

# Humorous Visual Content and Its Effect on Social Media Users in light of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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## Abstract

This paper explores the role of humorous communication as stress relief during the time of coronavirus pandemic. One of the most prominent manifestations was the internet humor that people resort to, in order to help themselves to keep up with what was going on around them throughout the restriction measures. Internet memes, as one of the internet's humorous content forms, is one of the main means people tend to share. Visually and verbally, memes could help them to express how they feel towards the pandemic in a way that gives them a feeling of social solidarity.

The research discusses how ordinary people use social media platforms and consume visual content that conveys humor, which is transmitted through Internet Memes, to face exceptional circumstances and release the negative emotions embossed from the global situation. The research aims to explore the connection between the emotional consequences of the coronavirus pandemic with the production and consumption of Internet Humor, and how that it is reflected on the visuals circulated on social media platforms.

The descriptive approach is followed in this research by collecting information and data, addressing the differences between humor and laughter and theories related to them. The research explores Internet humor and types of internet-based humor. Furthermore, it tackles the characteristics, genres, and components of Internet memes as a visual form used widely over different social media platforms. The research also analyzes a group of samples of Internet Memes shared on Facebook and circulated by Egyptians on social media platforms since the pandemic of the Coronavirus outbreak as well.

## Keywords:

Internet Meme, Internet humor, coronavirus, social media, visual content

## ملخص البحث

يتناول هذا البحث دور الدعابة في العملية الاتصالية لتخفيف الشعور بالتوتر الناتج عن جائحة فيروس كورونا وتحدياتها، فيعتبر استخدام الدعابة على الانترنت من أهم الوسائل التي غالبا ما يلجأ لها الأفراد لتخفيف من وطأة المشاعر السلبية وحدة التوتر النفسي اليومي، ولمساعدتهم في مواكبة كم التغييرات المتسارعة التي حدثت خلال فترة التدابير الوقائية للجائحة. واحدة من صور استخدام الدعابة هي (وحدات المعلومات الثقافية على الانترنت)، والتي تسمى أيضا (ميمات الانترنت)، والتي لجأ

العديد من مستخدمي منصات التواصل الاجتماعي لإنشائها وتداولها، حيث كان لها دورا كبيرا وساعدتهم بشكل استثنائي على التعبير عن أفكارهم ومخاوفهم، وخصوصا في أوج جائحة كورونا حين اضطر الجميع للالتزام بتطبيق التدابير الوقائية والحجر المنزلي. مثلت تلك الوحدات ناقلة للمعلومات الثقافية، سواء البصري أو المنطوق منها، للعديد من الأفراد طريقة للتعبير عن التكتاف المجتمعي لمواجهة تلك التحديات والتي تعتبر الأولى من نوعها.

يناقش البحث كيفية استخدام الأفراد لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي وتداولهم المحتوى البصري الساخر والدعابات على الانترنت، بالاستناد إلى وحدات المعلومات الثقافية (ميمات الانترنت) كوسيط، لمواجهة التبعات الجديدة والتعامل مع المشاعر السلبية الناتجة عن هذا الحدث العالمي الاستثنائي. ويناقش البحث كذلك انعكاس تلك التبعات والتأثيرات الشعورية التي يواجهها الفرد على استهلاكه هذا النوع من المحتوى وإنتاجه لمحتوى بصري جديد وساخر ليعود ويتداول بين هؤلاء الأفراد مرة أخرى على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي.

يستخدم البحث المنهج الوصفي لجمع المعلومات والوقوف على النظريات المتعلقة بالدعابة والضحك والفرق بينهما، بالإضافة إلى التعرف على الدعابة على الانترنت وأنواعها. يستعرض البحث كذلك خصائص وحدات المعلومات الثقافية (ميمات الانترنت) وأنواعها ومكوناتها كأحد أشكال التعبير البصري على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي منذ بداية جائحة كورونا، ويتضمن دراسة تحليلية لعدد من النماذج التي تم تداولها على منصة (فيسبوك) بين المستخدمين في مصر منذ بداية تفشي فيروس كورونا.

### الكلمات المفتاحية:

فيروس كورونا ، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ، المحتوى المرئي

## Introduction

While the ongoing global pandemic of Covid-19 and the restricting measures have been applied in most of the countries, people in Egypt were forced to go through a lockdown that never been through before, besides dealing with various emotions they have never experienced. Many scenarios related to the situation like the potential exposure to the virus, loss of loved ones, greave, and going through mixed feelings such as fear and stress, even waiting for the unknown, all these scenarios affected people's behavior in every aspect.

As (Pedrosa, Bitencourt, Fróes, Cazumbá, Campos & Simões, 2020) <sup>[16]</sup> reported, the concerns about the psychological and social impact of the pandemic are higher than the fear of catching the virus itself. There has been a substantial rise in feelings of functional impairment, stigma, worry, phobia, annoyance, indignation, and many other mental and neuropsychological impact as a result.

Other secondary factors may cause these results as well, like economic difficulties that may face those who depend on daily wages, unavailability of food for some other segments, and disruption of future plans of many people. Moreover, individual differences may influence the emotional reaction, Individuals with anxious and depressive temperaments are anticipated to suffer superior emotional impact during the current situation. The male gender with avoidant adult attachment style was more protected against the psychological risks as well. Furthermore, going through the experience of an infected friend or family member may increase anxiety levels.

Here comes the role of social media as a channel for people to release tension and as emotional catharsis. During the early days of the pandemic, people consumed humor on different platforms more than usual. Humor in shared funny memes, watching silly TikTok videos, sharing stories with childish filters on Instagram, and other forms are being used and circulated to give the feeling of bonding together against the unknown and to help people to get over loneliness during the lockdowns and quarantine.

### **Research Problem**

The research discusses how ordinary people use social media platforms and consume visual content that conveys humor, which is transmitted through Internet Memes, to face exceptional circumstances and release the negative emotions embossed from the global situation.

### **Aims and Objective**

The research aims to explore the connection between the emotional consequences of the coronavirus pandemic with the production and consumption of Internet Humor, and how that it is reflected on the visuals circulated on social media platforms.

### **Research Hypothesis**

**H1:** The pandemic of Covid-19 affected the consumption of humorous content over social media.

**H2:** Creating and consuming Internet memes are one of the methods for emotional catharsis including stress and negativity during the pandemic.

**H3:** The pandemic of Covid-19 affected the visual manifestation of internet memes on social media platforms among Egyptians.

### **Research Importance**

The research importance helps to take into consideration the effect of global events on people's behavior and the visual content on social media platforms.

### **Research Methodologies**

The researcher follows the descriptive approach in collecting information and data, followed by an analytical study for selected group of Internet Memes on social media platforms that was circulated during the pandemic of Coronavirus.

### **Research limits**

The research is limited to the period of the coronavirus pandemic starting from March 2020 using Arabic and Egyptian visual content on social media platforms (Facebook as an example).

## **1. The Pandemic of Covid-19 and Humor**

With the spread of Coronavirus in the first quarter of 2020, many countries went through different precautionary measures. Lockdowns took place for the longest time since the beginning of this century, causing changes in different aspects of our daily life. This new situation had many consequences on individuals' both psychological and physical health. While the people-watching the number of cases and deaths going up besides experiencing the fear of

losing beloved ones during this difficult time, managing mental health becomes crucial. Anxiety, stress, loneliness, fear, and uncertainty are on the rise due to the whole special circumstances as we are facing the pandemic.

Many studies focused on the psychological impact of being quarantined, health staff are more likely to report symptoms related to exhaustion, detachment, anxiety, and insomnia. Parents and children who had been quarantined were four times higher in scores related to post-traumatic stress comparing to those who were not quarantined. Generally, symptoms of emotional disturbance, depression, stress, low mood, and irritability were reported in much quantitative research on those who had been quarantined (Brooks, Webster, Smith, Woodland, Wessely, Greenberg, & Rubin, 2020).

Since the pandemic, shifting happened in our life. From the way we work, how we study and even our shopping patterns changed. The usage of social media platforms changed as well, how we often use it and how we use it. In a survey done on 4500 Influenced members in the community of North America (Word, 2020), some numbers must be noticed. Most of the respondents agreed on the raise of their social media consumption during the pandemic with more than 70% of them. They increased their posting rate as well, and Instagram was the most platform that they use the most with 44% of them (Word, 2020) (Pacheco, 2020) (“COVID-19 Barometer: More than half of Millennials’ and Gen Z’s household incomes impacted”, 2020). These numbers reflect the intensive consumption of social media platforms due to the physical and psychological consequences of the pandemic. Users tend to use humor over social media platforms to release the stress of the overwhelming situation. In the article “How Humor Can Ease the Stress of COVID-19” by (Gordon, 2020), she asserted that funny memes, crazy TikTok videos, and silly online trends are what people need to ease the overwhelming emotions that people experience during the pandemic, such as anxiety, grief, and fear.

Even loneliness, humor can take the role to heal the consequences of the whole experience. Mctague (April 3, 2020) reported in his article that one of the world’s leading experts on laughter, Robert R. Provine concluded the reason behind the laughter is bonding. Laughter is not only a mood-lifter but is also a means of connecting and bonding with other people as it gives us all the pleasure of acceptance.

Laughter is used in such situations to give us all the feeling of bonding together against the same enemy, which in this case the coronavirus. That helped in the excitement of the outpouring memes, funny videos and silliness spread on different social media platforms.

In the same way, Gordon (2020) explained that laugh activates the needed hormones in the brain to make the individual feels good while reducing stress-related hormones like cortisol. It helps to increase the number of antibody-producing cells, enhances T-cells which leads to a stronger immune system. Humor is considered as pain relief as well. It helps to improve positive emotions, regulate stress, and improve interpersonal communications. Anticipating humor makes people experience a reduction in stress with 39% according to the Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor.

## 2. Laughter and Humor Theories

Though often used interchangeably, “Laughter” and “humor” have two different definitions. Humor refers to the stimulus that triggers a response, such as a joke. On the other hand, laughter refers to a physical reaction, which is characterized by a distinct repetitive vocal sound, certain facial expressions, and contraction of various muscle groups. (Louie, Brook, & Frates, 2016). According to (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004), there are three theories related to humor and laughing are shown in literature repeatedly, Relief theory, Superiority theory, and Incongruity theory. These theories try to explain why we laugh and how humor works.

The first theory asserts that people laugh from time to time to ease physiological tension. It assumes that laughter is a result of a release of nervous energy as it is related to suppressed desires and overcome some sociocultural inhibitions. While in the superiority theory, people laugh because they feel superior to others or some kind of triumph over them, which means that humor has an emotional function to build self-confidence. The superiority theory conveys themes of humor like making fun of people who are less fortunate.

The third theory, incongruity theory, unexpected and surprising things are the main cause of laughter, the unexpected pattern of events that generates humor and laughter. This theory relies on the cognitive side, which regards the capacity to understand the contradicted events that provoke laughter. As expected, some of the main themes of this theory are the absurdity, nonsense, and surprise (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004).

Humor can have mixed results, outcomes, and consequences. Studies show that there are two types of humor, negative and positive. Humor can have a great positive impact on handling health issues such as depression. However, studies also mention that the consumption of humor in a specific context and style can emphasize some negative emotions of oneself or others (Samson & Gross, 2012) (Hecker, 2020).

Gordon (2020) suggested some ways to add humor into an individual’s life during the challenging time of the coronavirus. She suggested subscribing to channels on YouTube with funny content, watching comedian performance, share old stories with friends and family members and most importantly she stressed on creating and watching TikTok videos that make one laugh to have the benefits of both laughing and even sharing whimsical content with others in order to reduce the feeling of dis-connectivity and communicate with others to overcome it even if it happens virtually.

Humor is mankind's built-in coping mechanism, beneficial in difficult times and situations. Obviously, humor over the internet is an important tool and helps us to release tension and stress.

## 3. Internet humor

Internet humor refers to all activities that produce humorous content over the internet, the medium that helped in making humor a leading mode for online communication. As (Shifman, 2014b) (Shifman, 2007) defines, it is any type of humorous interaction or performance that is manifested on the Internet. Internet, as a tool, has a huge influence on humor in terms of the scale and speed of its diffusion, its themes, and its formats. It helps humor to travel easily beyond boundaries and cultural differences by changing formats from verbal-based into visual. It has a wider scope as it can spread globally very quickly. The spreading of humor on a global

scale can be considered as user-generated globalization which was defined as a process through which content is translated, customized, and distributed across the globe by ordinary Internet users. (Shifman, 2014b).

Humor conveyed in viral funny videos, humorous internet memes, and repeated GIFs which are always expressing the remix of pop culture and commercial imageries. Besides that, humor is used to generate social commentary memes which are considered higher in reaching people and grabbing their attention to specific events or social practices (Yoon, 2016). Although there are various types and formats of humor on the internet, (Shifman, 2007) defined six new humor types of internet-based humor as following:

3.1. Interactive humor, which is A humorous text that needs from its receiver the performance of an activity to be in addition to the act of reading, watching, or hearing. This type requires this kind of activity for the message to be received and understood.

3.2. Funny photo, which is a photograph that conveys a humorous message, often accompanied by a funny written text. Funny photos either a “natural” photo for unexpected situations or phenomena or “staged” photos, which is an intended composition made for the camera.

3.3. Maniphotos, which is a manipulated photo that is usually combined with other visual forms.

3.4. Phanimation, or animated photos such as GIFs, which is a crude animation of static photos.

3.5. Celebrity soundboards, which are collections of celebrity sound bites taken from movies, radio, and TV presented on the Internet to facilitate prank calls and are known as lip-synching.

3.6. PowerPoint humor is a humorous text that takes the form of a PowerPoint presentation.

Some of these types were evolved through the years into a wider range than others, however, the main note over this study that the internet facilitates humor to be more visual-based more than ever, as most of the new types of Internet humor tend to be visual. Both the availability of easy-to-use software and the internet helped in making humor more participatory as people consume visuals in their everyday communication through the internet.

One of the most popular humorous message carriers is Internet Memes. The medium that was evolved since the availability of the internet to ordinary people.

#### 4. Internet Meme

Richard Dawkins, the biologist and the pioneer of meme studies, was the first who coined the term “meme” in 1976. He described the small cultural changes and transformations that act like genes in terms of evolution as Meme (Denisova, 2019) (Shifman, 2014a). An Internet meme is defined as “a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (Davison, 2012). Within Internet culture, memes are generally related to user-generated online visual contents, in forms such as image macro, video, GIF, etc. (Yoon 2016). Memes are units of information that are spread throughout society and culture. Their creations and lifecycle can be unpredictable. The former’s ability to replicate is the main distinction between memes and any other viral units (Tay, 2014).

## 5. Internet Meme Features and characteristics

According to Denisova (2019), Internet memes are not fixed visuals, they are interactive aesthetic digital visuals created to give a snapshot of the immediate directions of culture and public discourses. Internet connects ideas over people as they are kept anonymous.

Internet memes are sharp, as they discuss specific events or people that require users to have a background about the context to understand the joke. They are abstract as well, as they are found appealing to various types of people with different backgrounds and ways of thinking (Denisova, 2019, p.196-197).

Memes considering two factors in their behavior. The first is Time, which can be overcome by using social media that facilitate the ease of circulation in a very short time. The other factor is Space, which considers the spreadability of the meme. The existence of fast bandwidth of the internet and facilitating the various social media platforms helped in overcoming this factor and give the internet meme the opportunity to reach a vast space of audience (Davison, 2012).

Shifman (2014a) asserted some main characteristics for this digital piece of content. They share a common form and being created with awareness of other memes, and they are being circulated and altered by multiple internet users.

Internet memes have three main characteristics, humor, rich intertextuality, and anomalous juxtaposition. The first includes quirky humor, satire, and social commentary, the second refers to the cross-references to popular movies, cultural events, artifacts, and practices. The last is used to the higher ability of the idea to be transmitted from one mind to another, which can be achieved by using different incoherence images together into one meme. These productions usually are odd, ugly, and can be provocative (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006b, p. 215).

## 6. Components of Internet Meme

According to (Davison, 2012), memes consist of three things each one relies on the other:

- 6.1. The manifestation, which means the set of objects in the meme or the visual translation of the idea behind it.
- 6.2. The behavior, which means the actions that an individual takes in service of the meme.
- 6.3. The ideal, which means the concept or the main idea conveyed.

Each of these three components, starting from the idea that instructs the behavior which eventually creates the manifestation of a meme.

## 7. Humor in Internet Meme

Humor is a major component of successful Internet Memes. It doesn't mean only the content that was made as humor in purpose but also includes those videos and images that don't intend to be humor in the first place as well. This category includes, for instance, films of animals and kids; protagonists who may or may not be acting out, and colossal mistakes that people were unfortunate enough to be videoed making. The importance of humor in memetic content relies on three attributes:

- 7.1. **Playfulness** is tangled with comic in the content which clearly intended to be humorous. Humor is enjoyed for its own sake and has a multilayer perception of social situations. Therefore, meme playfulness may attract user creativity by calling viewers to take part in a game.

7.2. **Incongruity** that generates comedy, derives from an unexpected cognitive encounter between two conflicting elements, as we can find in a pun for instance. This is called the incongruity theory of humor as we discussed previously.

7.3. **Superiority** that comes with content made by some people who enjoy not only watching videos of others, but also take pleasure in scornfully imitating them, thus publicly demonstrating their own superiority. This feature relates to the empowerment motivation that led people to share content on social media platforms (Shifman, 2014 a).

## 8. Main Genres of Internet Memes

Although the Internet trends appear and vanish rapidly, the main genres of internet memes can be still countable. Shifman (2014a) (2014b) and Denisova (2019) stated that meme genres are not endless as one may think. The limitless number of creators doesn't mean limitless categories and can be classified into a limited number of main genres as well.

Some types become more popular over others during specific times, but the existence of the type itself is constant and doesn't disappear like trends as we may think. In this paper, we focused on the most popular themes during the time of covid-19.

The most popular one is the Image Macro, as any captioned image can qualify for Image Macro. Using bold white text with black borders on any image makes it an Image macro, which can be used sometimes instead of emoticons to express emotions and reactions (Denisova, 2019). This is commonly used on Facebook comments as they act effectively to express reactions. The verbal message in this type is important as they convey the idea itself with the exact tone of voice.

Another popular genre is photoshopped Images, people tend to manipulate two or more different images into one to come up with a new idea, context, and message. A photoshopped Image is an image that is treated to communicate a message without any text or verbal message (Milner, 2013).

Another type was Comics. It is the closest genre to the traditional drawn stories in magazines and conveys the features of storytelling. Many main heroes of comic memes have turned iconic by the reproduction of their significant reactions or catchphrases, which helped to make the core of this meme goes viral. Moreover, comics use some famous people in unusual circumstances and describes their imagined reactions or actions. Comics may also include the juxtaposition of expectations and reality memes (Denisova, 2019). In (Fig 4), as an example, shows two characters talking on the phone and discussing how the lockdown makes one of them discover new "sides" of himself and his family. The wordplay in the comic makes it funny and humorous as it describes the fact of gaining weight during the lockdown.

Reworked cartoons are another genre mentioned by Shifman (2014a) (2014b) and Denisova (2019). It is similar to the previous one, but it is closer to the art of Caricature.

This format depends on previous professional artworks and may a sarcastic line be added (Denisova, 2019, p.51). Shifman (2014a) (2014b) narrowed down types of this genres into a small number of forms such as Rage comics, which doesn't rely on professional artworks or illustrations, on the contrary, it depends on a roughly drawn characters that keep the sense of vernacular on the meme itself.

People also tend to become actors and performers to participate in trends and activities that appear on social media platforms (Shifman, 2014a). This type is called "People as Performers"



and it is one of the most popular genres in the time of covid-19, due to the global lockdown that pushed people to use social media more than any time and have the time to participate in such activities at home. This genre may include Lip-Synch/lyp dub, which are clips in which an individual or group is matching their lip movement to a popular song (Shifman, 2014b).

Adding slang verbal message to visuals contains mainly animals like cats or dogs to react to daily situations is one of the most popular genres of internet memes. This type is called “Animal reactions” which is usually used to make fun of a certain situation, relying on the animal’s expressions (Denisova, 2019). One of the most recent viral ones was the “women yelling at a cat” meme. This meme was circulated widely on different social media platforms with altered messages. Another example is the famous “grumpy cat” that was used broadly to express depression and bad luck situations.

This genre includes what is called LOLCats, which is a picture of a cat with a verbal message that is misspelled to be written in a complex, nonstandard childlike (or catlike) English internet dialect (Shifman, 2014b).

## 9. The Analytical Study

In the following analytical study, a selected group of (6) Arabic and Egyptian internet memes circulated by Egyptians is being analyzed in the terms of content, visual representation, and behavior in the light of laughter and humor theories. These samples were shared on Facebook and collected since the pandemic of the Coronavirus outbreak in March 2020.

### Sample 1



**Figure (1) Internet meme express people’s opinion before the curfew was imposed due to the Coronavirus pandemic (Hisham, 2020).**

Background	Before the Egyptian government applying a curfew due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, people noticed that many of them are not dealing with the precautionary measures that the government assured seriously. Thus, many of them were demanding the government to apply a curfew to avoid the negative consequences that could happen.
Description	A Facebook post contains an Image Macro. The post was followed by a hashtag #افرض حظر التجول in the caption to assure the idea behind the meme.
Type of the internet-based humor	Funny photo

Meme genre	This internet meme is an Image Macro, which uses a still image with bold text. The image uses one of the scenes of an Egyptian film that suits the context, using Arabic bold and stroked text over it to identify “People” and “Government” followed with a sentence that shows Egyptian opinion prior to the lockdown begging the government to apply a curfew.
Humor and Laughter theory applied	In this sample, the superiority theory of laughter is applied. The superiority is presented in the feeling of comparing superior people who are asking for applying precautionary measures to the others who are not aware enough of the negative consequences.
The humor in the content	In this sample, the humor is implied in superiority, which is one of the features that humor relies on.

### Sample 2



**Figure (2) a shot from animated Photoshopped Image, the main characters in the scene are face-masked and one of them is holding (Talat Khamsat) cologne (Mousa, 2020).**

Background	“Talat Khamsat” is a famous Egyptian local cologne that was revived again after decades of reluctance from customers, as they contain the needed percentage of alcohol to sanitize hands.
Description	A Facebook post contains a photoshopped animated GIF. The image uses two symbols related to the pandemic (face masks and sanitizers) by photoshopping them in a scene from an Egyptian film.
Type of the internet-based humor	Maniphotos, represented in the photoshopped scenes, and Phanimation by creation a GIF out of it.
Meme genre	Photoshopped Image, depending on one of the Egyptian master scenes manipulated with two main symbols for the pandemic period, face masks and (Talat Khamsat) cologne. The existence of indicators for how people deal with the pandemic and spreading sanitizers everywhere.
Humor and Laughter theory applied	In this sample, the Incongruity theory of laughter is applied. It is represented in the surprise of showing how the local cologne has revived and is being used everywhere. The surprise is also represented in merging two symbols related to the personal protective equipment being used

	nowadays in one of Nour el Sheief’s master scenes. The manipulation of two components that have a big-time gab between them influences the surprise.
The humor in the content	In this sample, the humor is implied in the incongruity, derived from an unexpected cognitive encounter between two conflicting elements, which is one of the features that humor relies on.

**Sample 3**



**Figure (3) an Internet Meme with virus visual indicators (Yasser, 2020).**

Background	This sample was collected during Ramadan 2020 when Egyptians attend many family gatherings. because of the pandemic, many people avoided these gatherings and raise awareness to others who do join with the negative consequence that may happen.
Description	A Facebook post contains a photoshopped image. The image uses a green shape with protuberances as a visual indicator of the virus and is poorly manipulated with a scene from (Salam Ya Sahby) a film. The image has a stroked white Arabic text making fun of people who thinks that family gatherings are not prohibited in social distancing.
Type of the internet-based humor	Maniphotos, represented in the photoshopped scene.
Meme genre	Photoshopped Image, depending on one of the Egyptian master scenes manipulated with a visual indicator of the virus. The image recreates a master scene in an Egyptian film that one prevents his friend from harming others. The irony in the meme comes from how people think that coronavirus avoids spreading in family gatherings in contrast with reality.
Humor and Laughter theory applied	In this sample, the superiority theory of laughter is applied. The superiority is presented in the feel of the triumph of the people who avoid family gatherings during Ramadan, to the others who are convinced that it may cause no harm to visit family members in the holy month. The irony is presented in humanizing the virus and give it the ability to choose when to be contagious and when not.
The humor in the content	In this sample, the humor is implied in the Superiority, results from humanizing entities scornfully.

Sample 4



Figure (4) an example for Comic type of Internet memes (Alwaraqat, 2020).

Background	During the lockdown, people discovered different sides of themselves and their family members. Because of the limitation in being outdoor and have any physical exercise, many people gain weight as well.
Description	A Facebook post contains a digital-drawn comic. The artwork is roughly drawn to express the idea in simple characters and shapes. The comic is drawn on a notepad-like background with handwritten text. The post is followed with the caption “New sides in the quarantine” to assure the idea behind the meme.
Type of the internet-based humor	Maniphotos, represented in the drawn comic which is the closest type to the traditional drawn stories in magazines and conveys the features of storytelling.
Meme genre	Comics, depending on different frames to tell the story. It shows two characters talking on the phone and discussing how the lockdown makes one of them discover new “sides” of himself and his family. The wordplay in the comic makes it funny and humorous as it describes the fact of gaining weight during the lockdown.
Humor and Laughter theory applied	In this sample, the Incongruity theory of laughter is applied. It is represented in the surprise of using the wordplay with the word “sides” to indicate two different meanings, one of them relates to personality’s sides and the other to the physical gaining weight. The difference between the two meanings is making the content humorous.
The humor in the content	In this sample, the humor is implied in the incongruity, derives from an unexpected cognitive encounter between the two meanings of the same words, which is one of the features that humor may rely on.

Sample 5



Figure (5) An example for “People as Performers” meme (El-Laithy, 2020).

Background	Healthcare staff was the real heroes during the pandemic. The whole world sees them as the redeemers that could help the world to transcend the special circumstances.
Description	A Facebook post combines two visuals in one. The first is the famous artwork “The Last Supper” by Leonardo DaVinci, the second is healthcare staff recreating the artwork while wearing all the medical gowns and masks. The post was re-shared with an Arabic caption “الفيروس الأخير” which means “The Last Virus”.
Type of the internet-based humor	Staged Funny photo, in which an intended composition was made for the camera.
Meme genre	People as Performers, where people tend to become actors and performers to imitate well-known artwork.
Humor and Laughter theory applied	In this sample, the Incongruity theory of laughter is applied. It is represented in the imitation of DaVinci’s artwork and the metaphor of representing the healthcare staff as redeemers who sacrifice their lives to make people life’s better. The caption followed is conceded as a pun as well which helps in making the content humorous.
The humor in the content	In this sample, the humor is implied in the incongruity, represented in the juxtaposition of two images, one for the well-known artwork, and the other for the healthcare staff who are recreating the artwork. It also implied the similarities between the artworks’ name and the followed caption. It also contains some sort of playfulness in recreating and imitating.

## Sample 6



Figure (6) Shows an example of “women yelling at a cat” meme, localized and altered to fit the case of the lockdown during the pandemic (Abada, 2020).

Background	The first announcement of applying a curfew in Egypt states that it will last for only two weeks. The curfew extended afterward due to the first wave of the coronavirus.
Description	A Facebook post contains an animal reaction. The image is for the famous internet meme “Women yelling on a cat” that is widely used in different contexts. The cat was photoshopped with a scarf to mock the look of a mother. The image contains textual captions for both the woman and the cat.
Type of the internet-based humor	Funny photo
Meme genre	This internet meme is an “Animal reactions”, which is usually used to make fun of a certain situation, relying on the animal’s expressions. One of the most recent viral ones is the “women yelling at a cat” used in this meme, containing a textual message expressing being upset to extend the curfew. The cat was photoshopped with a scarf and its reply with “I said inshallah”. The Arabic word included to reflect a replay that people use in situations or suggestions that they don’t agree with, like a child asking for his mother to go out.
Humor and Laughter theory applied	In this sample, the incongruity theory of laughter is applied represented in the juxtaposition of two images of the women and the cat. The use of scarf and adding some Arabic words written in English letters help in the surprise factor which is one of the features that humor may rely on.
The humor in the content	In this sample, the humor is implied in incongruity, humanizing animals that lead to a surprise which is one of the features that humor relies on.

## 10. Results and Discussion

The results of the paper can be conducted into the following points:

10.1. Coronavirus pandemic affected people’s lives in many ways and causes higher rates of social media consumption.

10.2. Individuals tend to use social media platforms to reduce stress and release tension resulting from the pandemic of Covid-19.



10.3. The processionary measure of the coronavirus pandemic affected the consumption and the creation of humorous content over different social media platforms as they act as emotional catharsis.

10.4. There are three different theories related to humor and laughter that can be tracked in visual content on social media platforms; the Relief theory, Superiority theory, and Incongruity theory.

10.5. Internet and social media help humor to travel easily beyond boundaries and cultural differences by visual content.

10.6. There are different types of internet-based humor that can be seen on social media platforms and visual content, they all share the same main attributes, Playfulness, Incongruity, and Superiority.

10.7. Internet Memes, with all three components, are the perfect example of humor over the internet.

10.8. The pandemic of covid-19 affected the visuals used in Internet memes circulated by Egyptians.

## 11. Recommendations

The researcher recommends both designers and marketers to keep in mind the global events and explore how they may affect users' behavior over the internet. Tracking the changes in consumption patterns could help all who work in the advertising and marketing field to utilize their messages and visuals to suit these changes.

## 12. Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to discuss the role of internet humor during uninhabited global events. Explaining theories related to humor and laughter besides exploring humorous visual content and how it was affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, the paper tackles the characteristics, genres, and components of Internet memes as a visual form used over social media platforms.

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