

# “Dissecting the poisoned honey”. Sexist Humor in Egypt: A linguistic analysis of sexism in Colloquial Cairene Arabic jokes

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## Abstract

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This paper attempts to shed light on sexism in Egyptian Internet jokes. It examines how language, as an institution largely controlled by men, is manipulated and used to disparage women in this discursive mode of humor. Through running a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 284 sexist internet jokes, the study addressed three points; namely, the most frequently targeted category of women in sexist jokes; the most salient physical and personal attributes and finally the way sexist jokes is used to promote violence against women. The analysis has shown that the ‘wife’ is the category most ridiculed. The data also revealed that in spite of the freedom in anonymity that the internet provides, personal attributes far outnumber the physical features. The jokes conformed to the conservative nature of the society as derision of physical features was done through the use of general terms. The analysis has shown that ‘hatefulness’ was the most highly criticised personal attribute, with ‘stupidity’ coming second. It was also shown that under the guise of benign amusement, the effect of these jokes go beyond tolerating gender inequality to actually promoting physical violence against women. We conclude that in a patriarchal social system like that of Egypt, which already disparages women as the ‘marked’ and the ‘different’, such jokes should not be dismissed lightly as ‘just jokes.’

**Keywords:** gender studies, linguistic sexism, sexist jokes, linguistic feminism, Egyptian jokes