

The Image of the Woman in Romanian Jokes

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Abstract

In contemporary Romanian society, women are more frequently mentioned in public discourse, most often accompanied by all the stereotypes associated with gender. On the other hand, those who continue to cling to traditionalism are men, as it offers them a more advantageous status position in relation to women. Gender stereotypes are perpetuated in society through various means, starting with the way children are socialized in their early years. They are taught by their parents what it means to be a girl or a boy, how they should behave according to their gender in order to conform to the expectations of the society they live in, and what statuses and roles they are expected to fulfill. These dilemmas can also be found in Romanian jokes, which often serve as a form of entertainment that expresses a culture illustrating this hierarchy. Once told, such jokes do nothing but legitimize and reinforce old stereotypes regarding the gender image of women. In many cases, individuals' opinions about women are shaped by stereotypes based on traditional perceptions of gender roles. Over time, these perceptions have come to be viewed as more important in defining an individual as a "woman" or a "man," becoming a standard that many attempt to reach as closely as possible. The paper aims to analyze both the specific nature of the most common stereotypes about women in Romanian online jokes and the extent to which these jokes influence Romanian society's perception of women.

Keywords: *Social stereotype; gender image; traditionalism; modernity; power distribution in the couple.*

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1. Gender and Social Stereotype – The Dilemma of Equity

In order to develop a new type of understanding regarding the differences between women and men - beyond biological ones - human sciences have borrowed the term *gender* from linguistics. Thus, the distinction between sex and gender has represented a major sociological intervention in both academic and political language. (Grünberg, 2010)

To understand this distinction between gender and sex, a brief definition of each term is necessary.

Sex refers to *“those innate genetic and morphophysiological characteristics, observable, through which male and female bodies are defined (and differentiated). Thus, there are individuals of the female sex; individuals of the male sex; or, much more rarely, hermaphroditic individuals (with ambiguous sex).”* (Grünberg, 2010) Similarly, according to West and Zimmerman (1987), sex refers to what is assigned by biology - that is, anatomy, hormones, and physiology.

Between the 1960s and 1970s, gender was presented in academic settings as a status achieved by individuals, constructed through psychological, cultural, and social means (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125). Furthermore, gender can be defined as *“a system of meanings that shapes access to power, status, and material resources”* (Crawford, 2003, p. 1414).

Gender also refers to the social and cultural norms associated with sexes within particular social systems, through which individuals are classified as feminine or masculine. Thus, we can understand gender as illustrating *“the qualities, preferences, aptitudes, expectations, roles, and responsibilities associated with women and men in a given society”* (Grünberg, 2010).

Even before birth, a child is assigned certain statuses, roles, characteristics, and future expectations based on biological sex - by the family, the school, and society at large. After birth, if the child is a girl, her clothes are pink *“because she is a girl,”* while for a boy, they are predominantly blue. It is also generally assumed that if the child is female, she will most likely become a secretary, a teacher, or a caregiver, since these are considered *“women’s jobs.”* On the other hand, if the child is male, he is expected to become an engineer, pursue a career in the military or police, or enter a field requiring physical strength.

Although there are undeniable biological differences between the sexes - for example, women can give birth, and most men have greater muscle strength than women - identifying or self-identifying as

a woman or a man (gender identity) relies on characteristics beyond mere anatomical description. (Grünberg, 2010)

Thus, these characteristics specific to each gender are in fact represented by the expectations that society has of an individual, in accordance with their biological sex.

A different perspective on this topic is illustrated in a study by Erwin Straus, cited by Iris Marion Young (2005, p. 27). The author notes that differences in behavior or the execution of actions can be observed between girls and boys from an early age. Specifically, when a five-year-old girl wants to throw a ball, she does not rotate her torso, she does not move her arm to the side, and her legs remain stationary next to each other. In this case, the ball is thrown without precision or strength.

On the other hand, for a boy of the same age, the preparation to throw a ball is different. He uses his body in a much more complex way, changing both the position of his torso and the position of his arms and legs. This complexity of movement results in greater accuracy and much more force in the throw (Vlad, 2017).

Thus, according to the research mentioned above, since these differences can be observed from the early years of an individual's life, they are considered to be of biological nature and not differences acquired over the course of life. (Straus, 1966 *apud* Young, 2005, p. 28)

From another perspective, West and Zimmerman develop the concept of *doing gender*. According to them, this concept "*means creating differences between girls and boys and between women and men - differences that are not natural, essential, or biological.*" Once these differences are constructed by individuals, they are used to reinforce "*the essentiality of gender.*" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 137)

Thus, these gender differences - the different societal expectations toward an individual merely because they belong to one gender category or another - are created and perpetuated within society through individuals' attitudes toward everyday activities.

Gender differentiation occurs both at the individual level and at the structural level. (Grünberg, 2010)

At the individual level, a person relies on certain stereotypes and prejudices to define the masculine and the feminine. On the other hand, at the structural level, every society considers a set of behaviors, attitudes, and ways of social interaction specific to each gender. It is important to mention that a society's gender

differentiation system varies historically and across cultures, directly affecting both women and men.

According to the *Dictionary of Sociology* (1998), stereotypes are “*mental clichés*” that offer us “*economy of thought*.” In other words, stereotypes are simplifying mental schemes learned during the early stages of socialization and used by the individual in an attempt to understand society as a whole. Most of the time, stereotypes (and prejudices) are defined as unfavorable attitudes toward certain ethnic or racial categories.

Likewise, according to Gordon Marshall’s *Dictionary of Sociology* (1994, p. 198), stereotypes are “*one-sided and exaggerated images of men and women that are repeatedly used in everyday life*.” These are part of a process through which children are socialized into “*sex roles*” and through which both children and adults are “*denied opportunities to develop individually and more diversely*.”

From an early age, children learn what it means to be a boy and what it means to be a girl, as society imposes certain gender stereotypes upon them. Initially, these stereotypes are introduced by the nuclear family, especially by parents, who spend the most time with the child.

Thus, even from the process of primary socialization, the child begins their journey through life with well-defined gender stereotypes. Little girls are taught from a very young age to wear dresses and skirts to appear more feminine, to care for their long and beautiful hair, since this is what a future woman looks like. At the same time, parents teach them to be sensitive, empathetic beings “*because that’s how girls are*”; they are enrolled in ballet or in courses that develop their emotional or cognitive side, rather than in contact sports, football, basketball, etc., since those are considered “*boys’ sports*.”

On the opposite side, boys are taught to have a strong personality, not to cry “*like a girl*,” because “*men never cry*.” Their toys include cars, trucks, or construction tools. Also, most often, their hair is cut short by parents, since long hair would bring too much femininity, and they are encouraged to practice a sport because boys must have better physical fitness than girls.

Likewise, other gender stereotypes faced by individuals from early childhood relate to the expectations society - and especially parents - have regarding the child’s academic performance. In the case of girls, society expects behavior oriented toward a greater desire for knowledge, higher grades in school, and increased interest in academic and extracurricular activities.

In the case of boys, the level of blame from the family or society in general is not as high if they get a low grade at school or do not show a strong desire for learning in the educational sphere.

According to social cognitive theory, the main ways in which information related to gender is transmitted, processed, and reinforced for children are: modeling (observing those around them with specific behaviors, attitudes, and reactions for each gender and assuming them as “*normal*”), direct learning (through the approval of the behavior and attitude the child manifests, deemed appropriate for their gender), or through personal experience. (Țocu, 2012, p. 48)

Another environment where gender stereotypes are created, reproduced, and perpetuated in society is mass media. In order to create real change in society, this area must be studied closely. “*Tell me what kind of stereotypes dominate, and I’ll tell you what kind of society you live in*” is a phrase that can give rise to many questions. (Grunberg, 2005, p. 13)

Stereotypes, especially gender-based ones, can be considered “*a direct expression of the values and beliefs in a society,*” having a significant influence on individuals in their daily lives. Society functions based on a “*rigid framework*” for defining femininity and masculinity, in which each sex is expected to conform to specific traits. Men are associated with power, success, and public achievement, while women are defined as empathetic beings whose natural place is in the home, where they can express care for others. (Grunberg, 2005, p. 13)

The stereotypes embedded in society’s mindset are also presented in advertising and publicity. As Erving Goffman (1979) observed even in the last century, from the ads appearing in newspapers and magazines of that era, one can clearly extract a few gender stereotypes.

In most of the advertisements studied by Goffman (1979), the woman is portrayed in the home, taking care of children or in the kitchen, cooking - images that reinforce the stereotype that “*a woman should be a housewife, and stay at the stove.*”

Another example of a stereotype identified in the analysis of the previously mentioned author is that of the sensual, glamorous woman, whose hands are used in advertisements for products such as perfumes, fine drinks, or cosmetics. More specifically, in all advertisements where only a person’s hands are featured in close-up to advertise a product, the delicate hands of a female person appear.

At the same time, the news can be considered a direct transmitter of the values and attitudes of individuals in a society. Thus, the representation of reality in news broadcasts - whether true or false - can have a major impact on viewers. Most often, gender

stereotypes are not stated directly by news anchors, but can be understood by analyzing certain details. For example, during a news session, men present the most important topics with a greater impact on the audience, while women mostly present entertainment or celebrity news. This illustrates the stereotype that a man is more credible than a woman, who is not considered as intellectually capable as the opposite sex. (Grunberg, 2005, p. 57)

Beauty standards in society place strong social pressure on women (Nelson, 2013 *apud* Ellis-Hervey et al., 2016). These standards change frequently - perhaps even yearly in some cases - and are promoted through mass media, social networks, magazines, etc., highlighting the "*ideal*" waist, thighs, breasts, buttocks, or even hair (color, length, texture), traits which most women across social classes try to adopt for themselves in order to stay "*on trend*."

For those psychologically predisposed to developing anxiety about their physical appearance and self-confidence, images in the media - particularly in women's magazines - can be damaging (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 195). Since mass media habitually promotes a thin female body, free of stretch marks and cellulite, with long, shiny hair, many female viewers begin to feel insecure about their own bodies and traits, believing that what is promoted in newspapers, magazines, on TV, or online represents a beauty standard they must achieve.

According to excerpts from interviews presented in Gauntlett's book (2002, p. 200), the ideal woman is described as having both independence in attitude and physical beauty, as well as a certain modern flair in home design and fashion style.

Thus, because of these stereotypes and beauty standards shared publicly via mass media, many women, even from adolescence, end up with low self-esteem.

One of the physical aspects of the individual that generates a set of stereotypes, prejudices, and social norms in society is the hair on one's head. A large portion of society considers it normal or "*usual*" that, if you are a girl or a woman, you should have long hair and spend significantly more money and time maintaining your hairstyle, whereas if you are a boy or a man, you should wear your hair short.

Hair length assigns the individual a certain degree of femininity or masculinity. Thus, women with short hair tend to be labeled by society as masculine or less feminine, while men with longer hair are seen as too feminine.

In addition, over time, stereotypes and prejudices have also been created based on hair color. The most common example is blonde hair, most often found among women. These women are

considered attractive in appearance but lacking in intellectual and cognitive abilities. Blondes may be dismissed not only in everyday situations - such as interactions with friends or family - but also in formal institutions like educational settings or workplaces.

As for urban planning, one issue observed in contemporary society is the way public restrooms are designed and distributed based on gender.

Even though, often, in a public space - such as a movie theater - the women's restroom has the same surface area as the men's, there is a clear discrepancy between the lines in front of the women's toilets compared to those in front of the men's.

This difference stems from several factors which, unfortunately, are not taken into account by the relevant institutions. For instance, women need up to 2.3 times more time to use the restroom than men. (*Banks, 1991*)

This is due to the fact that women constitute the majority of the elderly and people with disabilities - two groups that tend to require more time in the restroom. (*Criado, 2019*)

Moreover, even if a woman is not part of these two categories, she is more likely than a man to be accompanied by a dependent from one of these groups or by a child, which also adds extra time to the action. Additionally, up to 25% of women are of childbearing age, meaning they may need additional time in the restroom to change a sanitary pad. (*Criado, 2019*)

Other spaces frequented by large numbers of individuals, where this inequality in public restroom space that significantly disadvantages women can be observed, are shopping centers visited daily by hundreds of people.

Thus, even though restrooms separated by sex are designed to be equal in terms of space, this is not truly equitable. That is why women's bathrooms often have long lines, while the men's bathrooms are less crowded. (*Criado, 2019*)

Even though, from a traditionalist perspective, men are "*the head of the family,*" "*the ones who bring money into the household, working more than women,*" in reality, things are different. Although women don't typically work longer hours than men at their jobs, worldwide, 75% of unpaid labor is performed by women. Women engage in domestic tasks between 3 and 6 hours a day, compared to men, who spend between 30 minutes and two hours on such tasks. (*Criado, 2019*)

Even from a young age, girls do significantly more household chores than their brothers, and this imbalance in the volume of "*unofficial*" labor grows gradually as they age.

This significant gender-based difference in unpaid labor is caused by society's view of women's roles in the household. In traditional societies, it was understood that women should care for children, handle household tasks such as cooking for the entire family, doing laundry for the entire family, washing the dishes, and caring for those who were no longer self-sufficient, whether they were part of her family or her husband's. All of this was expected to be completed by the time the "*head of the family*" returned home from a day of work.

Due to these aspects, a large number of women are forced to take part-time jobs, which implicitly offer lower salaries (Marit, Șargu, Corsei, 2022). Beyond the financial disadvantage of part-time employment, there is also a drawback concerning the criteria considered for retirement eligibility. Therefore, summing up all these factors, because of the woman's "*traditional*" role in society, she is not only disadvantaged in the short term - since she performs significantly more unpaid labor than a man - but is also negatively impacted at the time of retirement, which should otherwise reward the amount of work carried out throughout her life.

At the same time, the approximately 10 additional hours per week that women spend on housework - on top of paid labor - also affect their health, both physically and mentally. Thus, women are more likely to develop depression and anxiety, as well as life-threatening diseases, including heart disease and cancer. (Criado, 2019)

2. Methodology

The research aims to analyze the image of women in Romanian jokes. By conducting a content analysis of Romanian humor expressed through jokes published online, we can identify the extent to which these jokes influence Romanian society's view of women and the gender stereotypes they promote. The objective of this research is to examine how women are portrayed in Romanian jokes, as well as the level of individual agreement with these stereotypes. The study starts from two research questions: What are the most frequently encountered gender stereotypes in Romanian jokes? And what is the degree of agreement individuals express regarding the stereotypes present in Romanian jokes about women?

Following the analysis of the most popular and appreciated jokes with and about women in the online environment, the five most frequently encountered stereotypes were selected: "women are unfaithful," "blondes are dumb," "women are spenders and take

advantage of their partner's money," "women are bad drivers," and "women are nagging."

3. The Female Image and Stereotype in Romanian Jokes

An initial frequency analysis reveals a considerable difference regarding the percentage of female respondents who believe that women are more unfaithful than men (4.3%), compared to the percentage of male respondents who at least agree with the statement that women's infidelity rate is higher than that of men (25.9%). Moreover, the results indicate that women strongly disagree with this statement at a rate nearly three times higher than male respondents (73.9% women vs. 27.8% men).

This difference in perception between the two genders suggests that the stereotype found in a significant number of Romanian jokes - according to which "women are more unfaithful than men" - is predominantly supported by men, and to a much lesser extent by the "main characters" of the analyzed jokes themselves.

Furthermore, there is a tendency among men to blame the opposite sex for acts of infidelity, generalizing the phenomenon in order to avoid acknowledging the high level of unfaithfulness among themselves, even when they are aware of it. A significant correlation is also observed between male respondents who believe that women are more unfaithful and those who admit they would cheat on their partner if she were unfaithful.

To further support the aforementioned argument, a moderate correlation can be observed between male respondents who consider women to be more unfaithful than men and those who state they would cheat on their partner, justifying it with a "need for variety." Thus, men appear to be more likely than female respondents to engage in infidelity.

Table 1.

Correlations				
Gender			Women are more unfaithful than men	Would cheat if their partner were unfaithful
Masculine	Women are more	Pearson Correlatio	1	,415**

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unfaithful than men	n			
	Sig. (2- tailed)			,003
	N	54	49	
Would cheat if their partner were unfaithful	Pearson Correlatio n	,415**	1	
	Sig. (2- tailed)	,003		
	N	49	51	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A significant correlation can also be observed between male respondents who believe that women are more unfaithful than men and those same respondents who agreed with the statement that they would resort to infidelity if their partner were unfaithful.

Table 2.

		Correlations		
Gender			Women are more unfaithful than men	Would cheat if not sexually satisfied
Masculine	Women are more unfaithful than men	Pearson Correlation	1	,385**
		Sig. (2- tailed)		,006
		N	54	50
	Would cheat if not sexually satisfied	Pearson Correlation	,385**	1
	Sig. (2- tailed)	,006		
	N	50	52	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Women are considered more unfaithful than men by their very nature, not as a consequence of being erotically unsatisfied. Regardless of the underlying motivations, women are portrayed as inherently unfaithful and are treated as such in Romanian jokes.

The correlation table between the variables “*Women are more unfaithful than men*” and “*Would cheat if not sexually satisfied*” is not statistically significant. This lack of significance indicates that these two variables are not correlated, which could suggest that in the collective mindset - particularly in the realm of jokes and gender stereotypes - women are perceived as unfaithful regardless of the reasons that might typically explain infidelity.

Regarding the image of blondes, according to respondents’ answers, there is a significant difference in the level of agreement between women and men concerning the stereotype that “*Blondes are less intelligent.*” Specifically, 90.5 percent of women disagreed with the idea that women with blonde hair have reduced intellectual capacity, compared to 73.2 percent of men who also disagreed with this stereotype. Additionally, only 1.7 percent of women agreed with this stereotype, whereas 10.8 percent of men expressed at least partial agreement. These differences reflect a stronger rejection of intellectual stereotyping among women and highlight the persistence of gendered biases in cultural narratives.

Table 3.

Correlations					
				Blondes are less intelligent	Blondes are more manipulative
Blondes are less intelligent	Pearson Correlation		1		,731**
		Sig. (2-tailed)			,000
		N	175		174
Blondes are more manipulative	Pearson Correlation		,731**		1
		Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	
		N	174		174

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation above illustrates a contrasting, seemingly illogical idea, because the less intelligent a woman is, the lower her ability to manipulate should be. However, respondents believe that the less intelligent blonde women are, the higher their level of manipulation becomes, which can only be explained by a contradiction whereby it is the beauty of this type of woman that manipulates, not her intellectual abilities - a contradiction that is assimilated by society through social stereotypes.

Thus, it seems that individuals do not associate intelligence with the ability to manipulate, but rather connect beauty with a woman's power to manipulate.

Nevertheless, the fact that the woman manages to manipulate even the evaluator who considers her intellectually incapable shows that the image of the "*imperfect blonde*" is, in fact, superior to that of the evaluator who perceives her as less intelligent.

According to age, the study's respondents perceive differently the stereotype regarding blonde women and their intellectual capacities. A significant difference was identified between the perceptions and the ways in which respondents from the first two age groups - those not older than 35 - are influenced by stereotypes perpetuated in society, and the way in which the stigmatization of blonde women is perceived by those over 36.

More precisely, none of the respondents over 36 agreed even partially with the idea that "*Blondes are less intelligent.*" Thus, as years go by, individuals tend to build their own perceptions about society and different types of people based on personal experience and no longer "*judge a book by its cover.*"

Those who underestimate women intellectually based solely on hair color also attribute to them an inability to generate their own financial resources. According to this view, women rely on their husband's or partner's money to satisfy their needs or desires, since they are considered incapable of having financial means of their own.

According to the social stereotype, women are perceived as weaker than men - a belief still assimilated by many young people, even though communities are no longer so traditional as to impose such stereotypes with the same intensity. However, there is a connection between this idea of the less intelligent woman who, being aware of her lack of intelligence, takes advantage of the man's material resources.]

This atypical relationship shows that its justification lacks any real basis or rational explanation in terms of social evaluation and is

purely the result of a social stereotype, since a less intelligent person would not have the intellectual capacity to dominate financially.

The fact that some women manage to take advantage of a man's resources merely highlights those social stereotypes - often fueled by jokes - are taken *ad litteram*, without critical thinking. They do nothing but undermine the feminine image and artificially reinforce the image of male status - as the one who acquires more resources, dominates the woman, and considers himself more intelligent than her.

The portrayal of blonde women continues in a negative manner even regarding physical appearance. A medium-level correlation illustrated in the table above shows that individuals who do not trust the cognitive abilities of blondes also consider them physically unattractive. This indicates, from the perspective of the study participants, that blonde women do not attract society's admiration either through intelligence or through beauty.

However, when respondents were asked to choose the type of women who would inspire the lowest level of trust based on hair color, more than half of them stated that they would trust red-haired women the least. Thus, it appears that the stereotype of the intellectually incapable blonde woman did not influence their opinion about red-haired women, who are considered the least trustworthy.

Although the social stereotype claims that blondes are the least intelligent, most manipulative, and least capable women, in the chart above, red-haired women are seen - in a counterintuitively high proportion - as the least trustworthy.

For this reason, 77 jokes about redheads were analyzed, and most of them are constructed not so much to analyze the image of red-haired women, but rather to draw comparisons between blondes and redheads. Even in these jokes, the blonde is portrayed as having the highest level of intellectual incapacity.

The profile of the social category that considers red-haired women to be the least trustworthy consists of 60.7% of men and 66.4% of women.

At the same time, 66.9% of respondents from urban areas and 54.1% from rural areas contribute to the formation of this social profile. The highest proportion of respondents who express the lowest level of trust in red-haired women, according to age, is 87.5%, and is represented by individuals in the 26–35 age group.

Another aspect analyzed is that of the spendthrift woman. Depending on gender, the respondents' perspective on the statement according to which the woman takes advantage of the husband's

financial resources to satisfy her needs and desires is different. Almost 35% of female respondents totally disagree with this blaming of women for the way in which they manage the couple's financial resources. On the other hand, it seems that men, in a higher proportion than women, consider that their partners take advantage of their financial resources and use them to fulfill material desires, being at least partially in agreement in a percentage of 21.4%, a proportion almost 4 times higher than that of women with the same opinion.

At the same time, it is important to mention that a percentage of almost 3 times lower of men totally disagree with this stereotype taken from Romanian jokes, not seeing women as opportunistic individuals whose goal is to satisfy their needs and desires by using their husband's money.

According to the medium-level correlation between the two variables, among respondents there is a tendency towards traditional thinking, through which men consider themselves, based on traditional status, "*financially potent*" members of the family, even when they are not.

The fact that these two variables correlate denotes that the man feels, at least culturally, that the woman's requests put pressure on his ability to bring in money and, at the same time, on his financial autonomy.

Usually, the woman is the one who manages the family's financial resources, even if these are produced exclusively (or even partially) by the man. Considering this aspect, individuals tend to consider the woman as spendthrift, given the fact that she handles everything related to family expenses. The mere fact that the woman only manages the husband's financial resources for the benefit of the family, and not for her personal benefit, may lead individuals to the erroneous belief that the wife takes advantage of her husband's money in order to satisfy her own needs and desires.

As a rule, men do not assume the financial responsibilities of the couple, the management of financial resources and of the domestic role functionalities being handled and coordinated by women. At the same time, many of the domestic tasks are left by the man, in accordance with the traditional culture in which he was socialized, to be taken over by the woman.

Nevertheless, the spending of the budget is desired to be supervised by men. The attitudes of the man regarding the money spent by the woman are not correlated with the needs to be invested in various budget categories. Thus, he notices that part of the budget is spent, but does not question whether these expenses are useful or

not, or whether they can or cannot be made. The main issue raised is only that, at some point, the money diminishes.

The man does not have the autonomy to manage the budget for himself, as the financial resources produced for the family are mostly spent on the family's needs-needs that are identified and managed by the woman.

Therefore, the man reacts in a stereotypical manner, claiming that the woman is not the one who manages the family's money, although, when analyzing the domestic tasks divided by gender, it is observed that many of them are associated with the woman. At the same time, the man does not have the competence to manage the family's expenses, given that he does not know the dynamics of the tasks and the financial volume associated with the tasks he does not do or does not know how to do.

From the perspective of the image of the female driver, more than half of the male respondents have a not-so-good opinion about women and the way they drive a vehicle. They consider, in a significant percentage (52.7%), that most problems encountered in traffic are rather caused by women. On the other hand, less than 15% of respondents-both female and male-consider that traffic problems are rather caused by men.

Thus, a generalization can be observed regarding traffic problems caused by women, even though in every society there are countless women who are much more skilled in driving than men. However, they are considered "*special cases*" or, likewise, they are seen as female individuals who are too masculine, given that the domain of cars and mechanics is dominated by men.

Furthermore, a contradiction can be observed in the respondents' opinions, as they claim that women are worse drivers, yet at the same time consider that they drive more cautiously than men.

In the view of 59% of female respondents, the way women drive is considered to be a preventive one, aiming to avoid possible problems or misunderstandings in traffic. On the other hand, only 39.3% of men agree that women's driving style is a preventive one. This may also be due to the fact that they have a completely different driving pattern, namely a more aggressive one.

This stereotype existing in Romanian society and beyond, according to which "*Women drive poorly*", is also confirmed by the choice respondents made when answering a hypothetical situation. Only 3.5% of them chose the woman to be the one driving the car in case of a long trip. On the other hand, a percentage ten times higher-

namely 35.9% of individuals-stated that they would prefer a man to drive the car during long journeys.

This stereotype is culturally transmitted to society, so that for long-distance travel, it is taken for granted that the man is the one driving the car, being the main driver of the family, and the image of the best driver in the family is built around him, while women are seen as the weakest drivers.

At the same time, it seems that a considerable proportion of 60.6% of respondents state that it would be indifferent to them which partner drives the car during long journeys. Thus, when the general image of the woman driving the car is analyzed, it is a negative one, being stereotyped, but when actual behavior is analyzed, individuals no longer refer to the stereotype.

Even though we observed that predominantly, respondents consider that women drive worse than men, it seems that almost half of them state that most road accidents each year are caused by men. This may be the result of the aggressive driving style specific to most men.

At the same time, in their attempt to be fair, respondents express a stereotypical opinion according to which traffic accidents are caused annually by both women and men equally (46.1%). Thus, respondents do not have a statistical basis to support this choice, but rather prefer to give the socially desirable answer, so as to appear fair to both genders.

According to the statistical data displayed on the official website of the Romanian Police, women are responsible for accidents 6.9 times less than men (Poliția Rutieră, 2021, p. 12).

Within the questionnaire, respondents created a hierarchy of the characteristics they would attribute to a woman who talks a lot. From the perspective of male respondents, if a woman talks a lot, it primarily indicates that she is intelligent.

Secondly, predominantly, men consider that the same type of woman who talks a lot is sociable, followed in third place by the characteristic of being talkative, assigned by almost 50% of respondents.

Thus, we can admit that, paradoxically, the social image of the woman who talks a lot is better perceived by men, even though they are the ones who also consider her to be nagging, in comparison with the perception of women themselves, as we will illustrate in the next table.

Moving into the sphere of less positive characteristics, men chose in a percentage of 53.7% that the woman who talks a lot

should be described as tiring, a trait ranked fourth out of the six characteristics. Next, the fifth trait attributed to this type of woman by male respondents is “*nagging*”, followed in last place by the characteristic “*annoying*”.

The perspective of women proves to be quite similar to that of men. The only noticeable difference in the hierarchy of characteristics made by female respondents is the order of the first three traits attributed to women who talk a lot.

Thus, if men describe this type of woman as primarily intelligent, secondly sociable, and thirdly talkative, predominantly, women have ranked them in reverse order. More precisely, from the perspective of female respondents, the woman who talks a lot is primarily talkative, followed by being described as “*sociable*” and “*intelligent*”.

Regarding the negative characteristics attributed to a woman who talks a lot, a similarity can be observed between the opinions of men and women.

Analyzing by gender, it seems that there is a significant difference between the views of women and those of men. More specifically, 45% of male respondents believe that women are nagging, compared to only 22.7% of women who are at least partially in agreement with this statement.

At the same time, the difference in perspective between the two genders can also be seen in the share of those who were in total disagreement with the aforementioned idea. Thus, women totally disagree in a proportion of almost 50% with the statement that, in general, women are nagging, while men expressed total disagreement in a proportion of only 10.9%.

These differences in perspectives on this matter demonstrate the different ways of communication between women and men. Women have a significantly higher daily verbal output than men, and they also have the ability to transmit different messages through multiple channels in a conversation. Furthermore, the pleasure of talking and telling stories is specific to women, which does not apply to men. Thus, the volume of communication considered “*normal*” by women is seen as excessive by men, hence this observed difference in perception.

According to the correlation coefficient resulting from the sociological analysis, it seems that a defining characteristic of nagging women from the perspective of individuals who agree with this general description of women is that they “*talk a lot and without purpose.*”

Taking into account the above-mentioned characteristics regarding the hierarchy created by respondents for the traits attributed to a woman who talks a lot - according to which the top 3 are positive traits - a certain nuance can be observed in how respondents interpret the label "*nagging*." Thus, the mere fact that a woman talks a lot does not lead an individual to describe her as nagging; rather, the fact that she talks "*a lot and without purpose*" disturbs the interlocutor and leads their perception in a negative and irritating direction toward that person.

Therefore, the woman who talks a lot is not considered nagging, according to the image outlined by respondents through the results of the tables illustrated above.

Nagging women form a different social category, one that correlates with the fact that they talk a lot and without purpose. This indicates that the pressure women place when trying to express their dissatisfaction with certain masculine failures to assume responsibility or participate in various conjugal contexts is something that takes men out of their comfort zone, challenging them in situations in which they feel uncomfortable. For this reason, the Pearson correlation between the variables "*Women are nagging*" and "*Women talk a lot and without purpose*" represents a medium, significant degree of relationship, which shows that nagging women are those who talk a lot and without purpose.

At the same time, it seems that women's conflictual behavior creates a negative perception among individuals, leading to their being labeled as nagging. Thus, respondents perceive "*nagging*" not as women's dissatisfaction regarding men's lack of responsibility, but rather as their tendency to become conflictual. The more nagging they are, the more they are considered to be conflictual, since the woman's dissatisfactions are preempted by the man's self-protective attitude - an attitude that seeks to remain within the boundaries of what he considers desirable to do or desirable to assume in a conjugal relationship.

4. Conclusions

The appreciation and attraction individuals have for jokes can be argued through their need - predominantly among men - for legitimacy regarding their opinion about the image of women, shaped by the stereotypes present in this form of amusement. Thus, they rely on the innocence of jokes and on the idea that their purpose is merely to entertain society - without attacking the people being joked about -

in order to justify and reinforce their views about women, which may reflect a traditionalist perspective on the role of women in society.

On the other hand, the stereotypes fueled by jokes are taken ad litteram by society, without being deeply analyzed. Therefore, they only serve to undermine the image of women and artificially promote the status image of men.

There are differences in the ways individuals interpret jokes. From a general perspective, they confirm and support the way women are portrayed in Romanian jokes. On the other hand, when stereotypes are viewed through personal, specific cases, individuals' opinions change, and the stereotypes lose their consistency and relevance, proving inapplicable in real-life contexts.

As the data analysis shows, women are considered more unfaithful than men by nature of their definition, not as a result of being erotically or emotionally unsatisfied by them. Thus, the woman is seen as inherently unfaithful and is treated as such in Romanian jokes.

Intuitively, the less intelligent a woman is, the less capable she should be of manipulation. However, a counterintuitive result of the analysis demonstrates that, in the respondents' opinion, the more intellectually incapable the blonde woman is, the greater her level of manipulation. This contradiction in individual opinions shows that the beauty of this type of woman is the means through which she manipulates, not her intellectual abilities.

As a rule, men do not assume the financial responsibilities of the couple, nor the management of financial resources and the functionality of domestic roles. Consequently, these tasks are carried out by women. Nevertheless, the management of the budget is desired to be overseen by men. For this reason, the man reacts in a stereotypical way, claiming that the woman is not the one managing the family's money, even though, when analyzing domestic tasks divided by gender, it can be observed that most of them are associated with women, including the management of the family's financial resources.

When the general image of the woman driving a car is analyzed, it is negative and stereotyped. However, when actual behavior is analyzed, individuals no longer refer to the stereotype. More precisely, individuals maintain their negative opinion regarding female drivers in general, but when faced with a concrete situation, they resort to a socially desirable answer, stating that it is indifferent whether a woman or a man drives the car during long trips, thus dismantling the stereotype.

Regarding the woman who talks a lot, she is not considered nagging, according to the image outlined by the study's respondents. Nagging women form a social category that correlates with the fact that they talk a lot and without purpose. This indicates that, through the pressure women place on men in an attempt to express dissatisfaction with their lack of responsibility, they provoke men into situations they find uncomfortable to participate in. At the same time, individuals do not perceive "nagging" as the woman's dissatisfaction regarding men's lack of involvement, but rather as their tendency to become conflictual.

Thus, it seems that jokes have become more of a masculine resource for confirming one's own status, and less of a mere leisure activity for communal amusement.

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