

7-15-2026

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Maheen Zahra

Department of English and Literary Studies, School of Liberal Arts, University of Management and Technology, Pakistan, s2025310011@umt.edu.pk

Rahat Bashir

Department of English and Literary Studies, School of Liberal Arts, University of Management and Technology, Pakistan, rahatbashir@umt.edu.pk

Kanwal Zahra

Center for Languages and Translation Studies, University of Gujrat, Pakistan, dr.kanwal@uog.edu.pk

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Zahra, Maheen; Bashir, Rahat; and Zahra, Kanwal (2026) "Negotiating Laughter: Power, Gender, and Classroom Discourse in Pakistani University Settings," *Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*: Vol. 29: Iss. 2, Article 5.

Available at: <https://kjhss.khazar.org/journal/vol29/iss2/5>

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ORIGINAL STUDY

Negotiating Laughter: Power, Gender, and Classroom Discourse in Pakistani University Settings

Maheen Zahra ^{a,*}, Rahat Bashir ^a, Kanwal Zahra ^b

^a Department of English and Literary Studies, School of Liberal Arts, University of Management and Technology, Pakistan

^b Center for Languages and Translation Studies, University of Gujrat, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore how laughter is used as an interactional and socially situated discourse in Pakistani university classrooms at different academic levels. A total of 29 episodes of laughter, out of 32 observed classrooms, were documented through detailed field notes, analyzing how the laughter was initiated, processed, and regulated within the classroom. The findings revealed that laughter is not only an expression of amusement, but it is also a complicated communicative discourse, which is used as a pedagogical tool to maintain power hierarchies and relations as per socio-cultural norms. At the undergraduate level, laughter usually emerges through peer interaction, errors, and witty disruptions, which sometimes slightly challenge the teacher's authority. In contrast, laughter at the postgraduate level is intellectual and critically engaging, which contributes towards further learning. It was also observed that male and female students behaved differently in class during laughter episodes; females' laughter was subtle and restricted, while males were overt and loud in their expression. Consequently, females were regulated just by gaze, while males needed verbal instructions to be disciplined. Teachers play a vital role in making laughter an instrumental part of learning while balancing authority and engagement. So, laughter is a boundary marker where classroom norms, power, and participation are continuously negotiated.

Keywords: Laughter, Classroom discourse, Interactional practices, Power relations, Pakistani university classrooms, Gender dynamics, Ethnographic study

Introduction

For decades, laughter in the classroom has been associated with indiscipline, lack of learning, lack of seriousness, and distraction, as it is opposed to the traditional classroom

Received 5 January 2026; revised 24 May 2026; accepted 28 June 2026.
Available online 15 July 2026

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: s2025310011@umt.edu.pk (M. Zahra), rahatbashir@umt.edu.pk (R. Bashir), dr.kanwal@uog.edu.pk (K. Zahra).

<https://doi.org/10.5782/2223-2621.1594>

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setup, which requires seriousness and silence as markers of learning. However, in recent years, this notion has been challenged by conceptualizing laughter as a meaningful and structured component within classroom dynamics (Glenn, 2003; Provine, 2001). It is not only the outcome of some emotional outburst; rather, it is a sign of classroom discourse, which contributes to shaping ideologies, perceptions, pedagogy, and overall classroom relational dynamics.

Laughter is not merely a symbol of amusement in the class; rather, it is a powerful communicative strategy that enables students and teachers to share, agree, manage stress, and sometimes even resist (Jefferson, 1985; Partington, 2006). It is used to navigate classroom interaction (Alexander, 2008). In higher education, laughter can be the result of intellectual irony, cognitive irony, criticality, or common acknowledgment of disciplinary challenges instead of humor. At multiple levels, it is mutually agreed upon that laughter is the co-creation of educational norms, participants' positions, and their communicative and pragmatic expectations (Norrick, 1993; Holmes, 2000).

Although there is tremendous awareness growing regarding the use of humour, it is limited to its usage in the classroom for cerebral engagement and lowering anxiety (Banas et al., 2011; Garner, 2006; Ziv, 1988). Although these studies emphasize the positive effects of humor, they do not focus on the way laughter is created, bargained, and controlled in real-time classroom interaction. Moreover, the available literature has been largely Western or non-Pakistani based, which leaves us with little knowledge as to the way laughter operates in other cultural and institutional settings.

This gap is especially important because of society's role and its perception towards teachers. In Pakistani society, teachers are not considered only instructors, but they are often responsible for maintaining social hierarchical structures, and teachers themselves are symbols of high-level respect, power, and authority (Hofstede, 2001; Rahman, 2002). In such cases, the emergence of classrooms where teachers maintain their hegemony while students learn in a relaxed environment, deviating from the traditional classroom setting, carries different meanings. In this context, laughter may not simply indicate amusement but may also reflect the negotiation of authority, politeness, and social boundaries.

In mixed-gender classrooms, laughter is further complicated because it is highly influenced by the presence of females, so the expression of laughter produced by females may be interpreted differently. Humour would be controlled and sophisticated in the presence of females because of modesty and societal decorum (Shah, 2015; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). It shows that laughter is not only an interactional phenomenon but also an intricate fabric deeply knitted into cultural frameworks.

Laughter is not only guided by cultural dynamics and gendered influences, but it is also highly influenced by the specific classroom environment, which is shaped by interactional practices such as teacher talk, peer responses, timing, and multimodal cues including gaze, gesture, and tone (Partington, 2006; Andr n & Cekaite, 2016). Studies in other educational contexts assert that laughter may arise from pedagogical strategies, spontaneous student contributions, or moments of shared cognitive recognition (Holmes & Marra, 2002). However, how such processes unfold in Pakistani higher education remains underexplored, particularly from an ethnographic and interactional perspective.

Literature review

In educational settings, laughter has recently been used as a pedagogical strategy to enhance the teaching and learning process for meaningful purposes, rather than viewing it as distraction, indiscipline, or non-academic behavior (Banas et al., 2011; Garner, 2006; Iqbal, 2025). It is used for developing good rapport, reducing anxiety, increasing engage-

ment, supporting memory, and mediating relationships between teachers and students (Robinson et al., 2024; Bhat et al., 2026). Laughter is not always positive; sometimes it challenges teachers' authority, hierarchies, excludes other members, and exposes tensions in the classroom setting (Glenn, 2003; Omer-Attali et al., 2025). Due to its intricate nature, laughter is an important aspect to be studied in classroom discourse. Glenn (2003) argues that humour and laughter should not be confused with each other, as humour can exist on its own, but laughter is entwined with its context. So, laughter needs to be studied as an outcome of social interaction which shapes participation, alignment, and authority.

Much research lays stress on the appropriate use of humour in the classroom, which improves learning, makes the classroom interesting, and improves attentiveness (Banas et al., 2011; Iqbal, 2025; Wanzer et al., 2006; Abou-El-Sood, 2024; Spörk et al., 2023). There is a considerable amount of literature on the pedagogical importance of humor in education and learning. Researchers have suggested that the right humor could make classes more interesting, decrease stress, enhance attentiveness, and support teacher-student dynamics (Banas et al., 2011; Iqbal, 2025; Wanzer et al., 2006). For example, Garner (2006) proposed that humor leads to self-recognition and improves class memory. Similarly, Ziv (1988) concluded that when humour is used along with instructions, it positively affects learning outcomes. So, this research reinforces that when laughter is used wisely, it enables students to be emotionally and cognitively involved in academic content. These participatory practices resonate with constructivist theories of learning and offer a possible direction for innovation in Pakistani classrooms that tend to be teacher-centered.

As has already been discussed, though laughter is peripheral in nature, its effective use reduces psychological barriers and increases engagement due to positive emotional involvement (Zhou & Lee, 2025). It is important in the Pakistani context to study how teacher-student hierarchy is maintained and learning is enhanced by using humor as a tool to humanize instruction. Empirical studies prove that humour reduces stress and improves collaboration (Hackworth, 2024). Similarly, the appropriate use of humour changes the negative perception of teachers among students, which often triggers affective domains. Humour is hardly studied from the perspective of who initiates laughter in the classroom and how it is controlled and regulated in the Pakistani context. Humour is largely studied from the perspective of learning, but how it is used by both genders and teachers for classroom practices is underexplored.

Additionally, self-disparaging humour can reduce power distance and foster relatability, whereas other-disparaging humor negatively impacts psychological safety and classroom relationships (Wijaya et al., 2025). This distinction is important in the Pakistani educational setup because Pakistani society is highly sensitive towards cultural norms of respect and authority. Apart from the short-term effects of laughter, it has long-term effects on memory, identity, and relationships, and it creates a sense of belonging by creating emotional safety for each other (Lu'mu et al., 2023; St-Amand et al., 2023; Bishara, 2024; Arias, 2023). These observations indicate that humour can be of great help, especially in multicultural and multilingual Pakistani classrooms where inclusivity is an issue. Humor is also deployed as a coping strategy to manage stress and frustration (Erdoğan & Çakıroğlu, 2021; Frisby et al., 2024).

However, humour in the classroom is not inherently positive, as its effects on learning are inconsistent (Banas et al., 2011). Similarly, Wanzer et al. (2006) explain that laughter has to be non-threatening and inclusive in the classroom. So, the purpose of humour is not solely improving learning; rather, it helps in negotiating identities, relationships, and norms through the social interaction of classroom discourse. Students and teachers use laughter through gaze, body language, and gestures also to bypass norms, subvert teacher authority, and respond to transgressions (Omer-Attali et al., 2025). Laughter is not only a strong classroom discourse which is sometimes used to symbolize solidarity and

sometimes subtle defiance. This complexity makes it important to study it ethnographically for interactional purposes. Many studies reinforce that laughter in the classroom encourages critical thinking, imagination, and collaboration. It is also studied that many of the benefits are context-dependent rather than universal (Iqbal, 2025; Yakhshibayeva, 2025). Therefore, the field needs more fine-grained studies that investigate how laughter emerges, how it is interpreted by participants, and how it interacts with classroom hierarchies and expectations. Moreover, laughter is not external to academic ambiance; it co-exists and provides structure to the learning process itself (Martinsson & Ricknell, 2025). It must be remembered that educators must be aware of their own personal disposition; if they are introverted, then the role of humour and laughter may not turn positive as major research claims (Lei & Li, 2025).

It is also argued that when humor is used as a pedagogical tool, it also questions the existence of power: who is allowed to laugh, when is laughing appropriate, and when is it perceived to be disruptive?

Such questions are even more essential when one takes into account contexts such as Pakistani university classrooms. The body of literature available on classroom humor research has been predominantly carried out in Western or non-Pakistani settings, frequently in the context of school classrooms, overall pedagogy, or instructional communication. Little ethnographic research has been conducted to study the ethnographic aspects of laughter in Pakistani higher education, especially as an interactional accomplishment formed by local linguistic, institutional, and cultural conventions. This is a huge gap since Pakistani university classrooms are defined by specific formations of language, power, gender, status, and academic demands. The meaning of laughter in such classrooms can be different from the one reported in other national or institutional settings. To give a few examples, laughter can be mediated by the use of English and Urdu in classroom talk, rules of respecting teachers, gender patterns of participation, or more general norms of seriousness and respect in higher education.

The literature, then, indicates some key points in the case of a study on negotiating laughter in Pakistani university classrooms. To begin with, laughter cannot be regarded as a mere artifact of humor or pleasure but should be examined as a contextual interactional process (Glenn, 2003). Second, although laughter may lead to engagement, rapport, and lowered anxiety levels, these effects are influenced by the type of laughter, the timing of laughter, and the social placement of laughter (Banas et al., 2011; Wanzer et al., 2006). Third, laughter might serve as an instrument for bargaining power, involvement, and classroom demarcations instead of a reflection of a good classroom atmosphere (Omer-Attali et al., 2025). Lastly, context-specific studies on these dynamics in under-researched contexts like Pakistani higher education are needed.

In this regard, the proposed research can make a contribution to the field since it will fill the contextual and conceptual gap. In context, it is specific to the Pakistani university classroom, which has not been well represented in the humor and laughter in education literature. Theoretically, it is a change of focus from the general argument that laughter can be useful in teaching to the analytically fruitful question of the negotiation of laughter in classroom interaction. With this kind of emphasis, it becomes possible to recognize laughter not as a pedagogical device or an emotional response, but as a social and discursive event where relationships, expectations, and boundaries in classrooms are produced and negotiated in an ongoing process.

Given these considerations, it is seminal to look at laughter in the classroom beyond the scope of advantageous or non-educational purposes; rather, it needs to be studied in terms of how it is contextually negotiated. This study adopts an ethnographic approach to explore how laughter is generated, interpreted, and regulated within Pakistani

university classrooms, with particular attention to its interactional, social, and pedagogical dimensions.

Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions:

- How is laughter generated in Pakistani university classrooms at various levels of study?
- What are the interactional, social, and pedagogical roles of laughter in classroom discourse?
- How is laughter controlled by the teacher to regulate it according to organizational norms, teacher's authority, and social practices across genders?

By answering these questions, the research will help fill the gap in the existing literature on classroom interaction within Pakistani higher education, as well as contribute to a more detailed insight into the concept of laughter as a socially and discursively constructed practice.

Theoretical framework

The study investigates laughter as a social phenomenon of classroom discourse, which is context-dependent and is not merely an emotional response. Based on conversational analysis principles and rules of sociolinguistics, laughter is understood as an interactional achievement that is the consequence of certain moments and is subject to participants' alignment, positioning, and shared understanding (Glenn, 2003; Jefferson, 1985). So, it is safely deduced that laughter is not a response to humour but a communicative instrument. It is pertinent to differentiate between humor and laughter. While humour is a cognitive and textual element, laughter is an observable behavior in response to humour (Glenn, 2003). In the classroom setting, laughter is critical because it does not represent only its occurrence; rather, it explains how it is produced, responded to, and reinterpreted by the participants. It may cause agreement, solidarity, tension, resistance, or evaluation depending on its placement and uptake within discourse (Partington, 2006).

The study is also grounded in theories of power. Following the concept of Foucault (1977), classrooms are considered negotiable spaces where power is not fixed but is consistently challenged, negotiated, and reaffirmed. Participants keep on shifting their roles and alignments during interaction (Goffman, 1981). Moreover, the study also integrates a socio-cultural perspective on gender. Both genders influence the way laughter is communicated, responded to, regulated, and interpreted, especially in the Pakistani context, where respect, modesty, and authority are integral parts of society (Ullah & Skelton, 2013). So, laughter signifies cultural values and dynamics.

In general, this theoretical approach defines laughter as a multi-dimensional discursive phenomenon which is the combination of interaction, power, and social structure. It explores the function of the processes of laughter production, the role of laughter in classroom discourse, and the regulation of laughter in relation to authority, pedagogy, and gendered expectations.

Research methodology

This study has adopted a qualitative and ethnographically informed approach to examine the role and use of laughter in Pakistani university classrooms (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Creswell & Poth, 2018). It focuses on how laughter is employed as a socially situated interactional tool as a part of classroom discourse, rather than as an isolated behavioral variable (Bloome et al., 2005).

Research sample

The research was conducted in the Department of English Language and Literature at a private university in Lahore, Pakistan. Data were collected from three levels of study: third-semester undergraduate, 5th-semester undergraduate, and MPhil students. It was intentionally done so that datasets of different academic maturity levels could be obtained for variety and validity (Patton, 2015).

A total of 32 classroom sessions were observed across multiple courses taught by different instructors, and in 29 sessions laughter cases were observed. Each class consisted of approximately 20–35 students, representing mixed-gender classrooms. The selection of classes was based on accessibility, and it was also ensured that those classes were of language and literature, where discussion and interaction are used as an essential part of the teaching-learning process (Dörnyei, 2007).

Researcher role and ethical considerations

The researcher's role was that of a non-participant observer, attending regular classroom sessions without becoming involved in the teaching-learning process. This type of role allowed the researcher to naturally observe the episodes of laughter in the classroom. To make students comfortable with the researcher, the researcher used to have chit-chat after the classroom during tea time and helped them in their assignments and projects, so that the feeling of estrangement could be minimized as much as possible (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

The department and the instructors were contacted before the collection of the data, and after their consent, the data were collected for this observational study. Due to certain ethical and social restrictions, no audio or video recordings were made, and the data remained anonymous. Fake names/numbers were given to the participants, and any information that could identify the participants was altered to ensure their confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection

The data were collected over 8 weeks, during which the researcher observed the scheduled classes. The data was collected through detailed notes recorded in writing during and right after the observation as suggested by Emerson et al. (2011). Field notes were collected in the form of spoken communication, which included any word, hint or statement related to laughter. It was taken into care that even the smallest non-verbal gestures, like facial expression, postures and gaze are not overlooked. Moreover, the spoken discourse was observed in its context to understand the incident. Peer dynamics was also observed along with the teachers' strategies of handling and initiating laughter in the classroom.

The number of individual laughter episodes observed during the sessions was 29. Each episode was recorded to provide in-depth insight into how the laughter was initiated, its duration, who the participants were, and the immediate interactional consequences.

Analytical framework and coding

The data were analyzed through thematic qualitative analysis, which was guided by rules of interactional sociolinguistics and dialogic pedagogy (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gee, 2014). The analysis followed an inductive-deductive approach, allowing themes to

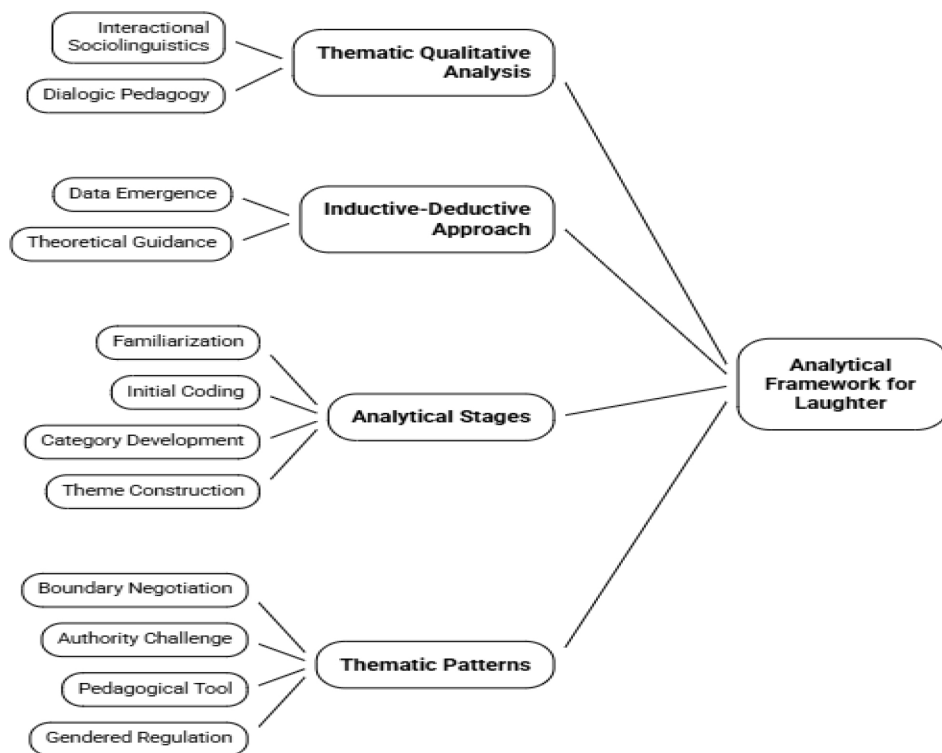


Fig. 1. Analytical framework for laughter in classroom dynamics.

emerge from the data while also being guided by existing theoretical frameworks on classroom discourse, power, and humor (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Fig. 1 explains how interactional sociolinguistics and dialogic pedagogy guided the development of the analytical framework for the thematic analysis.

The analysis followed the four phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). First, familiarization was achieved through repeated reading of the field notes to identify recurring patterns and significant interactional moments. Second, initial coding was conducted by examining episodes of laughter and coding them according to who initiated the laughter and the function it served within the classroom. These functions included negotiating boundaries, expressing humour, creating disruption, fostering affiliation, and the ways in which laughter was responded to by others. Third, the initial codes were organized into broader analytical categories that captured the social and pedagogical functions of laughter. Finally, themes were constructed to provide a deeper understanding of both the explicit and latent roles that laughter played in shaping classroom dynamics.

Four major thematic patterns emerged:

1. Laughter as Boundary Negotiation
2. Laughter as Authority Challenge
3. Laughter as Pedagogical Tool
4. Gendered Regulation of Laughter

These themes were further examined across different classroom levels and gender dynamics to find out differences in usage and regulation.

Trustworthiness and limitations

To increase the validity of the analysis, the researcher wrote field notes right after the immediate interaction and class session to preserve accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, recurring patterns were observed across multiple observations rather than individual occurrences of laughter. The use of multiple classroom settings and levels also supports analytic generalization within similar educational contexts (Yin, 2018).

The number of laughter episodes was considered adequate in qualitative research because it is more about the depth, contextual richness, and the consistent patterns of interaction that occur rather than the number of occurrences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic richness and repetition emerged repeatedly to ensure richness in the data (Guest et al., 2006). Due to ethical and institutional restrictions, audio and video recordings were not made, but detailed observational field notes enabled the researcher to retain the naturalistic setting of the classroom and provide evidence for the meanings of interactions as they happened in the immediate context (Emerson et al., 2011). Considering the purpose of the study, that is, “to explore laughter as a classroom practice that is socially situated,” it was methodologically significant that classroom interaction remained spontaneous. A further strength of the study was the extended period of engagement of eight weeks and multiple settings of observation, which were ethnographically informed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

It is admitted that the interpretation of laughter is influenced by the researcher’s positionality and interaction in the classroom, and it is dependent on observational field notes rather than recordings, involving subjective judgment regarding tone, pauses, and interactional meanings. However, repeated observations across multiple classrooms and prolonged engagement over eight weeks helped minimize personal bias and strengthen contextual understanding (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

However, the study has certain limitations. As the data was not audio-video recorded, it failed to collect the finest interactional details of conversation, such as timings, overlap, and some paralinguistic features of laughter. The absence of audio or video recordings limits the ability to capture fine-grained interactional details such as exact timing, overlap, and prosodic features of laughter. Since the data is based on observational field notes, the interpretation is subject to the viewpoint of the researcher. Irrespective of these limitations, the study emphasizes situational richness and naturalistic observation, both of which are key to ethnographically informed research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Findings

During the program of this study, interactions in the classroom were observed at three levels of study, namely, third semester, fifth semester, and MPhil classes, in the Department of English Literature. The number of lessons documented was 32, which recorded 29 discrete episodes of laughter. These episodes were relatively short (3–10 seconds), more or less frequent, and were initiated by different factors and differed in social contexts. Out of the 29 episodes, teachers triggered laughter in 10 episodes, students in 16 episodes, and there were three episodes involving shared laughter. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of laughter episodes according to whether they were initiated by students, teachers, or shared by both.

The findings revealed four recurring thematic patterns regarding the generation, regulation, and functions of laughter in classroom discourse: laughter as boundary negotiation, laughter as an authority challenge, laughter as a pedagogical tool, and gendered regulation of laughter.

Interestingly, the student who initiated laughter was of the opposite gender, and the type of laughter and classroom dynamics were affected by the gender of the student who initiated laughter. Women students were responsible for 6 out of the 16 episodes of student-initiated laughter, which were generally short, muted, and usually integrated into the academic conversation, like a nod towards a fellow student in his or her analysis of literature or a pun. By contrast, male students were the ones to initiate 10 episodes, often more outspoken, more expressive, and sometimes even approaching the performative, whether through overacted dramatizations during role-playing or sarcastic commentary on colleagues’ contributions.

It is observed that laughter in these literature classes performed multiple interactional and pedagogical functions across different classroom contexts. To begin with, it acted as a classroom norm and boundary negotiator. Indicatively, during role plays or group discussion activities, the students sometimes employed humorously exaggerated or ironically commentative words to push the boundaries of good conduct. During these times, the teachers usually came in to correct the direction without putting off creativity, as it may be taken to mean that humor is only welcome when it is coupled with pedagogical goals. Second, laughter was used as a social indicator; it expressed peer relations, inclusion, and implicit hierarchy. Laughter was also often used by students to react to a creative interpretation, mispronunciation, or exciting critique of a literary text by a peer in order to communicate understanding, solidarity, or amusement. Third, minor violations of anticipated behavior, which included digressions in discussion tasks or humorous off-topic comments, were responded to by laughter, which enabled students to be spontaneous and teachers to remain in control.

The findings further justify that laughter is not equally perceived across all classrooms. Sometimes it elevates collaboration between teachers and students, whereas sometimes it disrupts peer alignment and slightly resists institutional authority. So, laughter is highly dependent on the way the teacher handles it according to the instructional goals. To summarize the major patterns identified through thematic analysis, [Table 1](#) presents the four themes that emerged from the observed laughter episodes, their frequency, primary initiator, and predominant classroom level.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic findings.

Theme	Episodes (n)	% of Total	Primary Initiator	Predominant Level
Laughter as Boundary Negotiation	8	27.6	Student	Undergraduate
Laughter as an Authority Challenge	7	24.1	Student	Undergraduate
Laughter as a Pedagogical Tool	8	27.6	Teacher	Undergraduate
Gendered Regulation of Laughter	6	20.7	Student	Undergraduate/ Postgraduate
Total	29	100.0	—	—

Note. Episode counts represent thematic distributions across 29 observed laughter episodes recorded during 32 classroom sessions. Percentages are based on the total number of observed episodes. The “Predominant Level” column indicates the classroom level in which each theme most frequently emerged.

Table 2. Distribution of laughter episodes by initiator.

Initiator	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Student	16	55.2
Teacher	10	34.5
Shared	3	10.3

Note. Student-initiated laughter constituted the majority of observed episodes, followed by teacher-initiated and shared laughter.

Discussion

Laughter holds a very ambivalent position in the classroom. Its acceptance or suppression depends on the context and situation in which it is produced. Laughter is received positively when it is aligned with class learning objectives, and it does not disrupt the classroom decorum. It is strictly prohibited and discouraged when it undermines the teacher's authority and becomes the cause of distraction. It is also discussed that the teacher's response, gender, seniority and the students' gender all function together to perceive laughter and its utilization in the classroom. Moreover, it is the teacher, who decides, whose laughter is to be silenced, encouraged or controlled. This duality in the nature of laughter in the classroom strengthens the idea that humour in the classroom is not intrinsically healthy or inconvenient unless it is contextualized for communication (Glenn, 2003; Banas et al., 2011; Erdoğan & Çakıroğlu, 2021; Qamar et al., 2025).

The findings support the idea that laughter is deployed as a negotiated tool for shaping identities, maintaining hierarchies, and patterns of participation. The discussion is organized around four interrelated themes: laughter as boundary negotiation, laughter as an authority challenge, laughter as a pedagogical tool, and the gendered regulation of laughter. Together, these themes demonstrate how laughter is generated, interpreted, and regulated within Pakistani university classrooms.

Laughter as boundary negotiation

Laughter in the classroom is not used for entertainment; rather, it is consciously used to negotiate acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the classroom setting. It is used to define boundaries through which teacher's authority, institutional norms, and pedagogical practices are tested (Jefferson, 1985; Mercer, 2002). In classrooms, laughter can highlight two different extremes: it can highlight acceptable classroom behavior or shared engagement, or it can disturb the academic flow of the class. It strengthens the notion that laughter is not for the sake of emotional explosion at any time; rather, it needs to be controlled, and it defines limits and boundaries for what is permissible and what is not allowed in classroom discourse (Jefferson, 1985; Mercer, 2002; Omer-Attali et al., 2025).

Teacher 1 heard a cat-like meow that Student 1 made, and the sound instantly caused laughter among his peer group.

Episode 3:

[Teacher 1 noticed a sound, resembling a cat, was coming from the end of the class.]

Student 1: "Meow. . . . Meow" (immediate laughter arose from his group of friends)

Teacher 1 (pausing the lecture): Who is making this sound?

Student 1 and his friends: What? Sound? What are you talking about, misssssss? (dragging the last word).

[Another soft chuckle]

[The classroom fell silent for a while]

Teacher 1 paused, opened the white marker, turned toward the board, and stood there for a moment. She then turned back to the class again, closing the marker while staring at the class.

Teacher 1: I'll give +1 mark to the student who will name the student making these sounds.

[After a pause of 2-3 seconds, a student from the same peer group raised his hand slowly]

Student 2: (pointing at Umar) It was him, miss.

(complete silence)

Teacher 1: (calmly said) Alright.

Giving no additional remark, she turned to the board and resumed her explanation, bringing sanity through calmness.

This was not a collaborative or content-based laugh; it was more of a challenge to classroom order. This shows that laughter can be used to resist the peer group and to challenge authority as well (Glenn, 2003; Omer-Attali et al., 2025). It concludes that laughter sometimes restructures classroom hierarchies (Glenn, 2003; Qamar et al., 2025). The prolonged pronunciation of “misssssss” worked as performative mockery, which temporarily challenged the authority of the teacher. This type of interactional laughter, which resulted after imitation and exaggeration, strengthened peer alignment among boys and at the same time weakened institutional discipline and norms.

It also highlights the fact that the act was specifically meant to be disruptive and not interactional. The laughter tried to momentarily challenge the authority of the teacher by suggesting that she was unable to locate the origin of the mischief. It gave a fleeting sense that peer solidarity, in some way, was stronger than institutional control. Nevertheless, rather than reacting emotionally and employing unkind criticism, Teacher 1 reacted strategically and calmly. This instance of her giving the student who identified the source of the sound a +1 mark was a way to reinforce her authority in two major ways. First, she played the card of her authority over grading, reminding students that it is in her hands to provide academic assessment.

Second, she reestablished general classroom discipline without causing friction. The instant silence and the eagerness of a comrade to point out Student 1 show how much laughter falls to pieces when faced with structured authority. Therefore, laughter in this case was the dividing line between what was accepted and what was considered a disciplinary infraction, and the calm tact of the teacher was a successful way to reinvent that boundary. This supports the first research question by demonstrating that laughter is generated not only through humor but also through acts of disruption, imitation, and peer solidarity, reinforcing its interactional origin.

Laughter as an authority challenge

It is observed that instead of directly confronting the teachers, students used indirect ways, like laughter, whispering, exaggeration, and side comments to destabilize the classroom dynamics. It indicates that authority in the classroom is not fixed, but is continuously negotiated through discourse and interaction (Foucault, 1977; Goffman, 1981). The findings demonstrate that laughter can function as resistance, mockery, peer solidarity, and interactional repositioning depending on the context in which it emerges.

Mocking laughter as an authority challenge

This example explains how laughter can work as an authority challenge, when it is employed to ridicule or exclude others, within classroom setting. This episode illustrates how teachers respond to such incidents to restore authority and maintain ethical boundaries.

In one of the postcolonial literature lessons in Semester 3, the teacher, Teacher 2, recounted the history of colonialism and the idea of racism. In this conversation, a few students started to mock one of their colleagues. The crowd chuckled at each other, creating loud exaggerated laughs whilst pointing at the student of interest.

Episode 8:

Teacher 2: Racial discrimination refers to unfair and unequal treatment towards Africans on the basis of their skin color, ethnicity, and race.

Student 3: So, colonizers used to feel superior due to their light complexion?

Teacher 2: Yes, Student 3, but for sure, there were many other reasons.

Student 4: (whispered to his companions) It seems that the history of someone is being discussed. (All of them burst into laughter while looking at Student 5)

Student 5: Miss, they are making fun of me. They are comparing me with a negro.

Teacher 2 (responding in a firm, angry tone): Who? Who is calling you with derogatory names?

(Boys were still smiling)

Teacher 2 (looked straight towards the boys and spoke in an angry tone): Are you done with the jokes?

(Laughter died into immediate silence)

Student 4: Yes, miss.

Boys (together): Sorry, miss.

Teacher 2 (in a very calm tone): Meet me in my office after class. (class resumed)

Class, pay attention, these ideas of racial superiority have caused immense suffering.

The humor in this episode was not brought out in a collective manner but in that of a small and isolated circle of students who made racist comments about another student. The laugh lasted only 4–5 seconds, but it had a disproportionate effect. What started as a temporary outburst of fun soon created physical uneasiness that lasted several seconds longer than the laughter. The discomfort of the targeted student slowly turned into group stress experienced in the classroom in general. The mood moved beyond normal academic interaction towards social tension. Notably, the laughter was not interactive; it did not bring the class into a common laugh. Rather, it was used as exclusionary, where one student was the focus of ridicule and the laughing group was the dominant one. Such an imbalance interfered with the spirit of collaboration that was supposed to be present in the classroom. This episode echoes what [Billig \(2005\)](#) affirms: that laughter can sometimes be exclusive and hostile to the existing power, so it ultimately does not create solidarity. This resonates with the literature that emphasizes the dual aspect of laughter; relational and counterproductive as well, based on the target and context of a laugh ([Omer-Attali et al., 2025](#); [Frisby et al., 2024](#)).

The interactional phrase “Are you done with the jokes?” redefined not only laughter, but also repositioned the hierarchical position of the teacher in the class, which was established by her long gaze, initial silence, and interrogative sentence. The pause, the silence, and her speech acted as an example of how authority is positionally re-established through linguistic positioning and embodied control.

The laughter in this episode was a good example of a breach of boundaries. It was ethically and socially unsuitable because it was disrespectful to the peer and indirectly went against authority and etiquette in the classroom. However, this was not collaborative laughter, as a small group produced it and it was not shared among people; therefore, it was used as an exclusionary mechanism. The brevity of the laugh was in contrast to the longer discomfort period, which lasted six or more seconds and influenced the level of attention and emotion of the group.

Teacher 2 answered with a harsh face and a stern voice and asked, “Are we finished with the jokes?” Her glance went over the crowd with an expression of evident disapproval. The laughter was arrested midflow. She did not restart the lesson but asserted her power by asking the students in question to come and see her in her office. Her tone, facial expressions, and strong action made it very clear that this laughter was neither welcome nor appropriate. Her intervention brings into perspective the role of authority in controlling the behavior of students, reestablishing the seriousness of academics, and preserving

interpersonal respect. The laughter in this episode was not an engagement strategy since it was a violation of boundaries that was institutionally and morally unjustified. It reveals how teachers actively regulate and control the classroom environment to maintain educational norms, authority, and ethical boundaries. This supports the literature which highlights the dual nature of laughter as both relational and potentially harmful depending on its target and context (Meyer, 2000; Wijaya et al., 2025).

Reclaiming authority through interactional control

The previous episode demonstrates how humour challenged authority, while this episode explains a subtle form of resistance through whispers and laughter. It shows the process of negotiation of authority in interaction and the re-establishment of control by teachers through verbal and non-verbal resources. Teacher 1 was describing question four where the students were to recognize and highlight the action verb. The classroom was academically active; the only voices heard were the sounds of paper being turned and pens writing on paper. She reminded them that there is a difference between action and helping verbs. Two boys were whispering and giggling in the center of this concentrated environment. Their whispers were not loud, yet repeated enough to create a slight distraction to the seriousness of the work.

Episode 11:

Teacher 4: “Look at question number 4 everyone. Identify and underline the ‘action verb’.”

(Silence in the room was ended by the noise created by the scratching of pens and turning of pages)

Teacher 4: “Remember students, ‘Action verbs’ are different from ‘Helping verbs’.”

(Two boys whispered into each other’s ears and giggled)

Student 6: “Miss, is ‘do’ an action verb or a helping verb?”

Student 7: “I think that depends on the usage.”

(Whispers are again coming from the same boys)

Teacher 4 (looking straight towards the boys, finally spoke in a firm tone): “Excuse me, is there a problem?”

(Both boys looked towards the teacher, trying to suppress their smiles)

Teacher 4: “I am asking you, beta ji. What is the problem here?”

Student 8 (one of the boys finally spoke): Nothing, ma’am.

Student 9 (2nd boy): “Jee Jee ma’am, Kuch Bhi Nahi.”

(Miss stood there for a few seconds; the suppressed smiles completely faded)

Teacher 4: That’s good. Focus on the task please. So, what was I saying?

Class: Underline the verb.

Teacher 4: “Yes, yes, underline the ‘action verb,’ bachho.”

Here, the teaching power was temporarily shaken. Teacher 1 did not raise her voice and glanced at the boys directly. The shift was immediate. Her strident voice when she said, “Excuse me, is there a problem?” made the conduct publicly unacceptable. As she said, “I am asking you, beta ji. What is the problem here?” her restrained countenance and calm stare added to the power of her voice. The repressed smiles of the boys faded away. Their replies, “Nothing ma’am” and “Jee Jee ma’am, Kuch Bhi Nahi,” showed submission instead of confidence. A few seconds of silence on the part of Teacher 1 also contributed to the unequal power balance. Lastly, her command, “Focus on the task please,” put the lesson back in order. She used tone, look, and time to turn a slight disruption into a reassurance of her power. Such moments reflect that teaching and regulating the classroom is not always

verbal, but learning can be guided through subtle gaze, silence, and tone (Partington, 2006).

Laughter as a pedagogical tool

Laughter in the classroom has been an essential and important asset that is used as an interactional resource which supports engagement, critical thinking, enhances collaboration, and increases participation if meaningfully employed. Existing literature also testifies that it increases effectiveness, reduces anxiety, and improves bonding (Banas et al., 2011; Garner, 2006; Iqbal, 2025). The findings of this study also suggest that laughter becomes pedagogically meaningful when teachers wisely regulate rather than suppress it.

Regulating laughter for pedagogical purposes

In this example, the pedagogical use of laughter is illustrated as being in harmony with the pedagogical purpose. The teacher does not inhibit the laughter, instead, she or he focuses it on the desired learning goals, thus showing the learning potential of controlled laughter.

This episode shows how normal classroom behavior is always bargained in the process of interaction. The role-play exercise that was initiated by Teacher 3 at the start was designed to be pedagogical (to improve the delivery of dialogue and attention). The roles of the students as superheroes and antagonists initially corresponded to the task, although their conversations were not very original. This kind of participation is acceptable classroom behavior since it aids classroom instructional objectives. It explains that classroom norms are not fixed; rather, they keep oscillating (Goffman, 1981; Martinsson & Ricknell, 2025).

Episode 14:

Teacher 3: Work in pairs, class. One will be a superhero and the other will be an antagonist.

Student 10 (superhero): "I'll save the city from your evil plans."

Student 11: "No, you CAN NOT."

(Another pair)

Student 12 (superhero): "I'll save the world."

Student 13 (non-participating student): "Seriously bro, same ghis-pita dialogue."

Student 14 (non-participating student): "Aik aur predictable hero (smiling). Save the world, save the city."

Student 15 (antagonist): "Okay, calm down, Mr. Superhero. Allow me to post my Instagram first."

(Giggles arose from the students)

Student 15 (continued): "Because even villains need followers nowadays."

(Loud laughter emerged from the class)

Teacher 3 (slowly raised her voice): "This is not an entertainment activity. The reason behind this activity is to educate you on the significance of concentration and the way to enhance the delivery of dialogue."

Teacher 3: "Please continue and try to understand the importance of the task."

(Students resumed the activity without creating any disruption)

The remarks of non-participating students, however, like "same ghis-pita dialogue" and "predictable hero," changed the mood. Their comments were critical and a little derogatory in nature, and this created giggles that started to shift the learning into an informal pursuit. The fact that Student 15 made a joke about updating an Instagram story

and villains needing followers only further alienated the class from the academic goal as people laughed loudly. At this point, laughter could have turned the exercise into an entertainment act instead of a training process. The reaction of Teacher 3 was instrumental in restoring acceptable behavior. It aligns with the existing literature that laughter is sometimes used to strengthen instructional goals (Wanzer et al., 2006; Abou-El-Sood, 2024; Spörk et al., 2023). It reveals that laughter is used for pedagogical purposes by aligning it with teaching strategy; rather than snubbing laughter, it can be regulated. She reorganized her instructions, by raising her voice and explaining what they were discussing. She did not interfere and rebuke, rather shifted her attention to the focal point of teaching. Her, subtle intervention, gives the clear hint that laughter will be welcomed only if its suitable with learning and classroom pedagogical requirements.

The subtle shift in Ms. Khadija's tone, instead of instant anger, shouting and reprimand than immediate reprimand, intensifies how pedagogical authority can shift the direction of the interaction without stopping student participation. Her intervention allowed her to maintain the classroom's collaborative energy while also reframing the laughter within classroom boundaries. This episode explains that acceptable classroom behavior was determined not by the lack of laughter, but by its correspondence to the educational purpose. This finding directly answers the second research question by showing that laughter is pedagogically driven only when it is contextually aligned, and it strengthens the prevailing idea that laughter's role in the educational setting is socially constructed rather than fixed (Banas et al., 2011; Iqbal, 2025).

As soon as laughter started to dominate the purpose of the task, teacher authority came to restore the situation and keep it within the realms of academics.

Teacher-initiated laughter as a pedagogical resource

It is observed in the previous episodes that laughter needs to be regulated to maintain classroom dynamics, but here it is argued that teacher her/himself initiates laughter to reduce tension and to make classroom environment engaging. In this episode, Teacher 1 was writing verb forms on the board when she made a mistake in writing “run, ran, runned,” where “runned” was incorrectly used as the past tense of “run.” The mistake took several seconds to disappear. Some students looked at each other and laughed uneasily. This laugh did not simply oppose her, but it indicated that the power of the board, the symbolic space of teacher knowledge, had been briefly disturbed.

Episode 18:

Students of Semester 1 English 1 are practicing a grammar exercise on verb forms.

Teacher 1: Teacher is writing on the board “Past tense of run is run, ran, runned.”

A few students looked at each other and laughed nervously.

Student 16: “Ma’am, I think it should be ‘ran’ not ‘runned’, hahaha.”

Teacher 1 looked at the board with confused expressions.

Teacher 1: “Hmmmm.” Her face softened and a soft smile appeared.

Teacher 1 (continued): “Ah yes, yes, well spotted, hahaha, thank you.”

Another soft laugh followed before students returned to their writing.

The error was publicly revealed when Student 16 replied, “Ma’am, I believe it is supposed to be ‘ran’ not ‘runned’, hahaha.” Teacher 1 turned to the board at this moment with a bewildered expression. Potential embarrassment was implied by that moment. But rather than feeling uncomfortable or becoming authoritative, her expression eased and she gave a small laugh: “Ah yes, yes, well spotted, hahaha, thank you.” Her laughter was strategic. It was aimed at assimilating or absorbing the tension generated by the error. Through

laughing, she reconstructed the scenario from a failure to collaboration. The laughter flattened the hierarchy, at least temporarily, but at the same time defended her position of authority. It made sure that the nervous student laughter was not ridiculing. Therefore, laughter by the teacher, in this case, served as a face-saving mechanism. It masked weakness, neutralized potential loss of authority, and reinstated classroom balance without confrontation. This episode reinforces the existing perception that teacher-initiated laughter is used for face-saving and managing anxiety, while at the same time reducing social distance (Garner, 2006; Glenn, 2003). It also brings into further discussion that laughter initiated by authority can soften authorial structures without eliminating them, which makes the teacher more approachable but still authoritative (Banas et al., 2011; Qamar et al., 2025).

A moment that might have been awkward changed into a moment that was a learning opportunity for both, with the sequence of hesitation (“Hmmmmm”), softened facial expressions, and shared laughter. Instead of reasserting authority through defensiveness, the teacher used laughter pedagogically to normalize error correction and maintain classroom comfort.

Laughter as a marker of critical and dialogic engagement

This final example emphasizes on the the pedagogical uses of laughter that are beyond classroom management and humor. It shows how laughter and humour can work to stimulate critical thinking and questioning faculties, especially in higher-level classroom debates where students actively discuss ideas and opinions.

During an MPhil course on Global Feminism, Teacher 2 posed the question to the students of whether a woman has a role to play in determining whether a marriage becomes successful or not. The debate was soon stirred up. Student 17 pleaded that women ought to surrender and compromise to enable marriages to succeed. Student 18 smiled after listening and said in a calm yet firm voice, “Then a woman should not marry at all.”

The students are seated in a seminar-style arrangement in a class of “Global Feminism”; the atmosphere is very heated but lively.

Episode 23:

Teacher 2: “What is your perspective on the traditional concept that a successful marriage is the responsibility of a woman?”

Student 17: “Ma’am, I personally believe this to be true.”

Teacher 2: “Why, Student 17?”

Student 17: “Because ma’am, I think for a successful marriage women should respect and obey their husbands.”

Teacher 2: “Hmmmmm, I see?”

Student 17: “Ma’am, this is what we see in our surroundings; it is always a woman who compromises to make her marriage work. So, in a way, we can agree with the point that making a marriage successful is actually the duty of a woman.”

Student 18 (very calm and firm tone): “Then a woman should not marry at all.”

(Laughter emerged from the class)

Teacher 2: “Why?”

Student 18: “Ma’am, if the success of a marriage depends solely on a woman and it is only she who has to obey, respect, and compromise, then I believe that the poor woman should not marry in the first place.”

(Another laugh followed after a pause of a few seconds)

The teacher was amused by the discussion, but she did not interrupt.

The ensuing laughter was due to the vigor and courage of her reasoning. It was not directed at Student 17; rather, it was a response to the intellectual acumen of the counter-argument. In this case, laughter was not discouraged since it did not interrupt the academic flow. Rather, it made the argument vibrant. It demonstrated that there was active listening, assessment, and response from the students. The humor brought the tension in the argument out and made the debate more vibrant. The reaction of Teacher 2 is noteworthy. She glanced amusingly, but made no intervention. Though, her authorial present is still there, but she not exercise it. It is deduced that at the senior level, students know their discussion territories. They know how to manage and maintain discipline which aligns with the institutional norms to maintain hierarchies. So, the teacher does not feel the need to curb all emotional responses. Therefore, when she does not intervene, it gives the positive signal of moving on with discourse, and her this approval, approves that she did not object because laughter was here used a strengthening critical questioning, which was her set objective. Hence, it is found that laughter is appreciated unless it is used to mock at someone or disturb classroom learning environment. It further enhances the notion that laughter can be used as an intellectual tool of interaction, instead of wastage of time, because it adheres to the dialogic view of teaching (Alexander, 2021; Michaels et al., 2008; Iqbal, 2025). This finding set the pavement for the already established idea that laughter in the classroom is fundamentally used an instrument of collective thinking process, but it requires expertise of a seasoned teacher, who can align it with instructional and educational goals.

Unlike undergraduate classrooms where laughter frequently required regulation, the MPhil setting reflects greater interactional maturity, where the function of laughter was purely pedagogical, which align with their intellectual literary discourse, without disrupting the classroom behavior norms.

Gendered regulation of laughter

One of the interesting findings of this study is regulation of male and female students, during the laughter, initiation of laughter and the strategies to responds towards the humorous discourse. It is found that though laughter can be produced in similar ways, but the knack to control it, is different for both genders. Pakistani society is a traditional and conventional society, where the social and cultural norms are strongly prevalent in the classroom as well, and both genders are expected to behave accordingly. Students' obedience, and the way they participate in the discussion is generally reflected in their expression, interoperation and their acceptance of norms, during laughter episodes also. Previous studies also discuss that Pakistani females are self-regulated, more submissive, and show calculated behavior in the expressions of interaction, even in educational context (Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Shah, 2015).

Gendered discipline and the regulation of laughter

This example illustrates how the regulation of laughter is shaped by gendered expectations within the classroom. The episode demonstrates that similar forms of classroom behavior may be interpreted and controlled differently depending on broader social norms regarding gender, obedience, and self-regulation.

In a subject-verb agreement lesson, Teacher 1 was giving instructions, and students were doing exercises given on their worksheets while she explained the rules. The class was mostly silent, with the noise of pages being flipped and pens scribbling. When she wrote on the board, "subjects that are related by the 'and' are"... there was a slight murmur between two female pupils. It was a brief whisper that lasted just a few seconds.

Episode 27:

Teacher 1 is imparting the subject-verb agreement lesson. Students are doing some exercises on the worksheets.

Teacher 1: “Bacho, always remember singular subjects always take singular nouns.”

(Miss noticed the sound of whispers coming from two female students sitting in the middle row)

Teacher 1: as she was writing on the board, “Subjects that are connected by the ‘and’ are. . .” (another whisper).

Miss paused her lecture, looked straight at the students, and stood silently for a few seconds. The girls immediately corrected their postures, their smiles disappeared, and they put their hands on the handouts. They tried to avoid the teacher’s gaze by pretending to read.

Teacher 1 (resumed lecture): “Subjects which are joined with ‘and’ tend to have plural forms.”

As she wrote on the board, “subjects that are united by the ‘and’ are” — a faint phrase came out of two female students in the middle row. The whisper was a few seconds long. It paused and then continued once more. Before Teacher 1 responded, there were almost two or three brief whispers. The murmurs were supplemented by gentle smiles instead of loud cheers. This interaction was not as open and obvious as the disruptions of more open-minded or audible students, who are usually identified as male. When the whispering recurred the third time, Teacher 1 stopped mid-sentence. She did not raise her voice or use harsh words. Instead, she turned around and stared straight into the faces of the girls and remained motionless for a few seconds. This behavior had an immediate effect. The females stopped smiling, they started looking at their worksheets in shame and confusion, as they are reading. This instant response of female students is the reflection of internalized norms and behaviour that they manifested collectively. They are conditioned to be submissive and responsive even to the non-verbal authority. They self-disciplined their selves, just with a look of their teacher. So, their behavior was controlled, which manifests how gender expectations play their roles in the classrooms, and how it affects the teacher’s approach to regulate the discipline and learning. This finding strongly aligns with research on gendered classroom behavior, where female students are often expected to socialize and display compliance and self-regulation (Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Hussain et al., 2024). It asserts how females in post-colonial societies are trained to be humble and submissive to come up with their societal expectations. It also critiques how power is exerted on the female gender in a Pakistani society. Furthermore, it is also observed that male and female patterns of laughter. Females are more subtle and restricted, and also their tone remains in the decorum of academic discourse, which is easy to control, while males are more performative, expressive and sometimes even disruptive in their humorous interaction. It is also indicative of the wider sociocultural pressures in Pakistani society, where gendered norms shape the acceptable ways of participating in the classroom (Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Shah, 2015). In this way, laughter is a location where gendered identities are enacted and controlled.

Conclusion

The study affirms that laughter in Pakistani classrooms is an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon of communication, which simultaneously conforms with existing norms and challenges the existing hierarchies of the educational setting. Across all cohorts, it is

observed that laughter is generated through error, peer discussion, humorous situations, and some unexpected moments of realization. However, it is also revealed that the seriousness of laughter, its meaning, and how it is perceived and regulated are highly dependent on the classroom context where an episode occurs. So, it can be safely said that laughter is dependent on academic seniority and gendered norms that shape human behavior. Laughter at the undergraduate level challenges the teacher's authority unless it is addressed adequately. This is to show that laughter serves the purpose of a boundary marker of acceptable behaviour, which is only allowed when it does not pose a threat to pedagogical aims or authority. In contrast, in senior classes, laughter has been used to its full pedagogical and dialogic potential. At the postgraduate level, laughter is not taken as disruptive, but as a cognitive interaction that sets the decorum of the class towards critical engagement and involvement. Moreover, it was also observed that male and female students behave differently. It is found that females carry out their laughter in subtle ways through whispering or restrained gestures, and that can be regulated by teachers through eye contact and constant gaze. On the contrary, male students participate in a more overt way and perform laughter, which needs to be controlled verbally. So, it can be safely deduced that laughter is contextualized by internalized gender norms, which are manifestations of the norms of Pakistani society. It is concluded that females can be easily controlled in a subtle but definite way, which is not enforced.

Taken together, these findings suggest that laughter in Pakistani university classes is not restricted to the manifestation of amusement but is a socially and pedagogically regulated phenomenon. It is argued that laughter can both be resistant and challenge the authority of the teacher on a temporary basis, but it is mostly used in a critical way to encourage participation and critical thinking. The teacher's role in the class is to interpret and manage laughter. It enhances interaction, supports communication, and positive discourse as long as it is aligned with instructional goals. At the same time, it is easily controlled because it poses a risk to power, disrupts education, or estranges individuals. The relations among academic seniority, gendered behaviors, and teacher authority show how laughter serves as a key site of negotiating power, participation, and social norms in education. In this aspect, classroom talk does not exclude laughter, but it is an element of the co-construction of meaning in teaching, learning, and social relations in the context of higher learning. In this regard, laughter is not incidental to classroom talk but part of the co-construction of meaning in teaching, learning, and social relations in the context of higher learning.

Acknowledgements

N/A.

AI Use Statement

The authors used Grammarly Premium solely for language editing and proofreading. No AI tools were used to generate, analyze, interpret, or write the scientific content of this manuscript.

Ethics statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants whose data were included in the study and that all data have been anonymized to protect participants' privacy.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Author contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of the study.

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