



Exploring Gender Stereotypes and Shared Presuppositions in Pakistani Social Media Memes

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to examine how gender stereotypes in Pakistan are constructed, reinforced, and challenged through presuppositions in social media memes. The paper applies the Presupposition Theory by Stalnaker (1974) to ten viral Pakistani social media memes from Instagram and Facebook to identify the shared background assumptions that render these texts readable without any explanation. The findings reveal that Pakistani expectations of gender are expressed implicitly through implied cultural knowledge, encompassing the beliefs that women's lives revolve around marriage, that emotional labour is an implicit expectation of women, and that fear of victimization by men structures women's behaviour. These assumptions mirror social norms and serve as a tool of critique, especially in the feminist online community, which is dominated by humour and irony to confront patriarchy. The article reveals that memes are concise and powerful forms of discourse, which shape the common perception of gender relations through shared social experiences. These findings also contribute to the growing body of knowledge in digital pragmatics since they demonstrate that presupposition is an important tool for meaning-making in Pakistani online culture.



Introduction

Contemporary Pakistani society has been greatly shaped by the emergence of social media as one of the greatest platforms of expression, humour and cultural critique. Memes are among the most powerful means of communication since they express intricate social messages through short texts that are visually appealing. While memes can carry light-heartedness, their functionality largely depends on the shared cultural knowledge and social expectations. The gender roles and stereotypes of masculinity, femininity, marriage and house work are some of the most ingrained structures manifested in Pakistani meme cultures.

The creation and maintenance of gender norms in Pakistan are a result of cultural discourses that have existed over the years and have been disseminated through media, social institutions and everyday interactions. These norms are often seen in the social media memes, expressed indirectly and implicitly. Memes do not express stereotypes overtly; rather, they are based on shared assumptions, which include that women are the basis of domestic harmony and that men are unemotional towards household chores. These implicit assumptions enable gender stereotypes to work in the background and to seem socially acceptable under the guise of humour or casual remarks.

This dependence on background knowledge, especially the concept of common ground by Stalnaker (1974) within his presupposition theory, is an appropriate approach to analyze gendered meaning in memes. Although much research on memes has been conducted globally, little attention has been paid to memes in Pakistan, where studies on discourse mostly focus on political topics or other broad pragmatic features with minimal emphasis on gender stereotypes through presupposition. The present paper thus explores the construction and propagation of gender stereotypes in Pakistani social media memes based on common presumptions, providing an insight into how digital texts support or disrupt prevailing gender perceptions.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the gender-based assumptions inherent in Pakistani social media memes, which depend on collective cultural understanding.
2. To analyze the role of these presuppositions in building, supporting, or reinforcing gender stereotypes in digital discourse.

Research Questions

1. To what extent Pakistani social media memes utilize shared presuppositions to construct gendered representations of men and women?
2. How do these presuppositions operate to support or make gender stereotypes a natural part of everyday digital communication?

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant because it examines how social media, through memes, subtly formulates gender assumptions ingrained in Pakistani society. Memes can be considered as informal objects, but their impact relies on widespread cultural presuppositions, which make them powerful tools for creating and spreading gender norms. This paper explains how the implicit background knowledge promotes the comprehensibility and replication of stereotypes by applying the theory of presupposition proposed by Stalnaker (1974). Besides, the study adds to the body of Pakistani pragmatic scholarship — a sub-discipline that has significantly emphasized on political or generic meme discourse — at the cost of gender-specialized presupposition studies (Abbas and Arshad, 2023; Khan et al., 2025). Lastly, it promotes critical media literacy by showing how everyday digital content, being used in daily life, is shaping societal attitude toward gender.

Statement of the Problem

Although meme research is emerging in Pakistan, most of the existing research is usually conducted on political speech, humour strategies, or overall pragmatic characteristics, rather than gender-based presuppositions. For instance, Wahid et al. (2025) examine presupposition in Instagram comments but overlook the meme content itself, whereas Noor and Arshad (2024) employ multimodal analysis without considering gender stereotypes due to shared cultural assumptions. Similarly, the literature on political and humorous memes (Khan et al., 2025; Malik

and Zahra, 2023; Anwar et al., 2022) does not emphasize presupposition as a way of creating gender meaning. This paper fills this gap by providing a presupposition-based examination of the concept of gender stereotypes in Pakistani social media memes.

Literature Review

Scholarly literature exploring the concept of memes in the fields of linguistics and pragmatics has grown significantly over the last several years, exploring how online communication conveys implicit meanings, cultural presuppositions, and social commentary. Relevant contributions are made by Wahid et al. (2025) through their study of presupposition in meme commenting on an Instagram video post that studies presuppositions in the responses to the memes made by the people. The researchers identify specific forms of presupposition based on the linguistic stimulus and context of interaction. Although the research demonstrates the working mechanisms of presupposition in online communication, it is still limited to the comment sections and does not analyse the text or images of memes. Moreover, it does not examine gender-based content, which makes its input quite useful to apply in the methodological and theoretical background rather than to the specific thematic alignment with the current study.

Noor and Arshad (2024), in their multimodal critical discourse analysis of Pakistani memes investigate the way in which Pakistani memes reflect the cultural anxieties, humour practices and the attitudes of the public. Their multimodal approach sheds some light on the combined role of visual and textual elements in creating meaning. Although the paper addresses the problem of class perception and youth style, it does not examine the gender stereotypes or presumptions in particular. Still, the study confirms memes as culturally significant documents that can be used to reveal hidden social processes and hence provide a substantial foundation for studying implicit gendered assumptions.

Khan and Hassan, 2025, in the practical study of the discourse of major Pakistani political parties, focus on their attitude to social media as well as their pragmatic strategies such as implicature, presupposition, satire, and indirect speech act, via the prism of internet memes. Their findings show the ways political memes employ humour to convince followers, attack leaders and influence ideological discourses. Though presupposition is one of the aspects of their analysis, the research remains strictly political in terms of its subjects and provides minimal information on gender-based speech. Nevertheless, their work provides methodological advice about the analysis of memes in the Pakistani settings.

The other study relevant to the context of this paper is “Pragmatic Analysis of Internet Memes” by Malik and Zahra (2023), which examines the memes created in the switch to online learning. The authors presume that those memes represent cultural and pedagogical problem in a humorous and easy manner to understand how the experience of students is depicted through different pragmatic means. Although the study reveals the reliance of memes on common background knowledge, it is not a thorough study on gendered content to which presupposition theory can be applied. The applicability of this work to the current study lies in the fact that it investigates the daily experiences and the unofficial, culturally common meaning expressed through memes.

Similarly, “A Pragmatic Analysis of Humour and Irony in Selected Memes” by Anwar et al. (2022), confronts the particular role of linguistic strategies, such as irony, exaggeration, and indirectness, in the construction of humour in memes. The writers argue that humour is based on the shared cultural knowledge and expectations of audiences. Although it does not refute the existence of implicit meanings, gender stereotypes and presuppositions are not explicitly studied in

this work. However, it highlights the role of shared understanding as a key determinant of interpreting memes and supports the theoretical basis of the study under consideration.

All these studies testify to the idea that memes represent a fertile field of pragmatic study, especially in terms of humour, social commentary, and the implicit meaning. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that despite the growing literature, none of the literature available addresses the development of stereotypes concerning gender in Pakistani memes based on common presuppositions. The previous studies have identified the political discourse (Khan et al., 2025), general humour strategies (Anwar et al., 2022), societal themes (Noor and Arshad, 2024) or even user comments instead of memes (Wahid et al., 2025). None of the studies uses the presupposition theory proposed by Stalnaker (1974) to study gendered meme discourse. The absence of this element in the previous studies demonstrates the necessity of conducting the current study that examines the prevalence of gender stereotypes through the normalization of their messages and the dissemination of these messages via presuppositions involved in Pakistani social media memes.

Methodology

Research Design

The current study adopts a qualitative research design, which involves application of textual and discourse analytical methods in order to capture the latent meanings concealed in Pakistani social media memes. The question is guided towards the identification of how gender presuppositions are created by means of culture-based assumptions that are rampant in meme discourse. The qualitative paradigm provides the research with an option of close reading of the text and thorough interpretation of both linguistic and cultural elements that contribute to gender representation.

Tool / Mode of Data Collection

The information was collected from the popular Pakistani social media sources, i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter). Specific search terms were used to identify publicly circulating memes, which included gender memes Pakistan, boys vs. girls memes, marriage memes and husband-wife memes. The inclusion criteria required that the memes be created or shared regularly in Pakistani digital spaces to ensure their cultural relevance and presence of locally shared presuppositions in them.

Sample Size

The purposive sample selected for analysis consisted of 10 memes. The small sample corresponds to the qualitative focus of the research and, hence, allows a detailed interpretive analysis of each meme, as well as conduction of a scrupulous examination of the assumptions and gender stereotypes underlying them.

Theoretical and Analytical Framework (Stalnaker, 1974)

This paper is based on the Theory of Presupposition by Stalnaker (1974), according to which it is the presuppositions that form an element of the common ground, or shared background knowledge, which both the speaker and the audience should assume to accept. The framework is especially appropriate for meme analysis since memes strongly rely on unwritten cultural beliefs and mutual social assumptions for their interpretation. The same theory is applied as the analytical framework in this research for analysis of each meme to find out how gender stereotypes are developed through implicit assumptions, rather than overt ones. The study focuses on the activation of shared cultural knowledge regarding the role of gender in Pakistani culture, as depicted through the memes, to generate the meaning, critique or awareness.

Data Analysis

This section deals with the analysis of the data.

Analysis of Meme 1



The chosen meme is posted on Pakistani Instagram account “khatti_meethi_baatein2”, which is a brief text reflection based on the differences in the concerns of women and men after marriage. This post has become popular due to the assumption that its conclusions have found a common response in the local population and mirror recognizable experiences within the Pakistani marital and social culture.

The meme states that once married, the whole life of a woman appears to be dependent on the supportiveness of the husband. It has never been observed that a man doubts his future after getting married asking what happens in case his wife fails to support him; before and after marriage, he has a plan on how to live his life.

Using the culturally shared knowledge about gender roles, the meme focuses on the perceived more radical impact of marriage on the lives of women compared to men. It draws a comparison between women’s increased emotional and utilitarian concerns and men’s perceived stability, based on the audience’s implicit awareness of shared social realities. Such dependence on mutual cultural assumptions can be compared to the idea of Stalnaker (1974) that meaning can become effective only when speakers and hearers share some mutual background knowledge. This shared understanding is assumed by the meme, hence eliciting instant comprehension and identification among the viewers.

It is possible to identify a number of presuppositions in the meme. The statement that the life of a woman depends on the supportiveness of her husband makes many assumptions according to which the emotional and social welfare of women is largely dependent on men, which is firmly instilled in Pakistani family system. It further assumes that this reliance is a normal and accepted aspect of a post-marital woman’s life. The argument that men have no doubts about their future after getting married assumes that men are stable and consistent, and that marriage does not subject them to emotional vulnerability or dependency. The last line conveying that he himself chooses his path through the life before and after marriage assumes that the life path of men is not affected by marriage, which supports the stereotype of men as being independent and not susceptible to

changes in relations. These assumptions persist because Pakistani viewers share a common ground about the disparate demands placed on men and women in marital situations. The reason why women are afraid of unsupportive husbands and why men do not seem frightened is not clarified in the meme; it merely assumes that the audience already possesses the required cultural background knowledge. The fact that the post received significant responses indicates that these assumptions are not only interpreted but also accepted or acknowledged, which proves that these assumptions are grounded in common social experience.

In the perspective of Stalnaker, the meme is described as an example of the dissemination of gender stereotypes by relying on common cultural ground. The message of the meme is not presented as a new statement but as something that the viewers already know, making it more believable and effective. Therefore, the purpose of the meme is not entertainment but to reproduce and naturalize broader gender demands within Pakistani society through assumed cultural facts.

Analysis of Meme no: 02



The meme was posted on Pakistani Facebook page “Whatameme” on September 7 and has received thousands of reactions, including comments, and shares. Such intense engagement indicates the extent to which the content appeals to Pakistani viewers and suggests that its underlying assumptions may be leveraging some of the common cultural knowledge regarding gender, marriage, and social norms. The meme includes a short text post, which says: “Guys are working hard to get married; girls are working hard to not get married,” along with crying emojis that elicit humour and reliability of the post.

The satire of the meme relies greatly on the generally perceived disparities in the social pressures experienced by men and women in Pakistan. To most men, marriage is usually portrayed as a milestone of maturity, stability and social respectability. On the other hand, women often experience fears about loss of freedom, autonomy, and educational or career prospects after getting married. The satirical connotation of the meme arises from the contrast, which is based on these lived cultural experiences and the relatable, prevailing gender norms.

Applying Stalnaker’s (1974) concept of common ground, the meme operates on the premises shared by the viewers. First, it assumes that Pakistani society socially promotes early marriage of men, and often perceives them as active seekers of marriage proposals or social stability. Second, it assumes that girls, in turn, might be opposed to marriage because of the early domestic

responsibilities, control and authority of in-laws, and the loss of independence, which is perceived as the immediate consequence of marriage. These cultural dynamics are not clearly detailed in the meme, but the audience is assumed to be already aware of them. The viewers are expected to grasp the reason why men work hard to find a spouse and why women work hard to avoid marriage, without any further clarification.

They are not accidental presuppositions; rather, they portray common gender stereotypes within the Pakistani socio-cultural context. By presenting the statement as a general, self-evident fact, the meme presupposes that the audience is aware of the fact that marriage is depicted as something men can be proud of but women are burdened by it or put at risk. The emojis further indicate that the meme is intended to be humorous; however, the humour here completely relies on shared social knowledge of how men and women experience and perceive marriage differently. This popularity of the meme on Facebook presents it as a shared ground among Pakistani social media users in general. The level of interaction indicates that the meme is quite effective in strengthening a socially accepted story: that men and women enter into a marriage based on radically different emotional and cultural statuses. Based on Stalnaker's framework, it is evident that the meme does not simply entertain but subtly normalizes and replicates culturally enshrined gender expectations by presenting them as universally accepted matters of fact.

Analysis of Meme no: 03



This meme was initially tweeted by an X (Twitter) account belonging to Pakistan and later reposted on Instagram by the page “khattii.meethi.baateinn”. It has received thousands of views and interactions, implying that it has found a strong connection with Pakistani female audiences. The story recounted in the post is a personal example: prior to marriage, the woman's fiancé guaranteed that he would never make her apologize; however, after the marriage, he makes her sit at his feet to apologize nearly every other day. This drastic contrast between the prior conduct and the post-marriage treatment is the main focus of the meme's critique, which is further enhanced by crying emojis used to indicate the irony and frustration simultaneously.

This meme leans heavily on a very familiar cultural myth in Pakistan: the distinction between the performative good guy image of a man before marriage and the authoritative or dominating code after-marriage. This cultural understanding is supported by the caption that the Instagram page included, which states that men and their performative good guy acting is a nightmare to all

women. The fact that the meme on Twitter and Instagram has been widely viewed indicates that audiences instantly understand the phenomenon under discussion, and it is their shared perspective that makes the meme relatable.

Based on Stalnaker's (1974) idea of common ground, the meme relies on a series of assumptions ingrained into the cultural background that the audience is assumed to already share. First, it assumes that men in Pakistani society tend to portray an ideal, excessively thoughtful version of themselves during engagement — a socially accepted time period in which men usually appear as caring, progressive, as well as emotionally available. Second, it posits that in post-marital life traditional gender norms such as male dominance, female submissiveness, and unequal emotional labour tend to recur, albeit in exaggerated form. The reason behind the change in the husband's behaviour is not explained in the meme; rather, it depends on the audience's shared knowledge of these cultural changes.

The phrase “makes her sit at his feet” also assumes that there is a culturally accepted vision of female subordination in South Asian marriages. Though exaggerated, this quote reflects the actual issues many women face in terms of power mismatch, emotional control, and gender-based demands of obedience in marriage.

The meme, therefore, succeeds in appealing to common-ground knowledge regarding gendered expectations of marriage in Pakistani culture. Stalnaker argues that communication is successful when both the speaker and the audience make use of shared assumptions. In this situation, viewers immediately understand the difference between the love before marriage and the male superiority afterwards, as these tendencies are actively debated and accepted socially. The meme therefore reveals normalized gender inequality by turning it into a time of shared recognition and criticism.

Analysis of Meme no: 04



The Instagram post by the profile “EmpoweringWomenPakistan” reflects on the fact that the existence of violent men in society indirectly favours non-violent men. According to the meme, the actions of violent men are ultimately beneficial to all men and the fear caused by violent behaviour is the reason that women are more careful and controlled. It postulates that since violence is perpetrated against women, men have the right to do the bare minimum and deserve to be declared as good because of not being violent. The everyday dualism of Pakistani gender conventions is reflected in the language of the meme in which women must control their conduct to protect

themselves, whereas men are rewarded with social capital for achieving even minimal levels of decency. The meme is an expression of well-known dynamics of gender stereotyping in Pakistani society. It draws attention to the fact that women have to change their routines, movements, and other social interactions since violence, or the threat of violence, is always a part of their life. It also points out how little supportive behaviour by men is socially over-rated and applauded, thus forming the stereotype that being non-violent is synonymous with being very good. This aligns with the patriarchal values that focus on men as guardians and women as vulnerable, which in turn maintains unequal emotional and social labour.

The Presupposition Theory, as put forward by Stalnaker (1974), makes the meme meaningful since it fully relies on the collective cultural knowledge between the poster and the audience. It presupposes the existence of violent men and their presence in the society as a known problem. It also assumes that the change of daily behaviour of women in Pakistan is driven by the fear of being unsafe, which does not require elaboration for the readers of the meme. The fact that violence is what keeps women in check is based on the common knowledge that harassment, domestic violence, and fear-induced control are topical. On the same note, the wording of the meme — suggesting that men are doing the bare minimum and still manage to feel good about themselves — assumes that the expectations of society for men are low and that even the basic decency is presented as something extraordinary. Patriarchy, gender privilege, and fear are not specified in the meme since they are understood to be part of the everyday landscape of Pakistani social life and that is precisely what Stalnaker states as the background assumptions required to make communication a success.

The meme is also very close to Pakistani context as the message aligns with the universally accepted patterns of behaviour. Women are constantly advised against going out alone, and more so at night; harassment in the streets is a widely recognized phenomenon, and families tend to impose restricted rules on the daughters to shield them against men. Meanwhile there are often encomienda of men, such as escorting their wives to school or taking into account their career choices — behaviour that is portrayed as anomalous when it ought to be considered standard conduct. This cultural fact makes the meme to be immediately comprehensible to Pakistani audience, which means that its criticism can manifest itself in the form of presupposed shared knowledge instead of definite exposition.

Analysis of Meme 5



The above meme, shared by Pakistani feminist account “kharabaurat” on Instagram, criticizes the prevailing culture that women must always be ready to change their behaviour so that their safety

can be guaranteed. The page is popular among young Pakistani viewers, particularly women, and its posts usually have thousands of likes and comments, which shows the extent to which such discussions are relatable to Pakistani society. The burden with which women are frequently weighted to learn self-defence, run background checks, or even go out of their way to be extra-vigilant, is forcibly refuted in the meme; instead it asserts that it is the men who need to be educated to stop being abusive, and to cease pro-creating violence.

The terse and emotionally charged form, including short, stressful lines like MEN MUST BE HUMAN and MEN MUST NOT KILL, makes the argument even more urgent and shows the impatience with the long-established patriarchal norms. The message is very close to Pakistani setting where women are often expected to control their whole life in order not to be harassed or killed. Since one is not supposed to go out late, dress up, go to public places, look into the reputation of their male friends or peers, take self-defense classes, the social cost of safety is imposed on women in a massive way. In the meantime, the behaviour of men is hardly ever questioned so intensively, which is a kind of cultural disequilibrium. To highlight this imbalance, the meme demands that the change in behaviour of men is what is needed to stop violence rather than hypervigilance by women. This commentary indicates a wider feminist discussion in Pakistan that emphasizes the process of naturalizing male privilege and implicating the society rather than men.

In terms of the Presupposition Theory, as suggested by Stalnaker (1974), the meme relies on the common background assumptions between the audience and the person creating it. The article assumes that gender-based violence is a rampant issue in Pakistan and women have to defend themselves at all times. It also assumes that the acts of abusiveness among men are not some isolated cases, but a larger cultural trend that has to be unlearned and restructured. The meme is based on the premise that the audience is already familiar with the unfair allocation of responsibility: women have to undertake preventative measures, while men are either absolved or, at best, superficially investigated. These presuppositions are not explicitly stated, as they form part of the common cultural ground — widely accepted social realities, which do not require further elaboration. Consequently, the criticism of gendered expectations in the meme would be less effective in the absence of this background information.

As part of this mutual cultural perception, the meme serves as a rejection of patriarchal reasoning and a reformulation of responsibility. It focuses on what men must unlearn in order to practice non-abuse and to be non-killing, which shifts the responsibility to change onto men — a notion that directly confronts the status quo of gendered burdens. This bluntness, coupled with its use of presumed social knowledge, is what makes the meme a highly effective way of reflecting how gender stereotypes and expectations are constructed, distributed, and opposed to in Pakistani digital spaces.

Analysis of Meme 6



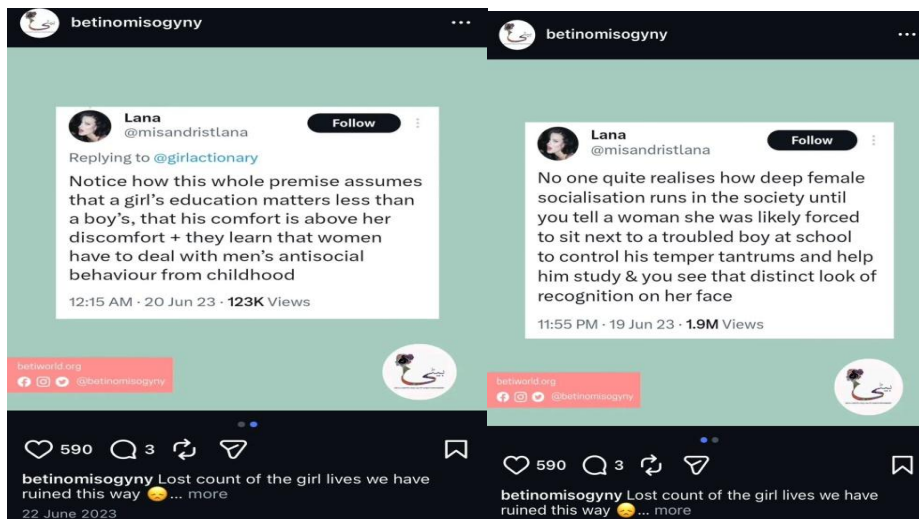
This meme juxtaposes the “desi Muslim” claim “aurat ki kamaai mein barkat nahin hoti” with the historical fact that the first campaign of their religion was largely financed by a woman. The meme is pure to the extent that it operates using common background assumptions; this is what Stalnaker (1974) called “presupposition” or “common ground”. The meme also presupposes the reader’s recognition of the “barkatless income” notion as one of their cultural beliefs constantly and falsely recycled in a Pakistani and desi Muslim family. This is not a point open to the daily discourse, but rather a fact of social reality that is passed over quite incidentally in conversations and directions, as well as in jokes. It is also implicit in the meme that the audience is familiar with the historical context of the Islamic religion that the early days of Islam were financed by Hazrat Khadijah (RA), wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Although, this reference to religion is not mentioned by name but one can assume that the viewer can find this information by relying on his/her own knowledge of religion on autopilot.

Within Stalnaker’s framework, the two facts already exist within the common ground shared by the author of the meme and the reader. The meme in question bases its claim on the fact that the two beliefs are being accepted as known truths, rather than making a statement about them one way or another. The power of the meme, however, does not lie in what it presupposes. Instead, when these two supposed beliefs collide, criticism emerges making it a powerful commentary. On one hand, society believes that the income of women is not spiritually significant; on the other hand, the history of Islam presupposes that the prosperity of a woman was the main pillar in the establishment of Islam. This contradiction, presented in the meme, is not argued logically; it is simply disclosed in ordinary supposition.

However, the meme is itself a challenge to the existing common ground from a presuppositional perspective. When the information given by the speaker (according to Stalnaker) contradicts some of the already established assumptions, the audience is pushed to re-examine the basis of the common ground. In this instance, the meme breaks the presupposition that the income of a woman is culturally considered inferior since it draws audience’s attention to a fact that cannot be disputed according to religious teachings. This creates a pragmatic tension: should both presuppositions be considered true, the cultural belief would become a priori unstable. By doing so, the meme does not merely mock a stereotype but reinvents what may, nevertheless, be acceptable in the mainstream belief.

With regard to the gender representation in question, this meme strikes against the stereotype defining women as economically unsuccessful and spiritually underachievers. However, instead of refuting this stereotype through argumentation, the meme is staged through an indirect exposure to presuppositions, which is precisely consistent with Stalnaker’s theory. The stereotype is proved to be retained only because it is neither discussed nor challenged in the everyday discourse. Its legitimacy becomes weak as soon as it is confronted with a religious presupposition that is stronger in Pakistani society. Thus, this meme demonstrates how gender stereotypes are being held together due to the unspoken common assumptions. The sense of the meme is constructed not through a direct argumentation but by playing upon the common ground, which is an impressive illustration of how the presupposition works as a very strong tool in gendered meme discourse of Pakistani social media.

Analysis of Meme 7



According to this meme, no one quite understands how deep female socialization is in society until you inform a woman that she was probably forced to sit next to a troubled boy at school to curb his temper tantrums and help him study. The meme further proceeds to explain how women have to deal with men and their antisocial behaviour from childhood. This meme is constructed on the basis of presupposition to a great extent rather than outright argument. It assumes that these practices are already socially accepted as known and normal in schools. According to Stalnaker (1974), the presuppositions are present as background beliefs that the interlocutors assume to be in the common ground. In this case, the meme makes the assumption that readers are already aware that girls were often expected to play the role of emotional controlling mechanisms for boys in the learning institutions.

The words “forced to sit beside a troubled boy” assume that this is not a random assignment but a methodical one and even consent does not matter when distributing this emotional labour among girls. The meme does not state that this happens; it presupposes that it is accepted. This shows the normalness of this gendered practice. Moreover, the fact that the girl is supposed to manage the tantrums of his temper and assist him in studying, supposes that the caregiving, patience, and the responsibility of regulating adult male behaviour are inherently female qualities. This is uncritically accepted as an undeniable social fact rather than as a question of debate through the meme, which clearly aligns with Stalnaker’s notion that the presuppositions are considered to be part of the common ground that are taken for granted.

These concealed assumptions are actually unpacked in the second slide of the meme, in which it is mentioned that the education of a girl is less important than the comfort of a boy. This statement is based on the assumption that society already favours the emotional comfort of males above the intellectual growth of females. The meme fails to substantiate this allegation since it presupposes that the audience is aware of this hierarchy of value. The fact that his comfort is superior to her discomfort further assumes that the suffering of women is acceptable socially when it benefits males. It is the fact that these meanings have been generated as a result of what is silently assumed and not openly declared that makes them powerful.

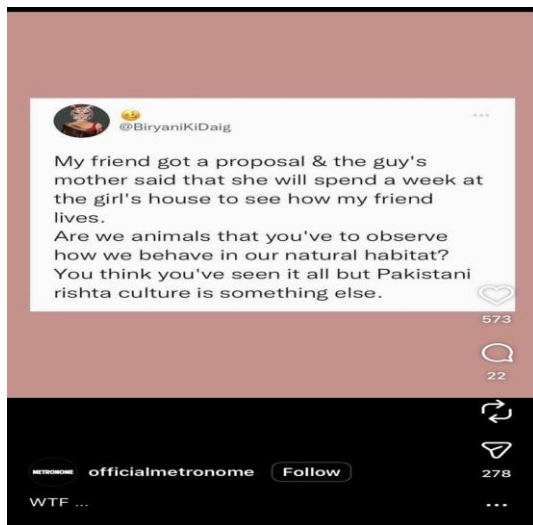
The last assumption is evident in the assertion that women are taught from childhood how to manage the antisocial behaviour of men. This presupposes that emotional stamina, patience, and mental adaptation are acquired feminine competencies that are developed at a very tender age. The meme is based on the assumption that inability to control aggression by males is not perceived as a

social deficiency in boys, but as a responsibility of girls. From a presuppositional view, this implies that gender inequality is not only reproduced by explicit rules but also through daily educational experiences which silently educate the girls about their social status.

This meme, in the context of Stalnaker, shows how common background knowledge perpetuates gendered power relations. The audience is not left to wonder whether the practices exist; they are immediately known to be socially familiar. Unlike stereotypical memes, which support the norms of femininity and masculinity by being humorous, this meme is a calculated exposure of the supposed inequality by surfacing the assumptions that were never stated. It places in the foreground of consciousness what used to be part of the common ground and makes the viewer look directly at the injustice that it contains.

By doing so, the meme is not a simple description of female socialization; it demonstrates how early socialization practices in the form of education help in the creation of gendered emotional labour. The meme depicts how girls, from their childhood, are conditioned to place the satisfaction of males over their development, and boys are not expected to control their actions. This is in line with the argument of Stalnaker that presuppositions shape social reality by giving meaning to what is taken as given and undeniable. The meme disrupts the unspoken social fact of gender inequality by exposing such presuppositions and makes an otherwise assumed social fact visible as an ideological challenge.

Analysis of Meme 8



This meme narrates an experience in which the speaker's friend received a marriage proposal and the groom's mother demanded to stay at the girl's house for a week to observe how she lives. The speaker then sarcastically asks whether women are animals being studied in their natural habitat and concludes that Pakistani rishta culture is "something else." At the surface level, the meme appears to be exaggerated; however, its pragmatic force lies almost entirely in the presuppositions it activates. The meme presupposes that such intrusive evaluations of a woman's private life are already socially recognizable and culturally intelligible to the audience. According to Stalnaker (1974), presuppositions are propositions that the speaker treats as mutual background knowledge shared with the hearer. This meme operates on the assumption that the audience already knows that women in Pakistan are rigorously judged for their suitability as wives based on their domestic behaviour, cleanliness, obedience, routine, and adaptability. The meme does not explain this system — it presupposes it.

The line “*to see how my friend lives*” presupposes that a woman’s everyday life is a legitimate site for moral and behavioural surveillance during marriage negotiations. The meme does not frame this surveillance as unusual within the cultural system; instead, it frames it as extreme but recognizable. This indicates that the underlying assumption — that women are evaluated in this way — is already part of the shared common ground. At the same time, the complete absence of any mention of similar scrutiny of the groom presupposes that such evaluation is not expected of men. This silence is itself meaningful: it reflects the asymmetrical gender order in which women are inspected, corrected, and verified, while men are socially presumed to be acceptable by default. The meme therefore reveals how gendered expectations are maintained not only through what is said but through what is systematically left unsaid.

The comparison of women to animals being observed in their “natural habitat” functions as a powerful pragmatic exaggeration, which presupposes that such inspection is humiliating and dehumanizing. The meme works because the audience shares the societal knowledge that girls’ homes, behaviour, food habits, and family dynamics are routinely judged in rishta settings. Through Stalnaker’s notion of common ground, the meme highlights how what is treated as normal within society can still be exposed as deeply invasive when linguistically reframed. The meme does not explicitly argue that the practice is unjust; instead, it presupposes its injustice and relies on irony to foreground it.

The concluding line, “*Pakistani rishta culture is something else,*” activates a collective presupposition that such practices are not isolated incidents but widespread social realities. The meme assumes that the audience has either witnessed or heard of similar cases, making the statement function as a societal generalization rather than a personal grievance. This shows how cultural knowledge sustains the meme’s meaning without the need for detailed explanation. In Stalnaker’s terms, the meme updates the common ground not by adding new facts but by re-evaluating already accepted ones—forcing the audience to reconsider the ethical implications of what they previously accepted as normal.

From a gender-stereotype perspective, the meme presupposes that women’s primary value in marriage is tied to domestic performance, obedience, and behavioural discipline. It reinforces the idea that a woman is not merely marrying an individual but being audited as a potential asset to another household. The meme also exposes how patriarchal authority is often exercised through other women, particularly mothers-in-law, thus revealing the intergenerational transmission of gender control. While the meme critiques this structure, its very intelligibility depends on the audience sharing the background assumption that such control mechanisms exist and are socially sanctioned.

This meme demonstrates how unspoken cultural rules about women’s surveillance, modesty, domesticity, and marriageability operate. Through Stalnaker’s theory, the meme can be understood as a site where shared background assumptions are not only activated but also subtly resisted through irony. The meme, thus, simultaneously exposes and challenges the normalized power imbalance embedded in Pakistani marriage culture, making it a powerful example of how presupposition governs gendered meaning in social media discourse.

Analysis of Meme 9



This meme, posted by the Pakistani Instagram page *khattti_meethi_baatein2*, states: “*Being not independent is the second most horrible disease, being born as a girl still remains first.*” At the surface level, the meme uses dark irony and exaggeration to compare social conditions with disease. However, its deeper meaning is constructed almost entirely through presupposition. According to Stalnaker (1974), presuppositions are those background assumptions that a speaker treats as already accepted within the shared common ground. This meme presupposes that the audience already recognizes two things as socially true: first, that lack of independence is a severe social disadvantage, and second, that being born a girl in Pakistani society leads to even greater lifelong suffering than economic or personal dependency. The meme does not argue for these ideas—it assumes them as already known and culturally validated.

The ordering of “diseases” in the meme is particularly significant. By ranking *being born as a girl* above *lack of independence*, the meme presupposes that gender itself functions as a primary source of structural disadvantage. This relies on a shared cultural understanding that girls routinely face restrictions on mobility, education, career choice, personal freedom, inheritance, and decision-making power. The meme assumes that the audience already accepts that women experience systemic limitations regardless of their personal abilities. In Stalnaker’s terms, these beliefs are already part of the common ground, which allows the meme to work without any explanatory background.

The metaphor of “disease” is itself grounded in presupposition. The meme presupposes that social inequalities are so normalized that they can be compared to unavoidable medical conditions. This comparison suggests permanence, inevitability, and inherited suffering, which reflects how gender discrimination is perceived as something imposed at birth rather than chosen. The meme does not explicitly describe specific forms of oppression; instead, it relies on the audience to fill in the gaps through collective cultural memory—restricted freedoms, early marriage pressure, surveillance of behaviour, honour-based expectations, and moral policing. The meme thus activates a wide network of unstated gendered realities without naming them directly.

Another important presupposition in this meme is that independence is something from which girls are structurally prevented. If independence is ranked second to being born a girl, the meme implicitly suggests that even when women strive for autonomy, their gender continues to override

their agency in societal evaluation. This reinforces the idea that independence is not simply an individual achievement but a privilege unevenly distributed along gender lines. The meme presupposes that the audience already understands how women's independence is often discouraged, feared, or punished within patriarchal structures.

The meme also presupposes that suffering is gendered. It assumes that the audience will immediately relate to the idea that girlhood itself is treated as a social burden. This reflects a deeply embedded cultural narrative in which sons are celebrated as assets, while daughters are seen as responsibilities. The meme becomes meaningful only because this bias is already part of the collective consciousness. Stalnaker's concept of common ground explains why the meme feels immediately "true" to many viewers — it builds its impact on beliefs that are already widely circulated and socially normalized.

At the same time, the meme functions as a critique rather than reinforcement. While it activates harmful presuppositions, it does so in order to expose their cruelty. By presenting being born a girl as the "first disease," the meme highlights the extreme injustice of a system in which gender determines one's suffering before any personal choice is made. However, even this critique depends on shared presuppositions about how girls are treated; the meme's resistance operates within the very belief system it challenges.

Analysis of meme 10



This meme, posted by the Pakistani Instagram page "officialmetronome", states: "When will old desi men realize that making second marriage jokes in a family gathering (especially in one where your wife is present) is literally a form of humiliation. It needs to stop." On the surface, the meme appears to be a direct social criticism. However, its communicative force is derived largely from presupposition, as conceptualized by Stalnaker (1974), where meaning depends on what is already mutually accepted as background knowledge between speaker and audience. The meme presupposes that the audience is already familiar with the cultural practice of men casually joking about second marriages in Pakistani family gatherings. This behaviour is treated as a socially

recognizable norm, not something that requires explanation, which shows that such jokes are already embedded within shared cultural experience.

The meme further presupposes that the emotional impact of such jokes on wives is already understood. It does not explain why such humour is humiliating; rather, it assumes that the audience already accepts that a woman's dignity, emotional security, and social respect are threatened by these remarks. This reliance on shared knowledge reflects Stalnaker's notion of common ground, where participants do not need to state certain truths explicitly because they are assumed to be collectively known. The meme thus operates on the unstated assumption that a wife's worth is culturally linked to her replaceability, and that jokes about remarriage implicitly signal her disposability within marriage.

A deeper gendered presupposition operating here is that men possess socially tolerated authority over marital loyalty. The meme assumes that men are allowed, or at least not strongly punished, for joking about taking another wife, whereas women are culturally denied the same symbolic power. The very fact that such jokes are normalized enough to appear in humour points to an unspoken belief: that male remarriage is socially discussable and humour-worthy, while female remarriage or resistance is not. This unequal gender privilege is never stated directly but functions as the background assumption that gives the meme its critical urgency.

The use of the phrase "*old desi men*" also carries presuppositional weight. It assumes that the audience already associates this behaviour with an older generation shaped by deeply entrenched patriarchal values. The meme does not need to explain what those values are, because the audience is expected to already recognize them as involving dominance, entitlement, and lack of emotional accountability toward women. This generational framing allows the meme to critique tradition without explicitly rejecting culture itself, thereby making the criticism socially acceptable within digital discourse.

By calling such jokes "literally a form of humiliation," the meme presupposes that women's emotional suffering in such settings has long been minimized or dismissed as overreaction. The statement "*it needs to stop*" presupposes that the practice is ongoing and socially tolerated. This transforms the meme from mere observation into a performative demand for moral correction, built upon a shared recognition of injustice. The meme relies on moral realism anchored in cultural assumptions already present in the collective mind.

This meme illustrates how shared presuppositions regulate gendered power in everyday interaction through humour. It shows that even casual jokes work as sites where patriarchal authority is rehearsed and normalized. The meme's power lies not in what it says directly, but in what it assumes the audience already knows: those women's emotional boundaries are routinely violated in socially acceptable ways, that male remarriage is a symbolic threat used as control, and that public humiliation of wives is culturally trivialized. Through Stalnaker's framework, this meme clearly demonstrates how gender stereotypes and marital power hierarchies persist through unspoken, socially shared assumptions embedded in everyday humour.

Findings and Conclusion

Findings

The discussion of the ten chosen Pakistani social media memes reveals that the message concerning gender stereotypes is mostly conveyed by means of implicit common assumptions instead of explicit or direct messages. Based on the premise of the common ground by Stalnaker (1974), one can see that these memes are based on culturally well-known concepts of marriage,

male dominance, female role, emotional work, and safety. Since the assumptions have already been developed in the shared social understanding, the audience can instantly understand the intended meaning without having to go through an explanation. The results also indicate that the presuppositions are at both ideological and emotional levels. A lot of memes legitimize the notion that the lives of women change entirely after getting married and the life of men does not. Others assume that women bear the burden of emotional nurture, family balance and personal safety. Meanwhile, some of the feminist meme platforms strategically use these common assumptions to challenge the status quo and demonstrate injustice. Therefore, presuppositions are not only reinforcing tools, but also opposing ones. The other interesting observation is that there is the coexistence of humour and critique in Pakistani digital culture. Even grave matters of domestic inequality, fear of violence, emotional exploitation, and public humiliation are conveyed using memes in a manner that is socially acceptable. This reveals how, through presupposition, sensitive gender issues can be discussed indirectly in a society where it would be discouraged to directly address them.

Conclusion

The research concludes that the Pakistani social media memes serve as effective cultural texts that mirror, enforce, and occasionally oppose gender stereotypes by sharing the presuppositions. Using Stalnaker's theory, it proves that the true meaning of these memes is not solely based on the surface text but on the assumptions, which are already held as true by the audience. These concealed assumptions help stereotypes to spread naturally without necessarily being mentioned. The research also concludes that presupposition happens to be the most effective pragmatic approach in online communication. Presuppositions are influencing the perception of gender roles in the everyday online exchange, whether through mainstream pages or feminist platforms. Thus, memes are not merely instruments of entertainment, they become the active means in the creation of gender ideology within modern Pakistani society.

Future Research Recommendation

Future studies can take into consideration a bigger sample, use multimodal analysis to examine the components of visuals in association with text, or make cross-cultural comparisons to learn how presuppositions in gender work in various cultures. These researches would also reinforce the knowledge of digital gender discourse.

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