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LANGUAGE, LAUGHTER, AND IDENTITY: ANALYZING THE INTERSECTION OF LINGUISTIC CHOICES AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN STAND-UP COMEDY

Nimra Hameed (Corresponding Author)
M.Phil. Scholar, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
Email: nimrah382@gmail.com
Amna Murad
Lecturer at University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
Email: amna.murad@umt.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This paper is a critique of cultural diversity and linguistic choices within the comedy of Abbas Bukhari and Akbar Choudhry by applying the lens of The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). This paper aims to analyze language, comedy and identity within the context of stand-up comedies. It emphasizes how these acts imprint or influences cultural settings in Pakistani society. Centered on the framework of GTVH, the paper focuses on comedy as a discursive practice. This paper incorporates a sample of 5 to 6 YouTube videos of stand-up comedy by Bukhari and Choudhry. Further, this paper does textual analyses of the content of Pakistani comedians from their performances to present cultural values in them. Moreover, this study contributes to current knowledge regarding the elements of theory such as language, logical mechanism, situation, target audience and narrative strategy. Eventually, this paper enhances the understanding of how comedians build their personalities and relate to their audiences by focusing on the use of language, dialects, slang and code-switching. This study is significant as it looks at how humor works as a signifying system for cultural critique and identity management especially in the context of Pakistan.

Keywords: Language, Stand-up Comedies, Culture, Identity, Logical mechanism, Narrative Strategy

Introduction

This paper is based on the investigation of humor found in comedy acts of stand up, performed by different Pakistani comedians with the help of humor theory i.e. The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) given in the book *The Linguistics of Humor* (2020) by Salvatore Attardo. This study aims to distinguish elements of language, logical mechanism, situation, target audience, narrative strategy and culture from the acts performed by two comedians, Abbas Bukhari and Akbar Choudhry. Language expresses and embodies cultural reality, which means that comics can become a particular agent through words and actions as a form of self-expression. Because a comedian expresses aspects of his culture through language, a man might be considered an articulator for a certain culture. Any kind of experience—social, political, educational, or cultural—can be addressed by these components.

The concept of humor has a solid foundation in ancient history, linguistics, psychology and even sociology. As a result, it is a very complex multi-disciplinary field of study. Philosophically speaking, humor has been examined as far back as the ancients and detailed work on it can be found as early as Plato and Aristotle. For instance, Plato considered laughter as

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a form of superiority, as it intended to ridicule others' shortcomings. On the other hand, Aristotle compiled laughter with humorous acts stemming from an emotional experience of a purging nature. Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer were among the many Enlightenment thinkers who proposed the incongruity theory, which is still regarded as a fundamental concept in humor theory up to this day. Ismail Filani, a Nigerian linguist and pragmatics scholar (2025) writes in his article that "through autobiographical storytelling and culturally marked humor, comedians foreground aspects of race, class, gender, and nationality, transforming comedy into a form of identity discourse" (Filani, 2025). Similarly, Elvin M. Salimli and Bilal Riaz (2025) put this scenario as, "Multilingual stand-up comedy frequently relies on code-switching as a strategic resource to index cultural belonging and in-group solidarity" (Salimli and Riaz, 2025). According to this theory, humor emerges from the disjuncture between what is expected and what is.

Abbas Bukhari and Akbar Chaudhry are two influential but stylistically different representatives of modern Pakistani stand-up comedy, which makes them especially useful in the analysis of the linguistic choice and cultural representation. The two comedians address the same life aspects in society; however, they vary in their humor techniques, diction repertoires, and the ways they appeal to the audience, which is effective in providing a comparative context in this research. The humor used by Bukhari is very much a form of social criticism which employs humor in order to reveal the contradictions which are considered as normal in Pakistani society. His language use illustrates the use of humor as a form of resistance albeit in subtle measure and still making it palatable and relatable. However, Akbar Chaudhry adopts a more narrative and more experiential form of comedy, often characterizing his themes in advance by foreshadowing by the issues of personal conflict, social exclusion, and negotiation of identity. His humour is frequently self-reflexive and emotionally textual with pause and silence and restrained language being used to create a laugh. The rationale behind choosing Abbas Bukhari and Akbar Chaudhry is that they are contrasting and complementing in their performances. Collectively, they demonstrate how the language use, plot formation and delivery style can be used to define cultural representation and construction of identity in Pakistani comedy.

Research Question

1. In what ways do linguistic choices and cultural references in Pakistani stand-up comedy generate humor and construct cultural identities?

Literature Review

Standup comedy is not only a highly active form, but it also performs on language agency, and language is by itself, performative and transformative of cultures. That is why, this literature review not merely focuses on how many comedians scope aspects of cultural diversity into their shows, and how identity aspects like race, gender and sexuality influence people's humorous point of view, but also investigates the specificities of the uses of language that comedians undertake when cascading humor. As, Mintz (1985) noted that social and political themes can cause the audience to think and "make them focus on requirements of the society and even engage them on issues of equity" (Mintz, 1985). It is widely claimed that the joke contains elements of social commentary where the comedian can comment on power relations, can call for change in some or other fashion, in a manner that "is easily digestible to the audience" (Double, 2014). Finally, comedy performances can provoke the audience's laugh making all the

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spectators become co-conspirators in the joke thus "inducing social unity among people" (Smith, 2009).

The beds of stand-up comedians are built on their ability to construct and perform their subjectivities as individuals' experiences, cultures, and statuses in society. Even though this kind of self-representation helps the comedian work a way around the constraints they can use it to take the audience to another level of experiencing the issues that "revolve around race, gender, sexuality and social class" (Gilbert, 2004). Thus, by using the method of comedians, prejudices and other cultural images can be influenced in that they can teach viewers new thoughts and "ways of thinking that create more empathy" (Lockyer & Pickering, 2005). The aspect of performativity, therefore, allows comedians to navigate their identities through stand-up performances by using humor to react to "oppressive structures or as a way of combating them" (Brodie, 2008).

Besides, Jonathan Ginzburg (2020) asserts in his study, recent linguistic research emphasizes that "laughter in stand-up comedy is not merely a response to humor but a communicative resource that carries pragmatic and social meaning" (Ginzburg, 2020). Tying everything to stand-up comedy as a lens through which one can look at the changes that occur in the culture and the norms that exist at the cultural level. Precisely, through the use of multiple personas and variations in accents, the comedian was effectively able to connect with the diverse ethnicity of the people present in his programs, joking about the different aspects of cultural peculiarities.

According to Kuiper (2012), humor can have a good impact from a psychological standpoint. Gratitude and hope are two of the many beneficial traits associated with humor. This perspective highlights the importance of affiliated humor in building resilience, based on a nuanced understanding of humor that takes into account both its good and negative aspects. "The ability to adjust and recover quickly from setbacks is known as resilience" (Kuiper, 2004). Kuiper (2012) argues that "humor helps people bounce back from adversity because it allows them to see the funny side of things or helps them appreciate the good things in life" (Kuiper, 2012). As pointed out by Tapley (2006) "humor allows us to step back and look at ourselves and our problems with fresh eyes". Similarly, according to Cameron (2015), it is worthwhile to take the risk associated with humor, despite its practical and ethical limitations. Humor can be ethical and have ethical repercussions, according to his view of the incongruity hypothesis. He acknowledges that powerful people can use comedy as a tool to oppress and marginalize others, but he maintains that "there is sufficient evidence to suggest that humor can also be utilized for the benefit of all" (Cameron, 2015). Also, Tapley (2006) so eloquently puts it, "there are people whose struggling and strife is made that much easier by a sense of humor". A person's character and spirit may be all they have when they endure poverty and injustice. Humor, according to Morrell (1999), "is crucial for religious institutions" (Morrell, 1999). Having a good sense of humor is a virtue in and of itself, and it also helps other virtues flourish. In addition to more conventional moral principles like modesty and forgiveness, humor, according to Morrell (1999), encourages intellectual qualities like critical and nuanced thinking as well as an openness to the unknown. Humor creates an imaginative space for different interpretations and meaning-making by removing preconceived notions.

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Furthermore, the experience and perspective that is supplied by humor make us more tolerant of our inadequacies as well as those of others. This is because we are getting closer to comprehending that the reality that we are witnessing is complex, and the truth is also complex. McFadden (2004) says, "Older adults experience a kind of double jeopardy of despair" who deconstructs the function of comedy in the aging process. She argues that humor helps us find purpose and hope in our life experiences, "which in turn reminds us that we can overcome sorrow" (McFadden, 2004). According to her, "the connection between faith and humor is ultimately about faith, not about humor" (McFadden 2004). When it comes to stand-up comedy, humor tends to become a form of cultural criticism, revealing subtle power relations, social conflicts, and cultural obstacles. Humor is "...one of the most complex cultural accomplishments..." (Tavory 2014), making it difficult to assess. To comprehend humor as a cultural and social act, Tavory (2014) provides a useful overview of the theory of humor. To make matters worse, the tension in question should not be relieved; this is a crucial component of comedy. According to Tavory (2014), "when people come together to make jokes, they are essentially sharing in this tension" (Tavory, 2014). This suggests that ambiguity, rather than clarity, is what makes a situation hilarious; after all, once a joke is explained, it loses all of its humor. Humor is valuable because it can help generate support when the person speaking identifies with the audience. As a result, the communicator receives more credibility as a result of this identification. Interestingly, "the joker can perform both functions, being the instigator in humorous sequences and being the target of attempts at humour" (Plester and Orams, 2008). The use of comedy by communicators to differentiate themselves from their opponents is known as differentiation. Politicians frequently employ this style of comedy to forge alliances while simultaneously "drawing divisions" (Meyer, 2000).

Moreover, the question of sexuality, gender, race, and ethnic affiliation is negotiated in most of the wordings used by the comedians. In another view, "there exists comedy in Pakistan, which Umer Sharif and Sohail Ahmed use to address the multifaceted reality of Pakistani society referencing class, political, and religious issues" (Haider, 2019). Intersectionality provides them with thickness in their art and the possibility to think about practically everything. Consequently, objects witness a fragmented Pakistani society, and cultural selves which are also plural across their performances. Numerous authors, including Dimaggio (1997) and D'Andrade (1995) have highlighted the fact that individuals often rely on culturally available schemata—i.e., objects or events that supply default assumptions for a community—to engage in a form of automatic cognition when it comes to these cultural challenges.

Conclusively researcher asserts that, GTVH has been used to analyze humor in different cultural contexts, including American, British, and Indian comedies, but it has not been used to analyze Pakistani stand-up comedy. The humor that Pakistani comedians present circles around unique socio-political landscapes that include religious conservatism, socio-political sensitivities, and a variety of linguistic nuances. In a Pakistani context, humor serves as a platform for nuanced commentary on censorship, patriarchy, and political instability, which up till now has not been blended with the GTVH framework, albeit it does provide a framework to analyze humor in six parameters; Script Opposition, Logical Mechanism, Situation, Target, Narrative Strategy, and Language.

Research Methodology

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This paper employs a qualitative method to study various dimensions of language, humor, and identity in Pakistani stand-up comedy. Researcher has used qualitative methods to investigate deep into the linguistic and cultural dimensions of stand-up comedy and quantitative methods to delimit the numbers of humorists. Primarily, the study dwells on the main representations of stereoscopic features in comedies, the difficulties that the passing language brings to the joke, and stereotypical features of identity such as race, gender, and sexuality. The research explains how one can include and assimilate cultural diversity in comedian performance; how linguistic features affect the way humor is presented, and how the factors of identity such as race, gender and sexuality intersect with comic perspectives. For this study, the researcher primarily collected data from video recordings and transcripts of stand-up comedians' performances, audience reactions, and reviews from social media. The videos in this regard are taken from the official YouTube channel of Akbar Chaudhry namely; Pakistani Flirting, 90's Kids, Pakistan vs. India, Racism in America, *Yahoodi Dulhan* (Jewish Bride), and *Shaadi Scene* (Marriage Scenario), and video of Abbas are taken from different YouTube channels with the name; *Anda Fry* (Fried Egg). The basic purpose of selecting these videos as major text is to highlight popular ethnicities kind of diversity among comedians in terms of their ethnicity and culture and to understand stand-up comedy as well.

Theoretical Framework

The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo is regarded as the most significant and provoking theory of humor. This theory has been wholeheartedly approved as traditional accounts of the mechanism deriving jokes and has given services as a point from "which to start a journey for much contemporary linguistic work done on humor" (Attardo, 2020). In addition to it, GTVH does not miss a potential genre realization. Comparatively, this theory was supposed to be presented officially to confront both of these allegations with its Central focus on the second fact. Too much extent strong catalyst behind the GTVH was to conference the question in detail "When are two jokes the same joke?" (Attardo, p.137). Further, Raskin (1985) premises whether a text activates two overlapping scripts such as 'serious 'nonserious' or 'expected' and 'unexpected' has substantial relevance to whether humor is found funny. These contradictory scripts produce a mental discomfort that breeds humor. Script switching sets the context of the comics; this is amusing. However, the punch line or the script evokes the context but presents it unusually. This incongruity-resolution mechanism is an important characteristic of verbal humor.

After a very versatile observation of the theory research question is addressed with the introduction of 5 more parameters which alongside the script opposition packed up the 6 knowledge resources. These parameters are language, narrative strategy, target, situation, logical mechanism, and script opposition. All six elements are applied to the comedy performances and the researcher has tried to relate and distinguish these elements out of them. In Script Opposition, humor arises from a conflict or incongruity between two opposing scripts (e.g., reality vs. absurdity, traditional vs. modern). Its application is to Pakistani Comedy especially Urban vs. rural cultural scripts and modern generational ideologies. Logical Mechanism (LM) is the reasoning or cognitive process that connects opposing scripts to resolve the incongruity. Its application to Pakistani Comedy is the use of exaggeration or absurdity to highlight societal contradictions. Employing stereotypes of Pakistani cultural roles (e.g., parents, landlords).

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Situation (SI) is the context or setting where the humor occurs. Application to Pakistani Comedy is relatable to everyday scenarios, such as family dinners, weddings, or workplace settings, and satirical depictions of political or social events. Target (TA) is the individual, group, or concept being critiqued or ridiculed. Its application to Pakistani Comedy is through political figures, cultural norms, generational behavior, and stereotypical depictions of societal roles, such as feudal landlords or overbearing parents. Narrative Strategy (NS) is the format or structure used to deliver the humor. Its application to Pakistani Comedy is through the use of anecdotes, skits, or stand-up monologues and the Incorporation of improvisational comedy, especially in stage performances. Language (LA) is the specific linguistic tools, such as wordplay, puns, or tone, used in the humor. Its Application to Pakistani Comedy is Bilingual humor (Urdu-English code-switching), and region-specific dialects (Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto) for cultural reliability and linguistic wordplay, idioms, and exaggerations. For a better understanding of these concepts as a framework, a table is given below.

Visualization of GTVH Framework for Pakistani Comedy

Component	Key Questions	Examples in Pakistani Comedy
Script Opposition	What conflicting ideas or scripts create the humor?	Rural vs. urban lifestyles; modernity vs. tradition; reality vs. absurdity.
Logical Mechanism	How is the incongruity resolved in the joke?	Exaggeration of cultural stereotypes; juxtaposition of expected and unexpected outcomes.
Situation	What is the contextual setting of the humor?	Wedding events, family conflicts, or miscommunications in professional settings.
Target	Who or what is being critiqued or ridiculed?	Feudal landlords, overly strict parents, societal hypocrisies, or political figures.
Narrative Strategy	What is the structure or format of the humor delivery?	Storytelling, skit-based humor, or stand-up routines with improvised interactions.
Language	What linguistic tools are used to enhance the humor?	Use of regional dialects, Urdu-English code-switching, puns, and hyperbolic expressions.

Data Analysis

The video of Abbas Bukhari is an example of how he comments on school assemblies creating not only the nostalgia of the school experience but also reflecting the institutional inefficiencies and the lack of awareness of official discourse and real experience. This video is a useful and entertaining source of examining the functioning of the verbal humor in the social-cultural setting and the way in which Bukhari employ linguistic creativity to transform ordinary experiences into the organization of the comic discourse. He starts his video as;

Excerpt 1

"Koi teacher yahan maujood hai?
Yeh poori assembly ka concept kis ka idea tha?
Koi mujhe kam az kam aik faida bata de school assembly ka.

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Balkeh, hamari society mein jo jo maslay maujood hain,
woh saare ke saare assembly mein bhi maujood hain."
English transcription;
"Any teachers in the house?
Whose idea was this whole assembly concept?
Someone tell me at least one benefit of a school assembly.
In fact, every problem that exists in our society also exists in the assembly."

These dialogues are comic in nature and their structure can be explained with the help of the Script Opposition (SO) which is in its very essence a clash of the cultural script which is supposed to be followed in a school assembly and it is a purposeful, disciplined and useful activity and the opposite script that makes school assembly appear as a meaningless, messy, and even dysfunctional event. The comedy of this confrontation between what an assembly is meant to be like and what it is like as a student creates the comedic effect. The comedic effect is achieved by revealing the discrepancy between the idealized institutional discourse and the reality of boredom, noise, and mismanagement that students are forced to deal with regularly.

This conflict of script is further elaborated with the use of the Logical Mechanism (LM) that is based on the exaggeration and absurd analogy. The hyperbole of saying that all the problems we have in our society are found in the assembly is deliberate. It is a fallacious but funny leap of equating a small daily school affair to the whole landscape of issues in society. The sarcasm is in this farfetched argument: as much as assemblies are annoying; it is ridiculous to compare them to the problems that are more intricate in the society; the ridiculousness that is created is the factor that brings laughter.

Situation (SI) is firmly based on the dialogue as it is an informal, conversational space that is also characteristic of observational comedy. The speaker appeals to a group of people that have a collective memory of when they were at school assemblies. This common culture renders the humor highly relatable. Virtually every audience can remember standing in the sun, waiting forever, listening to lengthy speeches, or hearing noisy lines collapsing; thus, the context of the situation makes the humor more significant by identifying it with universal student life.

Regarding Target (TA), the humor is a slight satire against the school system, and consequently, the authorities that enforce routine practices without doubting their true importance. Although the opening line is "Any teachers in the house? is directed towards teachers, but it is more of a jibe than an outright reproach. The actual object is the institutional routine of the assembly which is described as being outdated, unnecessary and ineffective. The humor peaks up at the institutional decision-makers but not at individuals and makes the criticism more palatable with comic tone.

The rhetorical strategy employed in this case is the Narrative Strategy (NS), which is the short series of rhetorical questions with an exaggerated punchline which can be seen as the typical feature of stand-up comedy. The speaker starts with a welcoming question to get the listeners hooked, creates a sense of inquisitiveness as to the origin and purpose of the assemblies, and finally gives the comic twist to the otherwise prosaic subject and turns it into a broad commentary on the society. This setup build punch scheme can retain the audience engaged and ready them to the ultimate comedic exaggeration.

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Lastly, humor is also promoted with the help of Language (LA) options that are straightforward, direct, and conversational. The repetition of the rhetorical questions reminds the tone of a frustrated student and makes it playful and sarcastic. The last sentence, representing a confident generalization, is rendered in the everyday language in order to make the punch line as accessible and relatable as possible. The wording in simple terms also serves to keep the humor down to earth and enhance the comic effect with exaggeration. He goes on in his performance and says;

Excerpt 2

"Pehla masla body-shaming ka tha.
Yeh kis ka brilliant idea tha ke sab se chhota bachcha line ke bilkul aagay khara ho?
Mera matlab, aik class ka sab se lamba bachcha bhi koi zyada lamba nahin hota.
Phir bhi woh koi aur bhi zyada chhota dhoond nikalte thay aur usay seedha aagay khara kar dete thay.
Chahe us ki self-worth bachi rahe ya na rahe —
line ki symmetry bachi rehni chahiye.
Woh bachcha phir poori zindagi isi baat se recover karta rehta hai."
English transcription;
"The first issue was body-shaming.
Whose idea was it that the shortest child must stand at the front of the line?
I mean, even the tallest kid in one class isn't that tall.
Yet they would find someone even shorter and put him right in front.
Whether his self-worth survives or not — the line's symmetry must survive.
The child spends his whole life trying to recover from that."

During this part, Abbas Bukhari builds humor on the comparison of two contrasting scripts: discipline vs. emotional harm, symmetry vs. self-worth. The mentality of the school, order and line perfection, is contrasted with psychological harm to children who are put in the forefront just because they are tall. This contrast of how the institution strictly prioritizes the superficial order and how the child is internally insecure builds a funny, but critical tension. The humor is that the viewer can immediately note that the assemblies that purport to bring about discipline do not care about the dignity of students. Accordingly, the comedic value lies in contrast between the way something is supposed to take place in a school (protection, confidence-building) and the way things really turn out to be (body-shaming under the guise of organization).

Bukhari relies on exaggeration and faulty logic as the most important tool of humor. The concept of "even the tallest kid is not that tall but teachers still find one who is shorter" still serves an absurd purpose of extrapolation of the real-life practices. The logic behind the joke is that there is a false logic of the importance of line symmetry in favor of emotional well-being. Hyperbolism in stating that the child lives his entire life attempting to recuperate by being placed in the front is yet another sign of incongruity and exaggeration which are actual processes used in stand-up comedy. This process brings out the irrationality of institutional routines through a critical comic perspective.

The scenario outlined is a typical school assembly which is a daily routine of millions of students in South Asia. This common recognition makes the humor even more effective since

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right away the viewer visualizes the morning queue, with teachers grouping students by their height, and the shame of standing out. The environment is banal yet emotionally loaded; meetings are supposed to be neutral or disciplined places but, in most cases, they turn into arenas of minor body-shaming and hierarchical actions. The introduction of the humor into a setting could be relatable to every audience member makes Bukhari sure that the comedy will be closely connected with the audience.

The school institution and its strict, old-fashioned ways is the main subject of the humor. Such rules make teachers and administrators who impose them to be the unwitting targets, in particular, their discipline and looks at the expense of children emotional well-being. Another secondary victim is the social mentality that values cosmetic homogeneity, or the existence of flawless lines, over personal integrity. The child that stands in the background is not derided but he is depicted sympathetically. This therefore aims at the system rather than individuals who end up being victims of the system.

It is told in the form of personal observational monologue that resembles the voice of the comedian reminiscing about a collective memory. Bukhari applies conversational style to the extent that he switches to a rhetorical question (Whose idea was it?), to descriptive exaggeration and under that to a reflective punchline on lifelong recovery. The story is a linear though dynamic flow where the problems are identified and then commentated through humour. The approach enables the audience to laugh and also ponder about the futility of school practices.

It is colloquial, easy to understand and deliberately dramatic. The expressions such as symmetry must survive, even the tallest kid is not that tall, and the child spends his entire life trying to recover depend on rhythm and rhetoric to create a sense of humor. The comic tension is created by using rhetorical questioning, repetition and ironical tone. Also, the juxtaposition of institutional language in the form of a line (institutional language) and the crude phrase of self-worth survives or not increases the humor with the help of tonal contrasts. The familiarity and clarity of language enable the humor to reach very wide audience. He continuous his argument and he says;

Excerpt 3

"Doosra masla tashaddud ka tha.
Assembly ke waqt PT teacher achanak S.H.O. kyun ban jata tha?
Poori assembly ke dauran peeche se ek musalsal background score chalta rehta tha.
Kyun?
'Belt nahin pehni? Tum ne nahin pehni? Tum ne pehni hai? Utaro!'
Aur masla yahin khatam nahin hota tha.
Yeh khauf se bhara hua tashaddud hota tha.
Humein haath upar karwa ke bilkul uss sensitive jagah pe khara kar dete thay jahan se larkiyan guzarti theen.
Dekho yaar,
tum aik mard ki khaal bhi cheel do, woh cheekhe ga nahin.
Lekin jis aurat ko woh pasand karta ho, us ki nazron se gir jaye—
toh woh azeeyat mein mar jata hai.
Aur teachers ko yeh baat bohat achi tarah maloom hoti thi."

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English Transcription;
"The second issue was violence.
Why did the PT teacher suddenly turn into an S.H.O. during the assembly?
Throughout the assembly, there was this constant background score.
Why? "You didn't wear a belt? You didn't? You did? Take it off."
And the problem didn't end there. This was fear-filled violence.
They would make you put your hands up and stand exactly at that sensitive spot where the girls passed by.
Look man, you can peel a man's skin off and he won't scream.
But let him fall from the eyes of the woman he admires — he'll die in agony.
And the teachers knew this very well.
And in a similar vein he asserts;

Excerpt 4

"Teesra masla hamari whiteness ki ghulami thi.
Assembly mein stage time milne ka merit gora rang aur nakli accent hota tha.
Aur bhai, woh log bohat hi ridiculous lagte thay:
'Main aap sab ke behalfs…'
'On our word of honor…'
Aur is sab ke darmiyan peeche se national anthem chalta rehta tha:
'That we shall do our duty to the best of our ability…'"
English Transcription;
The third issue was our slavery to whiteness.
The merit for getting stage time in assembly was fair skin and a fake accent.
And man, they looked ridiculous:
"I on your behalfs…"
"On our word of honor…"
Meanwhile the background anthem kept playing:
"That we shall do our duty to the best of our ability…"

Both pairs of conversations are based on dramatic contrasts of the script to achieve comedy. In the section of violence, Bukhari compares the parentally nature of a school type with the unexpected parentally-like police like violence engaged in by the PT teacher- transforming a place where lessons are expected to be taken into one where interrogation is the order of the day. The opposition of education vs. intimidation, discipline vs. humiliation is the basis of comedy. Similarly, the sub-title about slavery to whiteness is based on the conflict between merit and superficiality. Although school assemblies in theory are a celebration of success, the comedian points out that white skinned students and those with faked English accents were given a chance to perform- a humorous comparison between the institutionally promoted virtue and superficiality and superficiality. These script oppositions reveal the difference between what is said to be encouraged in schools and what is in fact encouraged.

The comedy in the two segments comes out as a result of exaggeration, analogy, and stretching of faulty reasoning. Bukhari uses the PT teacher as an example of an S.H.O.--a law-enforcement officer--due to his demeanor that is similar to the aggression of a law enforcement official. It is this hyperbolic analogy which works as the logical mechanism to turn ordinary

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disciplinary activities into a state violence parody. Likewise, the photograph of teachers making boys stand with their hands up at that delicate point where the girls crossed through employs farfetched reasoning to bring out the emotional weak spot, particularly the male ego and female gaze, as a means of punishment.

In the second group, Bukhari takes the idea of whiteness obsession farther by demonstrating the extent to which imitated accents of English turn out to be the standards of the general representation. The skewed sentences, such as, I on your behalfs... reveal the error of the language performance and the application of the logic of linguistic incompetence as a reduction tool. Both onsets of humor type are based on taking normal life to the absurd; exposing social irrationalities by exaggeration.

The school assembly is the situational context, a setting which is familiar to all students. This makes the comedy relatable. Assemblies, expected to be disciplined morning practices, are anarchical emotional frenzies that are full of fear, embarrassment and favoritism. The specifics of checking belts, raising hands and humiliating students bring the audience back to the realities of their childhood and the comedy becomes experiential and not abstract. In the case of the whiteness segment, the scenario is reflected at the assembly level- an area that is symbolically linked to prestige and publicity. The image of bad English accent students reciting ritual phrases to a patriotic anthem is very graphic and ridiculous. The collective cultural memory of reciting anthem as well as the blown out of proportion stage announcements reinforce the comic effect.

The main address in both segments is hypocrisy in institutions and school administrations. The PT teacher in the violence part reflects the incorrect authoritarianism that reflects on the bigger social activities of policing and social shaming. The second victim is the inclination within society to arm masculinity and emotional insecurity, especially in the way teachers can exploit a boy to be afraid of being humiliated in front of girls. In the whiteness part, the object of attack is the deep colonial hangover in schools. Bukhari criticizes how institutions value fair skinned people, western style accents, and faked Englishness more than talents and originality. When students imitate the speech of the Western people, they are an object of affectionate ridicule, yet they actually are criticized by the system that values such shallow features. Both segments strike straight into the sky, that is, into institutions, norms and mindsets, not individuals.

The story is told in an exaggerated manner, with Bukhari recreating scenes in a dramatic pacing and judiciously placed punchlines. In the violence part, he switches between the abrupt transformation of the PT teacher to that of a policeman and the successive disciplinary measures, working up to the release of tension by the punch line of emotional pain being more than physical. The same can be said about the slavery to whiteness narrative: the author opens the text with a statement regarding justice and the falsity of accents, then proceeds to comic imagery of the badly spoken English, finally contrasts those performances to the national anthem. This overlaying of stories assists the viewer to transition between recognition and laughter to introspection without interrupting the humorous atmosphere of the proceedings. The narration is in a conversational manner yet is organized so that the humor comes out naturally.

The use of colloquial and dramatized language by Bukhari is used to reinforce the humor. The words he uses, such as the "*Yeh PT teacher assembly ke dauran SHO kyun ban jata tha?"* (ET: PT teacher suddenly became an S.H.O), background score, take it off, and fear-filled

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violence are everyday words, but they are worded in theatrical way to create a comedy. The speech is metrically ordered the words are brief and harsh and resemble the harshness of verbal disciplinary actions. The amusement of the whiteness segment relies much on the use of the mockery of incorrect English. Lines like "I on your behalfs..." and "on our word of honor..." use phonetic awkwardness and syntactic mistakes as the means of demonstrating the artificially of the performance. The fact that this crass English is contrasted with the high-flying anthem in the background makes the comedic absurdity even more absurd. The linguistic choices that Bukhari makes bring out the social truths in a playful mimicry, and the humor is accessible and multi-layered.

The comedy of this part is mostly based on the tension formed between conflicting scripts of cultural representations and identity constructions. Abbas Bukhari juxtaposes the formal idealism of the school anthem (when it proclaims discipline, responsibility and ability) and the truth of fainting students at the assembly. This collision between the ability and disability is the core of the joke. In addition, he builds a second dichotomy between civilized and uncivilized societies, whereby nations that care about the well-being of the students end up cancelling the assemblies in cases of emergency, and Pakistan schools respond by extending them. These conflicting scripts, ideal and real, careful and careless are deeply ingrained in the collective memory and the humor becomes known immediately to the audience. The contrast between the nationalistic speech and the experienced agony is what forms the comedic tension which drives the segment. As in these lines;

Excerpt 5

"Yeh anthem 'ability' ki baat kar raha hai.
Aur pichlay do dinon mein do bachay behosh ho gaye.
Unhein utha ke dispensary le jaya ja raha tha.
Dekho, yahi farq hota hai civilized nations aur hum mein.
Doosray mulkon mein agar koi behosh ho jaye,
toh assembly band kar dete hain.
Hamare schoolon mein?
Assembly aur bhi lambi kar dete hain."

English transcription;

"This anthem is talking about "ability."
In the last two days, two students collapsed.
They were being carried to the dispensary.
See, this is the difference between civilized nations and us.
In other countries, if someone collapses, they ban the assembly.
In our schools, they make the assembly even longer."

Bukhari organizes the humor by means of irony and logical reversal. He appeals to the idea of ability, that is celebrated in the anthem, first, and creates a premise of competence and physical capacity. It is an assumption that is hastily spoiled by the fact that the students are falling, which form an incongruity that the audience solves by identifying the absurdity of the situation. The humor is enhanced by the fact that Bukhari is turning the presumed logic in the opposite direction: a collapsing student would normally stop the assembly, but in the illustration created by the comedian, the event serves to justify the extension of the assembly. This reversal

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of the usual cause-and-effect order is a stereotypical comic device. The joke works because the audience cannot fail to see the absurdity of the set-up, and the exaggerated, but culturally accurate, image of the institutional rigidity is hilarious. The reasoning process is based on exaggerating and being incongruent. The notion of a PT teacher acting like a policeman, with his/her interrogations and threats RT: “Belt nahi pehni? Tum ne pehni hai? Utaro.” (You did not wear a belt? You didn't? You did? Take off, take off) uses absurd escalation. Bukhari goes too far, and makes the disciplinary behavior every day, making it so ridiculous that it reveals the arbitrary and performance of school authority.

The setting of the situation is the known school morning assembly, which is familiar to the audience of numerous listeners. Children in the picture are lined with the sun singing patriotic songs, teachers impose strict forms of discipline creates a strong background. The humor arises out of this particular cultural setting; the Pakistani school assemblies are infamously protracted, formal and are usually held in extreme weather. With a reference to the students being taken to the dispensary, Bukhari creates absurdity and realism. The world of the joke is created by the situational context, heat, and exhaustion, rigid rules. Since this common ground is imprinted in the minds of the audience, the storyline sounds like a joke and fact at the same time. The humor is given a context of the everyday cultural experience of the situation: morning assemblies in Pakistani schools. The room arrangement (students stand in lines, teachers are patrolling, the background music of a nationalistic anthem), the section of both boys and girls, and the elements are familiar ones of school life. The subtlety of punishing boys close to the passing area of girls adds to the situation a social subtext: the way to impose obedience through shame.

The comedy is directed at the flaws in the institutions and the system and not on the human beings. Bukhari takes his criticism to the school system that is so enslaved to discipline and symbolism to the extent of overlooking the welfare of students. The object of the attack is the inflexible culture which is obsessed with ritual, patriotism and order at the expense of fundamental human demands such as rest and hydration. He employs humor by contrasting the local practice with the so-called civilized nations, to immaturely judge the dysfunctional priorities of these institutions. Notably, the joke does not ridicule the children who faint or the teachers as people but it reveals a greater structural mentality that tolerates the sufferings under the guise of discipline. This renders this humor socially critical as opposed to personal. The victim of the humor is the performative school institution authoritarianism. The Bukhari criticizes the highly institutionalized systems of discipline by making the PT teacher appear as a caricature of state power to reflect the broader practices of policing that take place in society at large. The joke is more socially critical than personal, as it is about the system, not about people.

The story is told in a very simple and observational manner of narration resembling normal conversation. Bukhari starts with factual comment of the anthem, introduces the contradiction of collapsing students and then takes it a notch higher by comparing the various responses by other cultures. This gradual build-up builds a comic effect that leads to the punchline: the notion that in place of cancelling assemblies, Pakistani schools increase their length instead. The narration is linear and ironic, with the change of the tone, i.e., between serious and exaggerated, being used to increase comedy timing. This plays to the persuasiveness and humour of the story as he uses contrast, particularly in setting global and local contexts. The

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story is constructed on episodic memory. Bukhari describes school situations in a very detailed and musical way, alternating description to punchline and at the same time, increasing or decreasing the speed. The absurdity of the situation and his performance style such as slight pauses, tonal variations and facial expressions are reinforcing and directing the audience to the mutual realization.

The language is based on simplicity, irony and tough expressions. Bukhari reads his lines in a transparent colloquial language and the absurdity of what is being said is enhanced. Such terms as "ability to obtain stratified connotation when they are contrasted with accounts of fainting pupils" as in "*Dekho, yahi farq hota hai civilized nations aur hum mein. Baahir agar koi behosh ho jaaye, toh assembly cancel kar dete hain. Hamare haan agar koi gir jaaye, toh assembly aur lambi kar dete hain*" (ET: "Look, this is the difference between civilized nations and us. Outside, if someone collapses, they cancel the assembly. Here, if someone falls down—they make the assembly even longer.") The comedic effect is made more effective by the understatement provided by the use of matter of fact sentences when describing the alarming situations. On the same note, his rhetoric analogy such as we vs. civilized nations has a bit of sting due to its crudeness. The situation is so ridiculous that it can speak in its own right, and the linguistic economy makes the humor quite available and sharp. The comedy relies much upon dialogic bits and imitation. Such expressions as "You did not wear a belt? You didn't? You did? Take it off" mimic the rhythms of the authoritarian speech. The language itself is not complicated, but it is effectively repetitive with a focus on the stiffness and absurdity of school orders. The switching between Urdu and English in the works of Bukhari is generational memory and increases relatability.

Abbas Bukhari has excellently employed humor in this part to satirize the hypocrisy in school culture. He uses contrast, reverse irony, a setting that everyone in the culture can easily relate to, and uncluttered but effective language to demonstrate how ridiculous the institutional priorities are. The resultant laughter is not just entertainment, but a reaction to the acknowledgment of the same social absurdities. The observational humor, the irony, and social commentary are applied by Bukhari to unveil the disciplinary systems and cultural stratification that are built into the Pakistani school culture. This section creates a definite contrast between school as the place of safe and nurturing environment and school as the place of fear, control and corporal punishment. The PT teacher is compared to the S.H.O. jokingly, changing the direction of semantic field to policing in place of education. The comedy in the situation arises because of the reversal of the normal teacher role and this shows the inconsistency of the disciplinary measures which purport to bring about order, but instead, cause fear.

Analyzing Verbal Humor in the Comedy of Akbar Chaudhry

The tension in Chaudhry comedy is frequently between the traditional and modern values, expectation of the generation and the personal ambition, and ordinary and exaggerated reality. As in this Excerpt:

Excerpt 6

> RT: *"Pakistan ke maa baap: betta bas engineer bano, doctor bano. And when you tell me that you wish to be an artist, unka aise dekhene aise jese aap ne budha pardada udhr giraa dia ho."*

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ET: "Pakistani parents say, 'Son, just become an engineer or a doctor.' And when you tell them that you want to be an artist, they look at you as if you have just dropped their elderly great-grandfather right there."

In this case, it is the conflict between the parental demands (engineer/doctor) and personal desires (artist). The comic element comes in the exaggeration of parental shock- parents acting as though a great disaster has taken place. Anxiety as a result of strict family norms is also a source of humor, and this hyperbolic opposition appeals to Pakistani audiences who are all too accustomed to them. Chaudhry applies hyperbole and absurdity to reveal cultural pressure and leaves the audience in laughter and at the same time meditates on generational tension. The cultural insights aim to evaluate how popular meat based fast food culture is within the Gulf region and how much it influences the purchasing behaviors of Saudi Arabians. The cultural/linguistic insights also measure the extent to which the popular culture of meat-based fast food is in the Gulf region, and the level of its impact on the buying behavior of the Saudi Arabians.

Further, selecting the daily life of Pakistani family and overindulging in it, Chaudhry roots the humor in the cultural-specific norms. The viewer can recognize instantly with the situation, which also brokered identity between the parental generation and the contemporary underage.

The context of the situation in the jokes by Chaudhry is usually the usual social phenomenon: family reunion, wedding, school, college, or work. As in;

Excerpt 7

RT: *Earnestly, shaadiyan Pakistan mein bilkul bhi bride and groom ke baare mein nahi hoti. Yeh ek family project hota hai jismein saari lean Lieutenant reehon ke liye rishtay dhoondte rehte hain.*

ET: "Honestly, weddings in Pakistan are not at all about the bride and groom. They are a family project in which all the aunts and uncles are busy finding matches for everyone else."

The family obsession with matching up is humorously achieved by the same setting (as weddings) replicated in order to bring out the cliché. The joke does not concentrate on the bride and groom, but rather on a cultural activity in which family members are the key participants. This sitcom comedy can have an audience identifying with the characters in the situation and appreciating the absurdities without feeling assaulted. In the course of negotiation of the cultural representations, Chaudhry presents the weddings as a group event of family but not as an individual celebration, emphasizes the pressure of the generations and the community. Chaudhry uses hyperbole, irony, and wordplay to close expectations and reality gaps. This involves a contrast of somber social problems and comic exaggeration. As the following excerpts says:

Excerpt 8

RT: "*In Pakistan, relatives kehte hain ke agar aap 25 saal ki umar tak shaadi nahi karte to aap outdated ho gaye ho. Woh shayad aapke second cousin twice removed ki shaadi plan karna shuru kar dein pehle ke woh aap par se disappointment feel karein!*"

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ET: "In Pakistan, the relatives would say that you are out of date when you are not married at the age of 25. they may start a wedding off among your second cousins twice removed before they disillusion on you!"

The obsessiveness of culture towards marriage is highlighted by the absurd exaggeration. In this case, irony and hyperbole can be defined as a logical tool to demonstrate the clash between social conventions that are pressing family care and personal preparedness. The joke does criticize a true social expectation but does it in a way that is humorous and therefore the audience is able to laugh and also to see the hidden commentary in the society. The humor is based on communal cultural knowledge known as arranged marriages and family expectations proving that Chaudhry understands language and cultural signals that appeals to audiences. His negotiating of identity is through youngsters who maneuver family expectations and this brings about humor that authenticates the experience of the audience. The objects of humor in the works of Chaudhry are concepts, societal customs, or institutions as opposed to individuals. He condemns the stress caused to young ones, parental demand and social norms. As in;

Excerpt 9

RT: *Mere maa-baap ki bas ek hi fixation thi, ki main doctor banun. Aaj bhi main ghar wapas aata, maa keh deti: 'Beta, kal kuch zyada thak toh nahi rahe? Doctor hi ban jaa, kuch aaram milega!*

ET: "*My parents had just one fixation — that I should become a doctor. Even today, whenever I came back home, my mom would say, 'Son, aren't you feeling too tired? Just become a doctor, you'll get some rest!*'"

It is aimed at the social norm which sees success as medicine/engineering careers. The humor is not personal toward parents, but it satirizes social pressures in the manner that individuals can relate to. Chaudhry allows the audience to reflect on themselves by bringing out hyperbolic parental care. Chaudhry tends to rely on narration, stories, and the conversational tone to establish a personal relationship with his listeners. To increase humor, he superimposes characters and circumstances in a story. As in the lines:

Excerpt 10

RT: *"This is how it is, the usual day of my life: Subah uthkar maa se kehna, 'Mummy, main der se uth gaya! Mummik logon ke jawab aa hai, Toh kya ho gaya betsa. Teri shaadi ke baad Yeh bhi batana!"*

ET: "This is how it usually goes, a typical day in my life: I wake up in the morning and tell my mom, 'Mom, I woke up late!' And my mom's reply is, 'So what, son? After your wedding, you can tell me that too!'"

Conversational narrative involves the audience as participants. Humor just comes out through natural dialogue, familiar characters and real-life circumstances. The narrative structure gives the viewers a chance to immerse themselves in it, and relatability enhances the comedic effects. The linguistic choices of Chaudhry are local dialects, Pakistani English and mixing between Urdu and English. For example;

Excerpt 11

RT: *Ek dafa aik aadmi apne dost se bola, Yaar, mujhe lagta hai ke mein English mein bohot expert hoon! Dost ne kaha, 'Achha? Toh phir tum English mein yeh batao, aaj ka*

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din kaise guzra? Aadmi ne jawab diya, Bro, yeh second, mein apni Urdu mein translation kar ke aata hoon!

ET: "One time, a man said to his friend, 'Dude, I think I'm really an expert in English!' The friend replied, 'Oh really? Then tell me in English, how was your day today?' The man answered, 'Bro, wait a second, I'll translate it into my Urdu first!'"

Code-switching generates bilingual humor, which attracts those audiences who are accustomed to using Urdu and English in everyday life. The source of the comedy is the discrepancy between trust in English and the use of Urdu translation, indicative of language hybridity in urban Pakistan. Through mixing languages and common expressions, Chaudhry compromise identity, urban, bilingual, modern Pakistani youth and implicitly criticizes cultural and social conventions. The humor of Akbar Chaudhry has several levels. He contrasts conflicting cultural scripts, amplifies the absurdities of society and places the jokes in the known contexts. Through his skill and practice of narrative, familiar language, and sparse targeting he invents humor which is both reflective and culturally sensitive in its social and linguistic truth. His comedy has given the viewers the opportunity to laugh at themselves and society and at the same time subtly get involved with the critical cultural and social commentary.6

Chaudhry's comedy has been based on common, absurd, as well as culturally specific realities of Pakistani existence. His humour, which has been spread far and wide on YouTube and through live shows, embraces linguistic nimbleness, code-switching, hyperbole, sarcasm, impersonation of characters as a means of earning comedy that cuts to the core of the audiences. Using the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), one can systematically apply to the jokes made by Chaudhry, the Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanisms (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS) and Language (LA).

Script Opposition is a contradictory thought or social standards which creates tension in humor. Chaudhry tends to set old values against new ones, serious issues against trivial ones, political/economic reality against ordinary personal lives. As in the following lines; "The difference between my hands and Rebeca's was as much as the difference in the dollar rate during Musharraf's era and the PTI period." (RT: *Mere or Rebeca k hathu main itna farak tha jitna Musharraf or pti k dor main dollar rate ka frak tha. [ET:* The difference between me and Rebeca was as much as the difference in the dollar rate during Musharraf's era and the PTI era*])* The contrast between my hands color and her one was as well as the difference between dollar rate during the times of Musharraf and the time of PTI. In this case, the argument against is paltry personal difference (complexion of hands) versus a macro-level political/economic fact (dollar fluctuations by different regimes). The comedic effect is created as a result of contrasting between ordinary and serious societal problems, and it shows the absurdity of domestic and political situations. Chaudhry pushes these contrasts to the extreme to allow viewers to laugh at the familiar absurdity of relating the mundane to the distinctive socio-political phenomenon. Audiences can relate to the cultural references and political allusions used by Chaudhry, including Musharraf and PTI, in an attempt to convey humor but negotiates his identity, he places himself as an acute observer but also a player in the cultural arena of Pakistan. The joke highlights the differences between generations and the society, and creates a sense of relatability and criticality.

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The situational dimension contextualizes jokes in the context of known lived experiences and therefore makes humor relatable. School life, family life, domestic pressure, and norms in the society are among the areas that Chaudhry relies on. For instance;

Excerpt 12

RT: *Ahista ahista us nay mere ghar pay qabza karna shuru kar dia Israeli thee, na wo is liye qabza karna fitrat thee uski.*

ET: "Slowly and gradually, she was starting to fill my house; it was Israeli, and she had to fill it."

The comedy is brought about by the exaggeration of a personal experience and presenting it as a culturally and nationally coded joke. The scenario of a person living in his house is ridiculous, yet the reference to nationality (Israeli) brings a comic and well-known stereotype, which the Pakistani audiences can relate to. Chaudhry brokering between identity and social perception, incorporates a national-cultural point of reference into a daily situation, so that the audience may acknowledge the personal and political comedic value inherent in the acts of simple interaction. Following logical mechanism, the rationale between the set-up and the punchline, which is frequently through hyperbole, reversal, analogy or irony. Chaudhry tends to use analogy and ironic opposition in his jokes. All an all, by using the GTVH framework, the comedy by Akbar Chaudhry is evidently multilayered, culturally resonant as well as social reflective. Through the use of script opposition, situational humor, hyperbolic mechanism, role-play, and bilingualism, he comes up with jokes that can amuse and at the same time criticize society in a subtle way. His humor plays the bargaining role of cultural norms and identity constructions so that the viewers could laugh at intergenerational conflicts, social pressures, and political hypocrisies. Chaudhry is a genius in his ability to absorb ordinary, intimate, and political experiences in the world of universal comedy where it mirrors the experiences lived by his Pakistani audience.

Conclusion

This paper has concluded that both Chaudhry and Bukhari show humor similarities such as self-depreciation and subtle sarcasm. The anecdote of Chaudhry on the membership of a gym or his admission of being socially awkward resembles the Bukhari exaggerating the school punishments and family disputes. The comparison between Chaudhry and Bukhari shows that verbal humor acts as the tension mediator between personal wishes and the social norms. Whether it is the marriage, career, and the bilingual misunderstandings. The humor has the same background themes: the generation gap, the cultural strain, hierarchical society and self-determination. Conclusively, the performances are socially reflective and culturally situated practices. The use of linguistic choice, narrative strategy, hyperbole, role-playing and cultural reference in their performances reveal the absurdity of society as they maneuver identity and cultural representation. Thus, based on data analysis, it is clear that every aspect of these stand-up comedy performances involves stereotypes, whether they are implicit assumptions or explicit statements. Furthermore, this paper has highlighted the role of cultural and social environments in constraining comedy acts. Not only do Pakistani stand-up comedians use specific sets of metalinguistic conventions to address the audience, but they also occupy an important position in constructing the cultural identities of the comedians and the roles they give to their audience. Their work shows that comedy is not just an amusing pastime, but rather an indispensable element of the cultures through which societies negotiate and define themselves and their

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environments. The ability of comedians to use humor to bring to light difficult social issues and taboos in today's society is a unique gift that a lot of people have.

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