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A Pragmo-Discourse Analysis of Jordanians' Complaining Strategies on Facebook

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Abstract This study sought to explore the complaining strategies employed by Facebook users in response to posts about price increases on various Facebook pages. Specifically, it aimed to identify the types and frequency of these strategies and explore the reasons behind the emergence of new ones. Additionally, it investigated the socio-political factors that complaints may reflect. A dataset of 481 complaints was gathered from multiple Facebook pages. For the analysis, the study employed the frameworks of Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) and Van Dijk (1993). The findings revealed that Jordanians used thirteen new complaining strategies. Due to the new cybercrime issued in 2023, most of the complaints were indirect and did not include offensive language. Furthermore, in terms of socio-political aspects, the findings indicated that Jordanians believe the government maintains strong control over social media because of the new cybercrime law. Some complaints also reflected sentiments of distrust, frustration, and a sense of socio-political division and discord among the people of Jordan.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Discourse analysis, Complaints, Cybercrime, Socio-political aspects*

1. Introduction

Facebook has emerged as a digital platform that is widely used for sharing various types of information ranging from personal and social experiences and messages to more serious reports, such as official news updates. Thus, its role goes beyond personal communication, serving as an essential instrument for public communication, such as in the case of governmental and political affairs. Government officials and institutions usually employ Facebook to release public announcements and official information through their own pages and through news outlets. One of the most recurring and provoking government-related posts on Facebook is the updates on the prices of essential goods and services, such as food, electricity, water, and fuel, which directly influence people's daily expenses. As a result, such posts tend to attract Facebook users, where reactions vary from understanding and expressing support to skepticism, frustration, and dissatisfaction. While some responses to such posts show overt resistance, denial,

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and open complaints, others develop more subtle strategies, including sarcasm, rhetorical questions, and irony, to express dissatisfaction. In this regard, Searle (1969), who proposed The Speech Act Theory, argues that, in addition to conveying information, language is also considered a tool to perform actions. That is, through language, we can compliment, request, apologize, warn, and notably, in this context, complain.

Due to the widespread use of Facebook as a tool for public communication, government officials and institutions have adopted it to post critical issues like rising prices of basic goods and services. Such sensitive issues remain unexplored enough, especially in settings governed by strict cybercrime legislation. The Jordanian new Cybercrime Law, which was issued in 2023, has increased the risk of overtly criticizing official policies on social media platforms. As a result, social media users, especially Facebook, have started to employ indirect strategies, such as irony, sarcasm, and rhetorical questions, to express their discontent. However, few studies have explored the use of such alternative strategies functioning as acts of complaints in naturally occurring discourse, such as Facebook.

Accordingly, the present study examines the complaining strategies developed by Facebook users in response to a more serious issue (i.e., the rising prices of essential goods and services), which could be more disturbing for both the government and citizens alike. It also investigates the influence of the new Cybercrime Law on Jordanians'reactions to sensitive issues on Facebook. The amendments to the Jordanian Cybercrime Law allow the Public Prosecutor to initiate legal proceedings against individuals without a personal complaint when the alleged offense involves public figures or governmental entities. Consequently, Facebook users have become more cautious when engaging with such news on social media platforms. Additionally, this study tries to explore the socio-political consideration behind the complaints as reflected in the cultuling fabric of the Jordanian context. Overall, this study examines the complaining strategies used by Jordanians to express resentment regarding the rising prices of commodities on Facebook. It aims to answer the following research questions.

1) What are the complaining strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users when reacting to news of rising prices of commodities?
2) What are the most frequent complaining strategies employed by Facebook users?
3) What might be the reasons for using new complaining strategies?
4) What are the socio-political considerations behind the complaints in the Jordanian context?

2. Theoretical Framework

According to Yule (1996), pragmatics studies contextual meaning. Examining this type of meaning requires interpreting what people mean by an utterance in various contexts and how these contexts affect what is said. The present work adopts a two-layered framework that combines Speech Act Theory, focusing on complaints, and Van Dijk's Socio-cognitive Approach (SCA) with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This provides a comprehensive understanding of how Jordanians express complaints about prices on social media.

2.1. Speech Act Theory

Rather than conveying information, language is a means used to perform actions. In pragmatics, a speech act refers to an action performed by voicing words or utterances. A clear and direct example of this is a set of verbs known as performative verbs (Austin, 1975). Through performative verbs, speakers clearly perform an action, such as the case with the verb 'warn,' which performs the act of warning, as in "I warn you to speak out." Another example of performatives is the verb 'apologize,' performing the act of apologizing, as in "I apologize for being late." According to Yule (1996), speech acts can be expressed either directly or indirectly. A direct speech act results from clear matching between the semantic meaning of the utterance and the intended meaning of the speech. For example, the utterance "can I use your mobile phone?," directly expresses the act of requesting. In contrast, the indirect speech act occurs when the literal meaning of the utterance does not align directly with its communicative function. For instance, the speech act of 'requesting,' expressed directly in the examples above, can also be communicated indirectly, such as in "I am out of credit, and I have to make a call." In this example, the speaker is implicitly trying to use the hearer's mobile phone to make a call. Indirect speech acts are

usually used to give a space for the speakers to modify or even retract their statements and for the listeners to interpret the intended messages in a way that suits their understanding (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Complaining is a specific category of speech act that can be expressed either directly or indirectly. The verb complain means to express pain, grief, or discontent and to make a formal charge or accusation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024). Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that the speech act of complaining shows a speaker's negative judgment regarding a piece of information, a behavior, or an action performed by the hearer. In the same vein, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) suggest that, by making complaints, a speaker expresses a sense of discontent and annoyance towards a specific action. The speech act of complaining is related to the theory of politeness, especially to the concept of 'face' (Brown & Levinson, 1987). When making complaints, a speaker does not usually care about the complainee's feelings or desires. In positive Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), the speaker threatens the complainee's face by communicating direct annoyance and dissatisfaction towards his positive face. However, a speaker can alleviate the impact of the complaining act by using indirect complaining strategies that may save the hearer's face.

Searle (1975) categorized speech acts into five types: assertive, directive, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Based on Searle's framework, Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) developed a taxonomy of complaining strategies, presenting five additional complaining strategies that vary in terms of intensity.

1. Below the Level of Reproach: This strategy represents an indulgent response that mitigates the issue and is often used to maintain harmony, as in "it's okay, no harm done."
2. Expression of Annoyance: This strategy indicates discontent or frustration but without direct blame, as in "this is a worrying behavior."
3. Explicit Complaint: This strategy presents a very clear dissatisfaction with direct blame, as in "you should not say this."
4. Accusation and Warning: In this strategy, people complain more fiercely through direct blaming and warning where they often try to prove personal responsibility and possible consequences, as in "it is all down to you."
5. Immediate Threat: This strategy introduces the harshest form of complaint, involving a direct reaction or ultimatum, as in "you must stop it immediately."

The framework of Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) is adopted to examine the data collected on the complaining strategies employed by Jordanians in response to news concerning rising prices on Facebook.

2.2. Socio-Cognitive Approach

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was developed by Van Dijk (1993). CDA is a form of discourse analysis that studies how social abuse and inequality are constructed, reinforced, justified, and challenged through language in social and political contexts. As a critical approach, CDA researchers adopt an explicit stance, aiming to uncover and confront social inequalities. For this reason, CDA can also be seen as a socially engaged movement of discourse analysts committed to political and social change (Van Dijk, 1993).

Within the broader CDA, Van Dijk (2006) offered a multidisciplinary approach to account for the discursive context, the SCA. This approach concludes findings from the interaction between three aspects: language, cognitive science, and social psychology. Central to SCA is the idea that context should be understood as a continuously evolving construct formed by participants, reflecting the relevant features of discourse. Through SCA, Van Dijk (2006) challenges the conventional sociolinguistic views of the relationship between discourse and context being very simplistic. Instead, he argues that the relationship between discourse and context can be best understood through what he terms contextual models (i.e., individuals' internal cognitive representations). These models include elements such as episodic and semantic memory, cultural knowledge, personal experiences, and procedural skills that enable effective interaction.

Van Dijk (2006) postulates that at the discourse level, we analyze the linguistic structure of the communication, such as lexical choice and syntactic features. The cognitive level investigates the

mental models, beliefs, and ideologies that underlie the text. The social level examines the connection between these social representations and the broader ideologies, power relations, and institutions that shape discourse. These three aspects contribute to shaping meaning, power relations, and social practices. To clarify, consider the brief analysis of a tweet by a verified user posted after a terrorist attack in Europe: *"Another attack by a so-called 'refugee.' How many more lives before we realize multiculturalism is destroying Europe?"*

First of all, we need to know and understand the circumstances under which the tweet was released. For the discourse level, the choice of the phrases 'so-called refugee' and 'multiculturalism is destroying Europe' reveal connotations of deception, crime, and illegitimacy. The cognitive model depicts the refugee as a threat and terrorist. As for the social level, the tweeter tries to create anti-refugee public efforts to legitimize anti-immigrant policy, exploiting the pretext of public safety.

Therefore, the present study also adopts SCA to examine the socio-political considerations behind the comments (see Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2024). The hybrid approach of Olshtain and Weinbach's framework (1993) and Van Dijk's SCA (2006) allows for a comprehensive analysis of complaints on social media. Speech act theory facilitates understanding how complaints are performed linguistically with a focus on the structure and function of complaints as speech acts. It offers insights into the way speakers use language to convey dissatisfaction. On the other hand, SCA provides a deeper analysis of the way these complaints express and shape ideologies. Thus, the interaction between discourse, cognition, and society, this two-layered framework uncovers the broader social, political, and ideological dimensions carried through complaints.

2.3. Cross-Cultural Complaints

In an interlingual context, both Tanck (2002) and Ekmekchi (2015) examined cross-cultural differences in the use of complaining and refusal strategies, focusing on native versus non-native speakers. Tanck's study (2002) compared native and non-native English speakers, revealing that non-native speakers often used fewer and less appropriate elements in their speech acts, favoring specific excuses and emotional appeals in refusals and complaints. Similarly, Ekmekchi (2015) examined Turkish native and non-native instructors, finding that non-native instructors produced vaguer and lower-quality responses, although their utterances were more detailed. The two studies revealed that both native and non-native instructors used common complaining strategies, such as direct complaints, justifications, and requests. However, Ekmekchi (2015) pointed out that non-native instructors were more likely to use offensive expressions, a feature not observed in Tanck's study. In general, both studies identified the pragmatic limitations non-native speakers may face, though they differ in the specific communicative features identified.

In a similar manner, De Leon and Parina (2016), Masjedi and Paramasivam (2018), and Maíz-Arévalo and Méndez-García (2023) attempted to explore complaining strategies within distinct cultural and linguistic settings, uncovering shared patterns as well as culturally specific differences in how complaints are expressed. De Leon and Parina (2016) studied the likelihood of complaints by Filipino students. The findings showed no significant relationship between the likelihood of complaining and gender, status level, or self-assessed language proficiency. The study also revealed that Filipinos conformed to their complaint strategies based on the language they used. Filipino males were assertive when complaining in English; they were even more assertive when complaining in Filipino; both genders employed distinct semantic formulae in each language. Additionally, to help preserve the face of the person being complained to, Filipino speakers of English as a second language preferred to complain in Filipino rather than in English. Masjedi and Paramasivam (2018), on the other hand, examined the structure and strategies of complaints, as well as the politeness strategies employed by Iranian learners when interacting with individuals from different nationalities in an academic university setting. The results indicated that Iranians adjust their complaint strategies and structures flexibly depending on the context. Additionally, the findings revealed that Iranians use indirect strategies and negative politeness to lessen the face-threatening impact of complaining, though directness could emerge when necessary. While both studies underline the influence of social and linguistic context, the former emphasizes language-based variation within one culture, whereas the latter explores intercultural flexibility in academic interactions. Maíz-Arévalo and Méndez-García (2023) investigated the moves,

strategies, and sub-strategies used by Spanish EFL students in complaint emails, with a particular focus on how gender influences their formulation. The findings revealed that students frequently transfer sub-strategies from their first language and tend to postpone stating the complaint, instead using extended openers, a pattern differing from that of native speakers. Additionally, the tendency toward excessive mitigation and politeness was more prevalent among female students. Across all studies, complaint behavior was shown to be shaped by cultural norms and the communicative context, with varying degrees of directness, politeness, and strategic formulation. In addition to these cross-cultural studies, the next section discusses research on complaining strategies in the Jordanian context.

2.3. Jordanian Context Complaints

Several researchers have examined the Jordanian context and Jordanian Arabic (see Abu Elrob et al., 2025; Almahameed & Farghal, 2024; Tawalbeh et al., 2023). More accurately, only a few studies have examined complaints strategies used by Jordanians on social media platforms, especially Facebook (see Al-Saidat et al., 2023; Ammari et al., 2024). In this regard. Al-Omari (2008), Al-Khawaldeh (2016), and Al-Shorman (2016) investigated both similar and different features of complaint strategies across linguistic and cultural groups. Al-Omari (2008) examined the differences and similarities of the complaints in terms of complexity, length, gender, and level of directness between Jordanian Arabic speakers and American English speakers. The findings revealed that Jordanian Arabic and American English speakers shared some complaining strategies. However, Americans employed more direct complaints and used unique tactics such as joking and demanding justification, whereas Jordanians employed expressions of regret. Additionally, gender differences were considerable among Americans but not Jordanians. That is, American females were more likely to mention the offensive act, suggest future actions, make requests, propose alternatives, and use sentencing, whereas males were more inclined to use threats and implications. In the same vein, Al-Khawaldeh (2016) studied the complaints employed by Jordanian Arabic native speakers and native English speakers. The findings identified eleven shared strategies: accusation, annoyance, direct threat, advice, irony, prayer, exclamation, request for repair, a rejoinder without disapproval, and request for an explanation. Yet, statistically, the two groups were different in terms of using two linguistic expressions: opting out and prayer. Al-Shorman (2016) examined the complaint strategies in intra-Arabic contexts, speakers of Saudi Arabic and Jordanian Arabic. The findings showed similar usage of complaining strategies among the participants of the two groups, such as mentioning the offensive act, calmness, and rationality, opting out, and making direct complaints. However, the two groups showed differences related to the variable of the entities or people students complain about. All in all, these studies highlighted universal patterns of complaining, including direct complaints and mentioning the offensive act. Specific cultural and social nuances also emerged. For example, Americans tended to be more direct, whereas Arab speakers favored more polite and indirect strategies. Additionally, gender was influencing Americans but not Jordanians.

As regards the inter-Jordanisan context, Migdadi et al. (2012) and Hassouneh and Zibin (2021) studied complaining nuances among Jordanians in various communicative contexts, media discourse, and digital discourse, respectively. The difference in discourse type shaped the delivery and nature of complaints. Migdadi et al. (2012) focused on live interactions between citizens and hosts on a public Jordanian radio show. The findings showed that callers frequently used solidarity-building strategies with the hosts, such as praising hosts and using informal and friendly language to gain support and enhance the chances of their complaints being addressed. Generally, the interaction was polite and cooperative, and the hosts also expressed empathy, encouraged open dialogue, and promised to forward issues to authorities. In contrast, Hassouneh and Zibin (2021) examined the complaining strategies utilized by Facebook users on the Zain Jordan Facebook page. The findings indicated that Facebook users employed ten distinct complaining strategies, with a preference for direct complaints. This might be attributed to the absence of face-to-face interaction and the anonymity afforded by Facebook. Additionally, complaints on Facebook exhibited unique linguistic features, including the improper use or absence of punctuation, three to five dots, emojis, and taboo language. A further study was conducted by Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2024) to examine the impoliteness strategies used by Facebook users commenting on statements made by the Jordanian Minister of Health during the pandemic. The study identified seven impoliteness strategies: insults, provocative questions, direct criticism, silencers,

negative wishes, dismissals, and condescension. Among these, hitting provocative questions was the most prevalent. The use of impoliteness strategies was influenced by socio-political factors, leading users to abstain from using more serious strategies like issuing threats. The first two studies explored the influence of context on complaint behavior. The former study revealed a preference for strategic rapport-building in public broadcast settings, whereas the latter showed how online platforms facilitate directness and emotional expression in complaint discourse. Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2024), on the other hand, stood out by linking linguistic behavior to broader political pressures, showing how users navigate limits of expression in contentious public discourse.

Based on the above literature, several studies have explored complaining strategies, primarily focusing on complaints in everyday conversations, cross-cultural contexts, and intra-language speech act realizations (see Al-Khawaldeh, 2016; Al-Shorman, 2016; Masjedi & Paramasivam, 2018; Maíz-Arévalo & Méndez-García, 2023). Most of these studies have elicited the required data through DCTs. Among them, Hassouneh and Zibin (2021) examined complaining strategies based on authentic data taken from social media (i.e., Facebook) in the Jordanian context. According to Tsoumou (2023), digital discourse has emerged as a substantial focus of interest within the field of pragmatics. Building on these studies, the significance of the present study can be attributed to three factors. First, this study examined a more critical issue—the rising cost of living in Jordan. The rise of basic commodities' prices, including food supplies, petroleum derivatives, electricity, and water, is one of the most critical issues that provoke anger among the people of Jordan. The second factor referred to the Jordanian new cybercrime law issued in 2023. This law allows the Attorney General to file lawsuits against individuals who create content or comments that might be offensive or critical of government figures or entities, even with the absence of a personal complaint. Issuing the new cybercrime law has forced Jordanians to be more creative when commenting on critical posts and news to avoid getting into serious legal problems. Finally, the current study also adopted Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (1993) to analyze the socio-political aspects of language within social media contexts. Employing this approach can contribute to the literature by highlighting deep insights into the socio-political dimensions of complaints.

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

There are two types of corpora: general and specialized. General corpora seek to capture language as a whole, whereas specialized corpora target particular research interests, such as legal language and media discourse. Compared to general corpora, specialized corpora are smaller in size but offer detailed linguistic analysis of the target-specific domain (McEnery et al., 2006). The present study adopted a specialized corpus to analyze complaining strategies employed by Facebook users in response to posts about the rising prices of essential goods. Since there was no pre-existing software corpus, the corpus, consisting of approximately 481 complaints (4654 tokens), was manually designed, and the researchers complied and analyzed the data by hand.

3.2. Procedure

3.2.1. Data Collection

The data was collected from different posts on official Jordanian news pages on Facebook (i.e., Al Mamlakah TV, Roya TV, Alghad Newspaper, Jordan News, Hayat FM, and Amman Voice) regarding price increases of basic commodities. These pages represented news related to the increase in food supplies, petroleum derivatives, electricity, water, and taxes. The sample was randomly collected over a period of four days. The population included all the comments on posts related to the increase of the basic commodities' prices on governmental and news pages on Facebook during the period from 1st of December 2024 to 30th of January 2025. The modest number of comments collected from the targeted posts can be attributed to the policy adopted by the administration of some Facebook pages, which deletes all the comments that show direct defamation and abuse of individuals and institutions, especially government officials and entities.

3.2.2. Data Analysis

Leech (1993) and Wynne (2005) argued that corpus annotation is the process of incorporating interpretative linguistic information into a text corpus. This process can vary in complexity, from simple part-of-speech tagging to more advanced forms such as syntactic parsing, semantic labeling, and pragmatic annotation. By systematic classification of linguistic features, annotation enhances the corpus's validation for linguistic analysis. Wynne (2005) emphasized the need for annotation to be transparent, consistent, and replicable to ensure the reliability of corpus-based research. The researchers used manual pragmatic annotations where they manually classified the comments using the strategies provided by Olshtain and Weinbach (1993). This made it easy for the researchers to account for the frequency and percentages of each strategy and to investigate whether Facebook users implemented new strategies or not. Additionally, since Facebook is rich in discourse analysis as it reflects public opinions, ideologies, and power relations, the researchers applied Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach (1993) to analyze the socio-political implications of complaints. This involves examining the interaction between three dimensions: discourse, cognition, and society. To illustrate, discourse encompasses the genre, audience, and context of the discourse. Cognition refers to the ideologies and beliefs of the speakers and recipients. As for society, power relations, social identity, and group representation should be examined. Therefore, the process of analyzing the complaints encompasses interpreting lexical choice, explaining how commenters understand and engage with the discourse, and accounting for power, ideology, manipulation, and polarization.

For validity, the researchers sought a group of linguistics professors to review the accuracy and alignment of the classification of the collected Facebook comments under the sixteen complaining strategies proposed in the present study. The compiled expressions of complaint were rendered phonetically using Arabic script-based IPA symbols, which were retrieved from (https://reshare. ukdataservice.ac.uk/852878/15/transliteration.pdf)

4. Results

This section outlines the various strategies used by Facebook users, along with their corresponding frequencies and percentages. Additionally, it delves into an in-depth discussion of the socio-political dimensions of the complaints. The first part of this section addresses the first research question, which aims to identify the complaining strategies used by Jordanian Facebook users when reacting to high prices news. The results show that Jordanian Facebook users employed sixteen complaining strategies distributed as follows:

4.1. Below the Level of Reproach

It is when the complainers provide lenient comments that mitigate the issue and are often used to maintain harmony. The researchers identified about twenty-eight comments representing moderate resentment. These comments incur no offensive language towards government entities and figures (see Example 1)

1. *batˁtˁalat* *tifrig*
   No longer make a difference.
   'It doesn't matter anymore.'

4.2. Expression of Annoyance

This strategy expresses dissatisfaction but does so without assigning direct blame. Forty-two comments represented frustration by the commenters (see Example 2).

2. *sˁa:r* *l-waːħid* *ma: jigdar* *jetˁlaʕ* *miʃwa:r* *bsija:rtu* *min* *ɣala* *l-banzi:n*
   Become a person not able go out for around in his car because of the high price of gasoline.

'We have become unable to go out for around in the car due to the high price of gasoline.'

4.3. Explicit Complaint

This strategy presents a very clear dissatisfaction with direct, but not harsh, blame to the complainee. The data included thirty-seven explicit complaints (see Example 3)

3. *l-ħukumah* *ʕa:lah* *ʕala* *ʃ-ʃaʕb*
the government dependent on the people
'The government has become a burden on the people.'

4.4. Accusation and Warning

In this strategy, Facebook users express more forceful complaints, attributing rough blame and cautioning about potential consequences. The researchers classified nineteen accusations and warning comments (see Example 4).

4. *bidkum* *tiʕmalu* *fawdʿa* *fi* *l-balad*
Want you make chaos in the country
'You (the government) try to create a chaotic situation in the country.'

4.5. Immediate Threat

Commenters use this strategy to represent the most severe form of complaint, incorporating a direct reaction or ultimatum. The data included only five comments representing immediate threats (see Example 5.

5. *ʃ-ʃa:riʕ* *huwwa* *l-ħall*
the street is the solution
'People must protest in the streets against these decisions.'

4.6. Demanding Justification

This strategy is employed when the complainer seeks an explanation for an issue they experienced due to someone else's actions. It typically begins with identifying or explaining the problem, followed by a request for justification. The data collected for the present study encompassed eighteen comments (see Example 6).

6. *mahuwwa* *n-naftʿ* *inxafaḍ* *ʕa:lamiyyan,* *laʃu:* *r-rafiʕ?*
It is petrol price dropped globally why the increase?
'Why do you raise the price of oil while its price has dropped globally?'

4.7. Future Action

In this strategy, commenters intend to take future action as a response to the unsatisfying situation. The researchers recognized only two comments representing taking future actions (see Example 7).

7. *bidha* *hiʒrah*
It needs emigration
'I must emigrate to another country.'

4.8. Request

In this strategy, the complainer requests the complainee to act, regardless of the degree of politeness. The data included only six request complaints (see Example 8).

8. *ħillu* *ʕanna*
leave us
'leave us alone/ Stop exploiting us.'

4.9. Making a Comparison

In this strategy, the complainer expresses a negative opinion by comparing the current situation to present or past situations experiences. The researchers classified eleven complaints regarding comparison (see Example 9).

9. *l- ʔurdun birbaħ binifṭˁ ʔkθar min d-duwal l-muntiʒah*
   Jordan makes a profit of oil more than the countries produce it
   'Jordan makes a profit from oil more than the countries that produce it.'

4.10. Negative Wishes Prayer

Praying for the destruction and ruin of others. The data included twenty-three complaints that represent negative wishes for those responsible for the increase of basic commodities prices in Jordan (see Example 10).

10. *xarabtu baitna Allah jixrib baitkum*
    destroyed you our house Allah destroy your house
    'You destroyed our lives; may God destroy yours.'

4.11. Self-blaming

In this strategy, the complainers attribute negative events, failures, or undesirable outcomes to themselves, often leading to feelings of guilt, shame, or regret. The researchers identified nineteen self-blaming complaints (see Example 11).

11. *ʔħna sakatna kθīːr. bnistaːhil ʔilli besˁiːr fiːna*
    we kept silent much. we deserve what happens to us
    'We have remained silent about their decisions for too long. We deserve what's happening to us.'

4.12. Wordplay

The strategy of any creative use of language to entertain, persuade, or make a point. Seven stances of wordplay were recognized out of the collected data and were subcategorized as follows:

4.12.1. Punning

It is a form of wordplay that exploits multiple meanings of a word or similar-sounding words to create a desired effect (see Example 12).

12. *ma raħ niʕmal maʕmuːl haːḍ el-ʕiːd, bikaffī ʔllī maʕmuːl fiːna*
    not will make Maʕmuːl this Eid, enough what made to us
    'We will not make maʕmul this Eid; we've had enough of what has been done to us.'

It is worth noting that the two words in Example 12, maʕmuːl and maʕmuːl, are spelled and pronounced the same. However, they have different meanings; the first one means a kind of dessert prepared for Eid, whereas the second refers to the bad deeds that someone may experience.

4.12.2. Minimal Pairs for Semantic Deviation

Facebook users change one sound to create a minimal pair. The sound modulation can change the expected meaning of a word to create an ironic effect (see Example 13).

13. *wain maʒlis l-nuwwaːm?*
    where house of sleepers?
    Where is the house of sleepers?
    'Where are the parliament members to save us?' (intended meaning)

The use of the minimal pair 'l-nuwwaːm' (sleepers) and 'l-nuwwaːb' (members of the parliament) through replacing the phoneme 'b' with 'm' led to semantic deviation where commenters sarcastically criticized the poor performance of the parliament in defending the rights of the people.

4.13. Using Mockery Statements

In this strategy, Facebook users employed one hundred fifty-eight comments representing various forms of mockery that were subcategorized as follows:

4.13.1. Dismissive Mockery

It is the act of making fun of an idea or person by belittling them. The commenters used various forms to achieve this, including jokes, excerpts from popular songs, and popular sayings (see Example 14).

14. *l-ħuku:ma* *ʃajfeh* *l-muwa:tˁin* *baqara* *ħalu:b*
the government see the citizen cow milking
'The government sees the citizen as a milking cow.'

4.13.2. Ridiculing through Questions

It is the state of asking rhetorical or sarcastic questions (see Example 15).

15. *mata* *bidna* *ntˁilaʕ* *min* *ʕunq* *l-zuja:ja?*
when will we get out of neck of the bottle?
'When will we get out of the bottle's neck?'

To clarify, the expression 'which means to get out of the bottle's neck, was stated by a former Jordanian prime minister when he promised Jordanians that they would witness economic growth very soon. However, Jordanians see that the economic level gets worse over time. This made the Jordanians issue such sarcastic questions.

4.13.3. Mock Praise

It is the use of fake compliments to insult or belittle someone or something (see Example 16).

16. *xabi:r* *fahma:n,* *Allah* *jħrusu!*
expert clever Allah protect him!
'What a clever expert he is, May God protect him!'

Facebook users tend to use exclamatory sentences, including positive qualities of people or things, to mean the opposite. This way, they would avoid direct insult.

4.13.4. Making a Sarcastic Simile

It is a comparison using "like" or "as" that expresses irony. This type of simile humorously exaggerates a situation to emphasize absurdity, inefficiency, or annoyance (see Example 17).

17. *l-ra:tib* *sˁa:r* *miθl* *l-barq,* *yadu:b* *binʃu:fu!*
the salary become like lightning barely see it!
'The salary has become like lightning; we could barely see it!'

4.13.5. Exaggeration

It is an extreme overstatement that is not meant to be taken literally and used to add dramatic effect or humor (see Example 18).

18. *Wallah* *ɣair* *naṣi:r* *nidfaʕ* *dˁari:bah* *ʕala* *l-hawa* *ʔllī* *bintanaffasu*
swear that Will we pay tax on the air that we breathe
'I swear that we will pay a tax for the air we breathe.'

The comment in Example 18 is used by Facebook users to exaggerate the frustrating economic situation in the country.

4.14. Making Entreaties

It refers to sincerely begging, often with humility or deep emotion. This is typically done when someone is in desperate need of assistance, compassion, or leniency. The researchers identified seventy-eight instances of making entreaties distributed as follows.

4.14.1. Formal Appeals

It is the act of structured and persuasive request and sincere begging to ask the king, who is the supreme authority in the country, to urge the government to stop raising prices (see Example 19).

19. *nuna:ʃid* *ʒala:lat* *l-malik* *l-tadaxul*
we appeal his majesty the king to intervene
'We appeal to His Majesty the King to intervene.'

4.14.2. Religious Entreaties

It is the act of calling upon Allah's power against the dominant power (see Example 20).

20. *ja:* *Rab* *faraʒak*
Oh God your help
'Oh lord, grant relief.'

4.15. Making Suggestions

The act of giving an idea or proposal for consideration. It might take the form of a recommendation for action or an alternative approach to something. The data represented six instances of making suggestions (see Example 21).

21 *laiʃ* *ma* *tzi:du:* *l-rawa:teb?*
why not increase you the salaries?
'Why don't you (the government) increase salaries?'

4.16. Using Emojis, Posters, and Hashtags

In addition to the strategies provided above, Facebook users employed emojis, posters, and hashtags to express complaints about raising prices on Facebook pages. These tools represented commentors' dissatisfaction, anger, condemnation, frustration, and inquiries. The data included twenty-two emojis, posters, and hashtags (see Examples 22-24)

22. *Emojis* ☹ 🥺 🤔 🙄
Express different feelings such as frustration, anger, surprise., etc.

23. *posters*

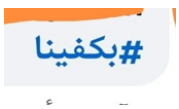




Express different feelings and attitudes such as frustration, anger, surprise., etc., and normally considered more expressive than emojis.

24. *Hashtags*





They are normally used to unify public opinion. Hashtags are viewed as a powerful electronic way of protesting and expressing opinions.

Table 1 indicates that, in addition to the five strategies provided by Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), Facebook users employed eleven new strategies. They were classified as follows: Demanding justification, future action, request, making a comparison, negative wishes, prayer, self-blaming, wordplay, using mockery statements, making entreaties, making suggestions, and using emojis, posters,

and hashtags. Four of the new strategies were identified by Hassouneh and Zibin (2021), namely, demanding justification, future action, request, and making a comparison.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentages of the Complaining Strategies

No	Complaining Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below the level of reproach	28	5.8 %
2	Expression of annoyance	42	8.7 %
3	Explicit complaint	37	7.6 %
4	Accusation and warning	19	3.9 %
5	Immediate threat	5	1%
6	Demanding justification	18	3.7 %
7	Future action	2	0.4 %
8	Request	6	1.1 %
9	Making a comparison	11	2.1 %
10	Negative wishes prayer	23	5 %
11	Self-blaming	19	4.7 %
12	Wordplay	7	1.3 %
13	Using mockery statements	158	32.8 %
14	Making entreaties	78	16.2 %
15	Making suggestions	6	1.2 %
16	Using emojis, posters, and hashtags	22	4.5 %
	Total	481	100%

In relation to the second question concerning the most frequently used strategies by Facebook users, Table 1 shows that the strategy 'using mockery statements' was the most frequent, with a percentage of 32.8%, followed by the strategy 'making entreaties' with a percentage of 16.2%. The least frequently employed strategies were future action, immediate threat, request, making suggestions, and wordplay, with the frequency of 0.4%, 1%, 1.1%, 1.2%, and 1.3%, respectively. The other strategies are arranged in descending order as follows: Expression of annoyance, explicit complaint, below the level of reproach, self-blaming, using emojis, posters, and hashtags, accusation and warning, demanding justification, and making a comparison.

Regarding the third question that tries to explore the reasons for adopting new complaining strategies, researchers believe that utilizing these strategies allows Facebook users to steer clear of directly violating cybercrime laws, thereby avoiding serious legal consequences. Additionally, these new strategies may contribute to shaping public perception by making social media discourse more engaging and memorable. Facebook users demonstrated creativity in employing various sub-strategies of mockery, enabling them to critique situations, ideas, or individuals in a less confrontational yet impactful manner. For instance, rather than using outright offensive language to address rising prices, they employed exaggeration as a strategy (see Example 25).

25 *ʔwwadu an ʔuðkir l-ħukooma bʔanna l-milħ nisiːtu tirfaʕuːh*
would like I to remind the government that the salt forgot you raise it
'I would like to remind the government that you forgot to raise the salt price.'

Such a strategy would deliver a strong message of denial and extreme annoyance about the unfair decisions the people made by the government concerning raising prices.

Moreover, using a wordplay strategy enables commenters to reveal something about the public perception of official institutions in the country. This strategy makes complaints catchier and more expressive (see Example 26).

26 *wain maʒlis l-nawaʔib?*
where the house the adversities?
Where is the house of the adversities?
'Where are the parliament members?' (intended meaning)

The insertion of the phoneme 'ʔ' before the final phoneme 'b' in the Arabic word 'l-nuwa:b' resulted in a semantic shift, transforming it into 'l-nawaʔib,' which carries a negative connotation, meaning "adversities." While the term 'l-nawaʔib' may be somewhat offensive, it effectively conveys public dissatisfaction with the inadequate performance of parliamentary members.

Concerning the fourth question, which examines the socio-political dimensions of the complaints, the findings uncovered compelling insights. Following the enactment of Jordan's new cybercrime law in 2023, individuals have grown more cautious and reserved in their interactions with Facebook posts. Consequently, the government has strengthened its control and influence (see Example 27).

27 *ʕndi kala:m ʔða aħkī:h banħabis.*
have I words if say I go to jail.
'I have words if I say, I will go to jail.'

The expressions "eða aħki:h" (meaning "if I speak") and "bənħabis" (meaning "I will go to jail") illustrate that individuals are restricted from openly criticizing governmental decisions and officials, as doing so could result in imprisonment. Furthermore, Facebook users refrained from using explicitly offensive language when accusing certain government officials of corruption or dishonesty or when expressing public distrust toward the government (see Example 28).

28 *mata bidha ti:ʒi ajjmuna l-ʒami:la, jaa ħukuma?*
when will come days our beautiful, Oh government?
'Oh government, when will our beautiful days come?'

Facebook users utilized rhetorical questions to mock the decisions and slogans of government officials. The phrase "Our beautiful days are the ones that have not come yet," spoken by a former Jordanian prime minister, was intended as a promise of a better future for Jordanians. However, several people believe the situation has worsened. As a result, employing rhetorical questions allows commenters to subtly accuse those who made such statements of dishonesty and express their frustration. Additionally, some Facebook comments also reflected signs of social inequality and marginalization, as seen in Examples 29 and 30.

29 *maʕa:li:k ʔnta min l-ʔrdun willa min ʒurdan?*
Excellency Your you from l-ʔrdun or from Jordan?
'Your Excellency, are you from l-ʔrdon (Jordan) or from Jordan?'

The terms 'Al-ʔrdun' and 'Jordan' refer to the same country, Jordan. However, Facebook users have employed the two labels to draw a distinction between two social groups in Jordan based on their economic status. The term "l-ʔrdun" refers to individuals in difficult financial situations, whereas "Jordan" is used to describe those with strong economic standing who are indifferent to rising prices.

30 l-ħukuma bwad wa ʔħna bwad
the government in a valley and we in a valley
'The government is in a valley, and we are in another valley.'
The government does not care about the people. (intended meaning)

The phrase "you are in a valley, and we are in another valley" is commonly used in Jordan to describe a situation of neglect or marginalization. The example above reflects a sense of socio-political disunity and discord between the public and the government, as many believe that the government overlooks the needs of low-income individuals. These findings go in line with the study conducted by Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2024), where socio-political factors influenced the choice of strategies and language.

5. Discussion

In relation to the strategies employed in expressing dissatisfaction with the rising prices of commodities, the present study identified a total of sixteen distinct complaining strategies utilized by Jordanian Facebook users. Five of these strategies correspond to those proposed by Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), namely, below the level of reproach, expression of annoyance, explicit complaint, accusation and warning, and immediate threat. Moreover, the findings align partially with those reported in the

study by Hassouneh and Zibin (2021), which examined the complaining behavior of Jordanian users on the Zain Jordan Facebook page. The overlapping strategies include demanding justification, suggesting future actions, making requests, and drawing comparisons.

In addition to the aforementioned strategies, the present study uncovered seven novel complaint strategies specific to the Jordanian social media context. These newly identified strategies are negative wishes or prayers, self-blaming, wordplay, mockery, entreaties, making suggestions, and the use of emojis, posters, and hashtags. Notably, some of these strategies are consistent with those reported by Al-Khawaldeh (2016), as both studies identified shared strategies and emphasized the evolving communicative practices of social media users. The findings underscore the dynamic nature of complaint expression in digital contexts and highlight the increasing incorporation of multimodal and creative forms of discourse.

In the present study, the most frequent complaining strategies were mockery statements and making entreaties, while the least utilized were future action and immediate threats. The predominance of mockery and entreaty strategies might be attributed to their indirectness, which enables individuals to convey dissatisfaction without resorting to overt confrontation. In contrast, the findings reported by Hassouneh and Zibin (2021) indicate that the most frequently adopted strategies were expressions of annoyance and explicit complaints, whereas the strategies below the level of reproach and complaining with negative advice were the least frequently observed.

There are various reasons why Jordanian Facebook users are employing new complaining strategies. For example, the topic and the legislation introduced by the new Cybercrime Law have played a pivotal role in influencing and shaping the modes through which Jordanian Facebook users express their complaints. Consequently, Facebook users may resort to adopting new strategies in order to avoid being trapped by the Cybercrime Law. Moreover, the collective use of mockery statements among Jordanian Facebook users is thought to foster unity among individuals to express common complaints. Using other rhetorical complaining strategies like ‘wordplay’ may lead to more engaging and memorable participation and invite recipients to think more deeply about the issue being complained about. It would also mitigate the state of frustration and convert it into humor, which would, in turn, grant complainees control over the disappointing situation through wit. This justification is compatible with the findings of Al-Shorman (2016), which indicate that language users vary in their strategies of expressing complaints depending on the entities, individuals, or topics being complained about.

From socio-political dimensions of complaints, the use of indirect complaining strategies suggests that Jordanian Facebook users try to comply with both social norms and legal limitations. This tendency is embedded within the cultuling, cultural-linguistic framework of Jordanian society, where the expression of complaints is shaped by cultural values and reflected in linguistic practices (Hasanzadeh & Shakeebaee, 2023; Pishghadam et al., 2020). Such complaints highlight a widespread public sense of mistrust and dissatisfaction with governmental decisions, institutions, and officials. Furthermore, the use of indirect complaint strategies signals a general atmosphere of restriction on freedom of expression, particularly with the existence of the new Jordanian Cybercrime Law. Additionally, Facebook users’ complaints often reflected widespread issues of social inequality and marginalization, revealing concerns about systemic disparities and the neglect of disadvantaged groups. In this regard, Al-Khawaldeh et al. (2024) emphasized that Facebook users deliberately avoid incorporating particular impoliteness strategies, such as issuing threats and making forceful statements due to specific sociocultural and political factors.

The present study provided a thorough analysis of the various complaining strategies utilized by Jordanian Facebook users to express discontent toward rising commodity prices, highlighting the evolving nature of digital discourse in response to socio-political restrictions. The identification of new complaining strategies reveals that social media users are creative when coping with constrained and regulated communicative spaces. Additionally, the use of indirect strategies indicated that social media users try to preserve social norms of communication and apply practical adaptation to the restrictions imposed by the new Cybercrime Law.

The findings also showed that Jordanian Facebook users employed rhetorical and visual modes, including wordplay, mockeries, images, and hashtags, to voice common complaints, build a sense of unity, and quietly discuss political and social unfairness. The language used in the complaints is deeply rooted in the cultuling fabric of the Jordanian context. As a consequence, commenters attempted to express their dissent more carefully in ways that respect both social expectations and legal rules. Ultimately, the present study may help researchers understand how contextual factors, including culture and power, interact with language on social media, especially when users have limited freedom to speak openly.

Drawing on the above discussion, future studies can be conducted to examine complaining strategies across a broader spectrum of digital discourse rather than Facebook to explore whether similar patterns of complaints and creativity are evident across different online environments. Comparative research, including participants from diverse cultures, Arab or non-Arab, may offer important insights into how sociocultural norms and legal systems shape online complaint behavior. Moreover, longitudinal research could be done to track how complaining strategies change over time, especially in response to changes in socio-political contexts or legislative developments, such as legislative updates of the Cybercrime Law. Incorporating interviews can also provide a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions and motivations concerning the effectiveness and risks of different complaining strategies. Finally, interdisciplinary research of linguistic analysis and sociological or political insights may yield a more holistic understanding of how digital discourse operates as a tool for resistance, solidarity, and social commentary, particularly in settings where freedom of expression is restricted.

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