

HUMOR AND VIOLATION OF SOCIAL NORMS: GENDER ASPECT

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ABSTRACT

Creating new forms of norms and restrictions, culture leads to the increase in the need for a symbolic, game violation of these norms. In humor you can temporarily violate the rules by playing with reality in the way that negates social restrictions and ignores the usual consequences of behavior. This work attempted to study the relationship between different styles of humor and a tendency to violate social norms and rules by men and women. The study was conducted using the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ, Martin R.), Coping Humor Scale (CHS, Martin & Lefcourt), A.N. Orel methods "Diagnosis of addiction to deviant behavior". 309 students (249 women, 60 men) took part in the study. They revealed gender differences in the use of different styles of humor by students, as well as the propensity of subjects to deviant forms of behavior. Affiliated and self-sustaining humor is used by students who do not show a desire to deny social norms and values and the patterns of behavior. The desire to violate norms, to conflict with generally accepted norms of behavior arises among students (both men and women) who prefer aggressive humor. Women who tend to ignore and violate norms and rules have a tendency to use self-deprecating humor, to seek the disposition of other people to the detriment of themselves.

Keywords: humor, styles of humor, social norms, violation of norms, students.

INTRODUCTION

Humor as a symbolic violation of social norms

Humor can be seen as a form of a play that includes cognitive (non-serious mismatch), emotional (joy), and behavioral (laughter) components. Psychologically, laughter removes the responsibility for a person to behave according to existing norms of society [2]. A joke allows to defuse the tension created by "prohibitive social norms" [2, 3]. In a hidden and open form of "fooling around" there is the criticism of the existing world and existing social relations are exposed [4]. Laughter shows the senselessness and absurdity of the causal relationships existing in the social world [5]. The comic element appears as a deviation from a social and a moral norm, a laughing man has the ideas of what is due apriori, with which the real state of things is compared with all its shortcomings [6]. One can temporarily violate all the rules in humor [7, 8]. Humorous relations take place in different cultures between people, performing an important function of social interaction regulation [9], allowing one to gain a sense of freedom, superiority and dignity in the opinion of Mindess [7]. According to Ziv, humor is used to expand the boundaries of social relevance and the criticism of immutable truth [10, 11]. Long and Grasser [12] pointed out that humor can be used not only to test and violate social norms, but also to enforce them, to exercise indirect control over the behavior of others [13]. Ignoring social taboos, laughter performs a positive role in society, acting as an authorized way of destruction [14, 15]. Malkay [16] suggested that the function of jokes may be more associated with the social expression of those who are tabooed in a given culture than with an intrapsychic release of motives. E. Oring [17] and Kane [18] suggested that in addition to sex and

aggression humor is often used to convey various topics that cause some embarrassment in a given culture.

Table 1 shows the reasons why different authors compare and contrast humor and a social norm.

Table 1. Attributes of humor and a social norm

Humor	Social (cultural) norm
Dynamic	Sustainable
It accepts contradictions, inconsistencies, ambiguities (Milkay, 1988)	Logical consistency, avoidance of ambiguity and contradiction
Punishment may not follow for taboo violation (Ziv, 1984)	An inevitable punishment for the violation of public norms and rules
Active use of the topics of religion, sex, politics, ethnic issues, gender issues (Kape et al., 1977)	It is forbidden to discuss the subjects of religion, sex, politics, ethnic issues and gender peculiarities
Social gaming activity (Milkay, 1988)	Strict regulation of social interaction

Thus, humor allows you to raise and discuss a wide range of social problems, without the fear of punishment for it. Regulating the relationship between people, humor allows you to relieve tension and enjoy a game, using opposite meanings and definitions.

HUMOR AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The results of the studies by Kuiper [19,20], Kirsh [21], Ivanova [22], Martin [23] do not allow one to perceive humor used in interpersonal communication only positively. A relationship was established between negative styles of humor and aggression, the asocial behavior of adolescents and adults. McGhee [24, 25] found that adolescents who laughed often and initiated humor often displayed unprovoked verbal and physical aggression and retaliatory aggression in the communication with their peers. Damico & Purkey [26], Fabrizi [27], Bowker [28] found that children prone to humor showed a more negative attitude toward teachers and a school principal, more often violated the discipline in a classroom. According to Martin [29] a high level of aggressive humor use is associated with frequent negative interactions with other people and a reduced ability to manage a conflict. Thus, the aggression contained in humor is only a game, a symbolic violation of social norms. Humor is not directed in fact to cause real harm to another person. It only emphasizes the absurdity of social attitudes and rules [30].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research methods

Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ)

The humor styles of the subjects were studied using the Humor Style Questionnaire (HSQ) [23], adapted by E.M. Ivanova [22].

Coping Humor Scale (CHS)

In order to study the sense of humor as a stress-relieving feature, the Coping Humor Scale (CHS) was used [31] adapted by Artemieva T.V. [32].

Diagnosis of propensity to deviant behavior

The following technique was used: "Diagnosis of the tendency to deviant behavior" [33].

Participants

309 students from the Kazan Federal University of full-time education, at the age from 17 to 24 took part in the study. The female sample made 249 people, the male sample made 60. The participation in the experiment was a voluntary and a free one.

Research questions

1. There are gender-specific uses of humor: men are more likely to have an aggressive style of humor than women.
2. Men are more likely to violate norms, they are more prone to delinquent and addictive behavior than women.
3. There is a possible dependence between the negative styles of student humor and the desire to violate social norms and generally accepted rules.

RESULTS

Table 2. Descriptive statistics in humor study

	Men (n=60)		Women (n=249)		t(309)	p	Whole sample	
	M	SD	M	SD			M	SD
Humor styles (HSQ)								
Affiliative	4.09	0.41	3.96	0.55	1.72	.085	3.98	0.53
Self enhancing	4.26	0.99	3.96	0.91	2.25	<.05	4.02	0.93
Aggressive	3.79	1.24	3.37	0.99	2.77	<.01	3.46	1.05
Self- defeating	3.60	1.00	3.36	1.10	1.53	.127	3.41	1.08
Coping Humor Scale (CHS)	20.65	3.85	19.79	3.70	1.59	.113	19.96	3.74

Note: Humor Styles are rated from 1 (Totally disagree) to 7 (Totally agree). Coping Humor Scale (CHS) is rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Table 3. Propensity of subjects to deviant behavior

	Men (n=60)		Women (n=249)		t(309)	p	Whole sample	
	M	SD	M	SD			M	SD
Scales								
Propensity to the overcoming of norms and rules	6.76	2.81	7.82	2.08	3.27	<.01	7.61	2.27
Propensity to addictive behavior	8.75	4.15	6.57	3.02	4.62	<.01	6.99	3.37

Propensity to self-harming and self-destructive behavior	8.36	3.83	7.96	3.69	.74	.456	8.04	3.71
Propensity to aggression and violence	9.45	4.02	10.28	3.19	1.71	.088	10.11	3.38
Volitional control of emotional reactions	6.68	2.90	7.39	2.18	2.11	<.05	7.25	2.35
Propensity to a delinquent behavior	6.53	3.56	8.30	2.94	4.00	<.01	7.95	3.14

Table 4. Correlation relations of humor styles and inclination to deviant behavior among women

Scales	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	.23**	.48**	.21**	.28**					.17**
2		.14**		.28**			.16*		
3				.22**					
4				.37**	.32**	.28**	.26**	.25**	.31**
5					.27**	.25**	.14*	.26**	.30**

Table 5. Correlation relations of humor styles and inclination to deviant behavior among men

Scales	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	.31*	.52**							
2		.35**		.30**					
3			.35**						
4					.30*	.27*	.40**	.33**	.35**
5								.32*	

Note:

1. Coping by humor
2. Affiliate humor
3. Self-sustaining humor
4. Aggressive humor
5. Self-deprecating humor
6. Propensity to addictive behavior
7. Propensity to self-damaging behavior
8. Propensity to aggression and violence
9. Volitional control of emotional reactions
10. Propensity to a delinquent behavior

DISCUSSION

The results of the study are consistent with the studies by E.M. Ivanova [34] and Lampert [35]: men are more likely to have an aggressive style of humor than women. In the studies by Crawford & Gressley [36], men's assessments by aggressive and derogatory humor styles are higher than women's. In our study, men's ratings are higher only in an aggressive style of humor. Men scored on average higher grades for self-sustaining humor. Martin's research [23] suggests that men are more likely to use negative styles of humor. The studies by Lampert [35] for women have more affiliate and self-sustaining humor, women's assessments of these styles of humor also turned out to be higher in our study than in negative styles of humor, but they are significantly lower in self-sustaining humor than among men. In Ivanova's study [34] the average values for affiliate humor (M = 36) were higher than in our study (M = 31.91). The results for other styles of humor turned out to be similar. In the studies of foreign scientists, the estimates of positive

styles of humor among men and women are higher than in the studies obtained within the Russian sample. The scores on the scale of self-deprecating humor among Russian students were higher regardless of gender characteristics [37]. The relationship of the scale of coping with all indicators according to the method "Styles of humor" is consistent with the results of the studies by Card and Martin [38]. The studies by Martin [39], Artemyeva [32], Nigmatullina [40] found that students who have high scores on humor coping scale are more active, sociable, and have less aggressive strategies. The indicator of coping with humor among men was associated with self-sustaining humor and affiliate humor. This is consistent with the results of previous studies. However, in the female sample, the coping with humor turned out to be associated with self-deprecating humor. Self-deprecating humor is ambiguous, especially in Russian culture. In the study by E.M. Ivanova [22], it was revealed that a self-deprecating humor style prevails among the subjects with a high level of self-control, a sufficient self-esteem, which allows to ironize over oneself without becoming a subject of a ridicule. In the study by Martin R. [23] an aggressive and a self-deprecating humor significantly positively correlate with each other; This shows that people who use one potentially harmful style of humor tend to use the other one. In our study two negative styles of humor are associated only in the female sample, this correlation is not revealed in the male sample.

Our study allows us to assert that the negative styles of humor (aggressive humor, self-deprecating humor) are associated with the tendency to violate public rules, a weak social control of behavioral reactions or the unwillingness to control behavioral manifestations.

CONCLUSION

In the performed study they found out that men and women often use positive styles of humor. Men use aggressive humor more often than women. This statement confirms our assumption (Hypothesis 1).

In general, the studied sample of students revealed a tendency to aggression, a destroying behavior towards themselves and others. Women are more prone to destructive behavior, unwillingness to control their behavior, to contrast their own norms and values with the public ones. Men are more likely to regulate their mental states. This statement refutes the second hypothesis of the study.

A relationship between negative styles of humor and a tendency to violate social norms were revealed. Aggressive humor among men and women is associated with the majority of scales for deviant behavior (Hypothesis 3). However, these scales are also associated with self-deprecating humor among women. Aggressive humor of women also reveals the connection with the desire for self-damaging behavior, the willingness to realize various forms of auto-aggressive behavior. Thus, having the desire to violate norms, to realize negative emotions, to enter into a conflict with a generally recognized way of life, women tend to use humor against themselves, wanting to enlist the support, to get favor from significant persons. Self-deprecating humor among men is associated only with the weakness of the emotional sphere volitional control, with the inability to control the behavioral manifestations of emotional reactions. The obtained results make it possible to assert that aggressive and self-deprecating humor can be considered as a manifestation of a lack of social skills, the weakness of the emotional sphere volitional control and the inability to control behavioral manifestations of emotional reactions. Positive forms of humor can be seen as a type of social skill; Humor allows you to gain a sense of freedom, superiority and dignity and continue to remain within the social framework of human life.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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