of Pakistani news channels. It has also been evident that the programs that had considered to be the ideal ones for the others have also been polluted with the same atmosphere (like *Hasb-e-Haal*). Different types of self-deprecating and disparagement jokes are cracked in the sample programs which would have been under securitize by the concerned authorities. Because this kind of language could also be giving the oil to the burning flame of inequality by further ostracizing the suppressed. Moreover, the way metaphors and similes are being used of other personalities and historical places along with the use of abusive language is also considered to be demeaning which also asks to formulate the comprehensive media policy which should be

based on the stringent adherence to deontological ethics which will discourage the tendentious or deprecating humor from prevailing.

The dark humor used by the infotainment programs is not considered to be a normal thing which is a violation of one's sense of how the world ought to be which is the endorsement of the first clause of Benign Violation Theory. Moreover, most of the jokes cracked in the Punjabi language. The study also acknowledges the reservations made by Dr. Nabila about the misrepresentation of the language which was a sign of dignity before, reflected in the poetry of the famous poets of the Punjabi language. If the comments were made on any international platform like the jokes on the skin color in the programs, it would have been caused raising eyebrows of many. Make fun of skin color is a serious anomaly in the world but the comedians of these programs make fun without any hesitation to get laughter.

Most of the comedians come from the Punjabi theater which is dominated by the slapstick stick comedy and is bordered with the jokes that are based on vulgarity, and the rowdy spectators are used to hoot on the lustful jokes. Now they have taken the driving seats in the infotainment programs. These programs have been very popular in Pakistani since the introduction of Hasb-e-Haal in 2008. Before that, there was a program 'Hum Sab Umeed Se Hain' which was not used in such kind of language expect the objectification and ill full activities of government and oppositions in satirical language. To address the ethical dilemma about the matter, PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) must open eyes to put an ethical

check on the use of the type of language which is identified by the current study. For that purpose, the study suggests training the comedian who comes from the traditional Punjabi culture and they are needed to be asked to follow a certain code of conduct which should not allow them to humiliate and distort the image of the following language as well as the individuals about whom they are cracking jokes to elicit laughter.

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Appendix:

Details of Selected Sample for Content Analysis

Date	Khabarnaak	Khabardar	Syasi Theater	Mazaq Raat	Sawa Teen	Hasb-e-Haal
23 Feb 2017	✓	✓				✓
24 Feb 2017	✓	✓			✗	✓
25 Feb 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
26 Feb 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
27 Feb 2017			✓	✓		
28 Feb 2017			✓	✓		
01 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
02 Mar 2017	✓	✓				✓
03 Mar 2017	✓	✓				✓
04 Mar 2017	✓	✗			✓	✓
05 Mar 2017		✓				✓
06 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
07 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
08 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
09 Mar 2017	✓	✓				✓
10 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
11 Mar 2017		✓			✓	✓
12 Mar 2017		✓			✓	✓
13 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
14 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
15 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
16 Mar 2017	✓	✓				✓
17 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
18 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
19 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
20 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
21 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
22 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
23 Mar 2017	✓	✓				✓
24 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
25 Mar 2017		✗			✓	✓
26 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✗	✓
27 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
28 Mar, 2017			✓	✓		
29 Mar 2017			✓	✓		
30 Mar 2017	✓	✓				✓
31 Mar 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
01 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
02 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
03 April 2017			✓	✓		
04 April 2017			✓	✓		
05 April 2017			✓	✓		
06 April 2017	✓	✗				✓
07 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
08 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
09 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
10 April 2017			✓	✓		
11 April 2017			✓	✓		
12 April 2017			✓	✓		
13 April 2017	✓	✓				✓
14 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
15 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
16 April 2017	✓	✓			✓	✓
17 April 2017			✓	✓		
18 April 2017			✓	✓		
19 April 2017						✓
20 April 2017	✓	✓				✓

*Note. The red highlighted programs are supposed to be selected but they were either the repeat telecast, missing or on-aired on the special occasions like (Canada special) etc. The yellow highlighted programs are selected as the sample for the content analysis of the research.



PAKISTAN ELECTRONIC MEDIA
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No.13 (89)/OPS/2015/1361

June 12, 2019

All Satellite Television Channels

Subject: ADVICE ON AIRING SATIRICAL CONTENT

PEMRA while monitoring transmission of various satellite TV channels has observed an increasing trend of demeaning individuals representing various political parties and law enforcement agencies through caricatures, animated characters, photo-shopped images and funny memes. Moreover, PEMRA is also receiving numerous complaints on such content through PCP and Complaints Call Center. Public sentiments are agonized by the trend of demeaning leadership of the country. TV viewers are expressing loath and disapproval on comic and satirical depiction of political leadership as well as law enforcers. Public is of the view that channels in News and Current Affairs genre are promoting such ironic trend which is denigrating leadership of the country and tarnishing their impression nationally and internationally. So much so in such depiction, repute of female politicians is severely being spoiled.

2. PEMRA has time and again advised media houses to adopt self regulatory mechanism and empower their editorial board by sensitizing them about prevalent laws, journalistic ethics and social sensitivities/ norms. Besides, Authority has also organized training sessions to educate media personnel, however, it appears that creativity is hacked by rat race and every channel is trying to copy content, ignoring its negative impact on the viewers as well the individuals, targeted.
3. Moreover, airing of such content is in violation of Section 20 (f) of PEMRA Ordinance 2002 as amended by PEMRA amendment Act, 2007, Rules 15(1) of PEMRA Rules 2009 and clauses 3(1) (e, f, l), 4(7)(c), 4(10), 5, 12, 13 & 17 of Electronic Media (Programmes & Advertisement) Code of Conduct 2015.
4. All Satellite TV Channels are therefore advised to refrain from airing any content which is demeaning, creates hatred against any individual or mocks any personality associated with any political party or law enforcement agency. Channel management must be careful in selection of words and gestures while creating content or memes. Furthermore, an effective In-House Editorial Committee must also be constituted in order to ensure compliance of PEMRA laws which could sift unwarranted content.
5. This issues with approval of the competent Authority.


(Muhammad Tahir)
General Manager
(Operations-Broadcast Media)

Copy for information:

- General Manager to Chairman, PEMRA.
- Assistant General Manager to Executive Member, PEMRA.

