

'Satiricalization' of A Pandemic: An Exploration of WHO's Public Health Taxonomy for Social Listening in Covid-19 Caricatures in Kenyan Newspapers

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<https://doi.org/10.62049/jkncu.v5i1.399>

Abstract

The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya in the year 2020 triggered a massive infodemic campaigns by the Kenyan government to raise public awareness about the disease. There was an overabundance of information globally about Covid-19 and the risk of misinformation and disinformation was very high. Although the masses were craving for news about the disease it was not easy to identify the trustworthy sources and reliable health guidance. This information confusion undermined the efforts to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recognizing the power of mass media contents in shaping public opinion, this article examined the use of the caricature as a platform of communication. It specifically analyzed how the Kenyan newspapers' used caricatures and satirical techniques to deploy the World Health Organization's Health Taxonomy for Social Listening frames in their Covid-19 messages. It uses the coinage satiricalization to emphasize the extent to which the caricatures deployed humour, mockery and infotainments to deliver their messages. To interpret and make sense of the caricatures' messages, multimodal critical discourse analysis and content analysis were deployed. 261 caricatures were evaluated. The Key finding was that the three newspapers of Nation, Standard and the Star deployed caricatures as potent tools for communication and that, the WHO's taxonomy of health messaging is a strategic asset that is used by cartoonists in their framing of health messages. It is recommended that, print media outlets in Kenya should continue using caricatures in their priming of key issues that affects the society.

Keywords: Caricature, COVID-19 Pandemic, WHO, Public Health Taxonomy for Social Listening

Introduction

The year 2025 marked approximately five years since the global pronouncement of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome. Scientists believe that one or more humans acquired it from an animal and later transmitted it to other humans (Africa CDC, 2024; WHO, 2023). Cases of the COVID-19 virus were first discovered in China in December 2019. Later, the virus spread rapidly to other countries worldwide. Due to its widespread, WHO declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30th, 2020. Afterwards, the outbreak was characterized as a pandemic on March 11th, 2020. The WHO ended its PHEIC declaration on May 5th, 2023. As of December 13th, 2023, the pandemic had caused 772,138,054 cases and 6,985,951 confirmed deaths (Hannan et al., 2020-2022), ranking it fifth on the list of the deadliest epidemics and pandemics in history.

When the coronavirus first emerged in Africa, scientists predicted the worst scenario would occur because it is the least developed continent in the human development index. On the contrary, that catastrophic scenario never materialized and Africa was described as one of the least affected regions in the world by WHO, with approximately fewer than 6% of people getting vaccinated (Bwire et al., 2022; Cheng & Mutsaka, 2021).

In Kenya, the Ministry of Health declared the first case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Nairobi on March 12th, 2020. The Ministry then warned that the Covid-19 cases would rise exponentially in the coming days, asking Kenyans to remain calm and follow the set guidelines (Aluga, 2020). The Kenyan State was fighting what was framed as an epidemic of virus and an epidemic of misinformation.

Afterwards, the Ministry implemented diverse public health interventions to contain the pandemic, including a COVID-19 vaccine program initiated in March 2021 to vaccinate 26 million citizens by the end of 2022. As of December 2022, Kenya had approximately 10 million adults vaccinated against COVID-19. By January 2023, Kenya had more than 342,507 confirmed cases and above 5,660 deaths (Fesshaye B et al., 2024; WHO, 2022; Kenya Ministry of Health, 2021). Vaccination against COVID-19 proved to be one of the most efficacious strategies for combating the pandemic (Ackah et al., 2021).

During a pandemic, mass media news is essential in communicating public health and policy information and in Kenya, the print mass media outlets extensively covered the Covid-19 story. Caricatures, or editorial cartoons, form a fundamental part of the media landscape, and they transmit information via humour approaches. They provide perspectives on timely topics that warrant public attention in the mainstream media (Mach et al., 2021; Labbé et al., 2022). Caricatures are a form of visual news discourses and a barometer of public opinion. Furthermore, they reflect a society's cultural attitudes and values at a particular historical time (Labbé et al., 2022).

WHO (2022) and Purnat et al. (2021) have categorized the topics of conversation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic into five categories, namely: the cause (how did the virus emerge and how is it spreading?), the illness (what do we know about the disease, what are the symptoms, and how is it transmitted?), the treatment (how can it be cured?), the interventions (what is being done by authorities and institutions?), and the conversations about information (meta-conversation about guidance, reporting, misinformation, and content).

Cartoons in newspapers are intended to entertain, inform, and influence public opinion (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2024). Ames (2023) argues that caricatures invite the audience to appreciate the topic of discussion from a critical perspective, while Zarifian et al. (2022) argues that caricatures stimulate the audience's thoughts and inspire action and attitude change. Cartoons transcended mere comedy and humour; they adopted a humorous and serious tone.

Generally, caricatures capture the subject's essence through exaggeration, simplification, distortion, and symbolism. They typically combine hyperbole, satire, and a high level of artistic skill and creativity to draw attention to governance ills such as corruption and political violence (Shelton, 2024). Das (2019) postulates that caricatures are visual communication that conveys messages exaggeratedly in the form of drawings. They are one of the briefest and sharpest ways of expressing criticism or awareness of the viewer. Onakpa (2014) describes caricature as a condensed form of editorial opinion designed for the public to digest and find remedies for societal issues. They stimulate critical thinking and encourage readers to demand positive change in the political landscape. They act as the conscience and the voice of the people. Indeed, Kaviti (2006) argues that caricature encourages the audience to not just passively consume but to actively engage, criticize, and provide insight, thereby shaping and even forming public opinion.

WHO Public Health Taxonomy for Infodemic Monitoring

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed a public health taxonomy for infodemic monitoring and insights generation. The Taxonomy is a structured framework that classifies public health concepts and activities into various categories (Airlangga, 2023; WHO, 2022). The WHO's public health taxonomy for social listening is a theoretical and practical tool that enables analysts to align data to a search strategy as well as paves the way for identifying infodemic insights (WHO, 2023).

The taxonomy includes the following themes: 1. Health Misinformation vs. Accurate Information 2. Trust in Health Authorities, 3. Vaccine Hesitancy, 4. Cultural and Religious Narratives, 5. Economic and Political Influences, 6. Social Solidarity vs. Individualism, 7. Fear and Risk Perception, 8. Conspiracy Theories, 9. Public Health Messaging, 10. Equity and Access, 11. Global vs. Local Perspectives, 12. Caricature Tone and Sentiment, 13. Influence of Social Media, and 14. Satire and Humor.

Problem Statement

About 6000 Kenyans died during the Covid-19 pandemic, and another 26 million (half of Kenya's population) were vaccinated against the Covid-19 pandemic. To vaccinate such a large number of its citizens, the Kenyan government mounted a significant public campaign to create awareness about Covid-19 pandemic and how it was to be dealt with. Some strategies deployed included getting vaccinated, washing hands, prohibiting public gatherings, and closing schools. The paper explores the deployment of caricature as a communication platform to establish how the World Health Organization taxonomy of health themes played out in the Nation newspapers, the Standard newspaper and the Star newspapers. Specifically, how did the caricature in the three newspapers stimulate critical thinking and inspire the actions of their audiences? What types of messages did the caricature carry about the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya? The paper, therefore, pursues the question: How did the Kenyan Newspapers apply the Public Health Taxonomy for Social Listening in the portrayal of the Covid-19 pandemic Caricatures?

Methodology

The study deployed a mixed approach. The quantitative part of the study focused on identifying specific linguistic features or themes of the caricatures (content analysis). The qualitative part explores the possible interpretation process of the discourse's deeper meanings, context, and social implications. This involves analyzing the caricatures in terms of language constructs, power dynamics, image portrayed and key themes of WHO's taxonomy of social listening. The period of sampling is one year and 3 months (from March 2020 to May 2021). The period covered the time when Covid-19 was declared in Kenya until the easement of the Covid-19 restrictions in the country. The caricature analyzed came from three mainstream newspapers in Kenya: The Nation, the Standard and the Star newspapers. Images of caricatures were analyzed via thematic analysis to identify and explore the themes, concepts, metaphors and ideas portrayed in the caricature as well as the framing of the messages of caricatures' captions. The research methods integrated textual and visual elements to uncover themes and power play that were portrayed by caricatures. The methods fall within the meaning of making theory and align with what is called 'data frame symbiosis' which recognize that frames can be elaborated through details and that frames and their interpretation can be questioned to gauge data quality and judge plausibility.

Results and Discussions

It emerged that the three newspapers used caricatures extensively. They (newspapers) published 261 caricature articles, where 96, 94 and 71 caricatures were published by the Standard, the Nation and the Star newspapers, respectively. The caricature captured variegated themes as highlighted by the WHO's taxonomy of social listening (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1: Themes of taxonomy of social listening

Taxonomy Themes	Newspapers			Total	Percent
	Nation	Standard	Star		
Satire and humor	22	35	30	87	33
Political influence	16	14	16	46	17
Public health Messages	18	13	10	41	16
Economic influence	13	4	2	19	7
Fear and risk perception	6	4	2	12	5
Social solidarity	4	4	2	10	4
Global Vs local messages	2	12	3	17	7
Cultural narratives	2	2	1	5	2
Religion	2	1	2	5	2
Trust in health	4	3	1	8	3
Conspiracy	4	3	2	9	3
Social media influence	1	1	-	2	1
Total	94	96	71	261	100
Percent	36	37	27	100	

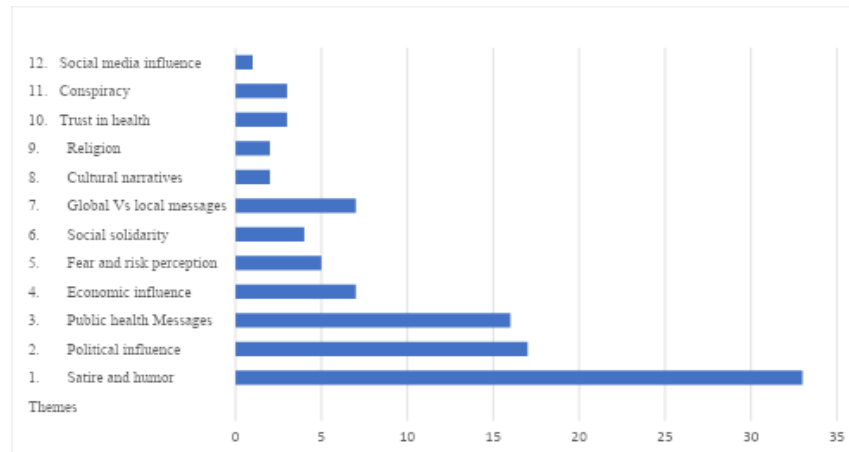


Figure 1: Themes of taxonomy of social listening

From Table 1 and Figure 1, it emerged that three WHO's taxonomies of social listening - satire and humour, political influence and public health messages - were the most significant and accounted for almost 7 in 10 (66%) caricatures published by the three newspapers. The other four prominent taxonomies of social listening were economic influence and Global vs. Local themes at 7% each, fear and risk perceptions at 5%, and social solidarity at 4%. A qualitative discussion of the WHO's taxonomies of social listening as used in selected caricatures published by the three newspapers is discussed as follows:

Satire and Humour

Image 1

The caricature in image 1 was published in the Star Newspaper on 16/03/2020. It portrays the COVID-19 pandemic as an external threat that has knocked on the door and entered the country Kenya despite the human efforts to prevent it from coming to Kenya. The disease's international dimension is projected as a major point of reflection and as a space that has to be contended with, for it had a profound impact on Kenya as a country in the global arena (See Image 1).

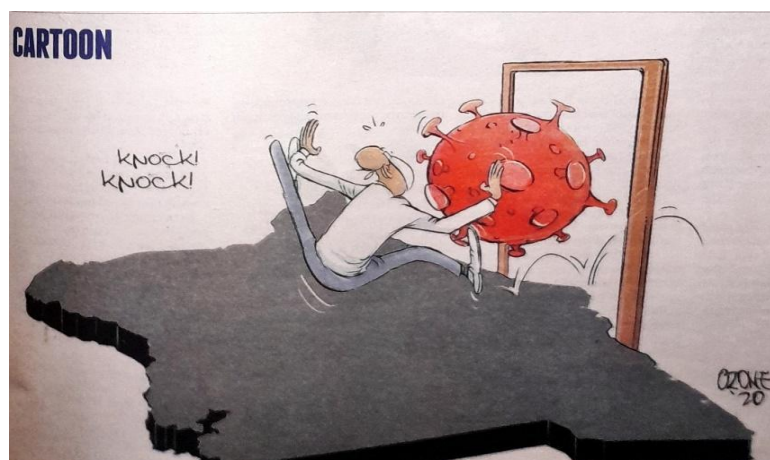


Image 1: The Entry of Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya

Source: Star Newspaper 16/03/2020

This caricature aligns well with WHO's health messaging taxonomy of global versus local context perspectives. This taxonomy postulates that effective health communication often needs the act of balancing the global health guidelines with local contexts, an approach WHO advocated to enhance the effectiveness of COVID-19 pandemic messaging. Indeed, it is argued that while global public health initiatives are essential for creating broad-based policies, their effectiveness often depends on local adaptation (Mohan & Nambiar, 2020). Health policies that are both globally informed and locally adapted to accommodate different levels of resource availability are needed (Farmer et al., 2013). The caricature is a call to Kenyan to think global and eradicate the mindset of local when dealing with a global pandemic. Kenya is projected as a player among the league of global nations even on matters pandemic.

Image 2

The caricature in image 2 was published in Nation Newspaper on 12/3/2020. It portrays a key politician in Kenya (Najib Balala - the then cabinet secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife) broom in hand as he sweeps a national scandal under a Kenya-shaped-rug while lamenting that; 'We are taking COVID-19 very seriously.' Note the collective behaviour of the ruling class in the word 'we'. The rug cloth itself has a message that declares that 'Hakuna Matata' - loosely translated as No problems in Kenya. This is a popular motto used in the Kenyan tourism sector as a marketing slogan to encourage foreign tourists to come into the country. The minister represents a political class that was not seriously thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic, thereby preventing the country from putting in place a mechanism for handling the COVID-19 pandemic (see image 2).



Image 2: Sweeping under the carpet

Source: Nation Newspaper 12/3/20

The cynical smile on the politician's face portrays the Kenyan political elites' mischief in treating matters of public concern. They are portrayed as selfish, uncaring and capable of hiding matters of national importance under the carpet, including national calamities such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. The caricature is an invitation to the citizens to increase their scrutiny and gaze on the activities of the ruling elites to expose their shortcomings and the politicians' true character.

The caricature aligns well with WHO's Health Misinformation vs. Accurate Information taxonomy; under this taxonomy, WHO emphasizes distinguishing between misinformation and evidence-based guidance to support positive health outcomes (World Health Organization, 2024). Health misinformation has become pervasive, undermining public health efforts and spreading confusion regarding medical guidelines and recommendations. The caricature is a cautionary voice that health misinformation requires multifaceted strategies to promote accurate, evidence-based information (Lewandowsky, Ecker & Cook, 2017). The caricature, therefore, invites the audiences to reflect about their leaders and the incompetence they sometime bring on board even when the country is under serious threat from a global pandemic.

Image 3

The caricature in image 3 was published by the Nation Newspaper on 14/03/2020. The caricature portrays a scene where Jubilee Political Party's key politicians in Kenya were playing their dirty politicking behind a curtain. (Jubilee Party was the ruling party during Covid-19 period and was headed by Uhuru Kenyatta, the then president of the republic of Kenya). It is projected that the Jubilee politicians were busy scheming to literary 'cook' (undermine and politically finish) the then opposition leader, Hon. Prime Minister Raila Odinga. However, while on their dirty scheme, they are interrupted by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The caricature presents one of the politicians peeping through the curtains and is shell-shocked to see what is happening in the country. He(politician) retorts, 'We had a special menu, then the coronavirus check-in...' The caricature uses humour to portray how Kenyan politicians are clueless on matters of national priority like the COVID-19 pandemic while they are busy doing daily silly politicking. The caricature communicates political immaturity for the ruling elites and cements the view that they were either clueless about tackling the COVID-19 pandemic or had misplaced priority (See Image 3).

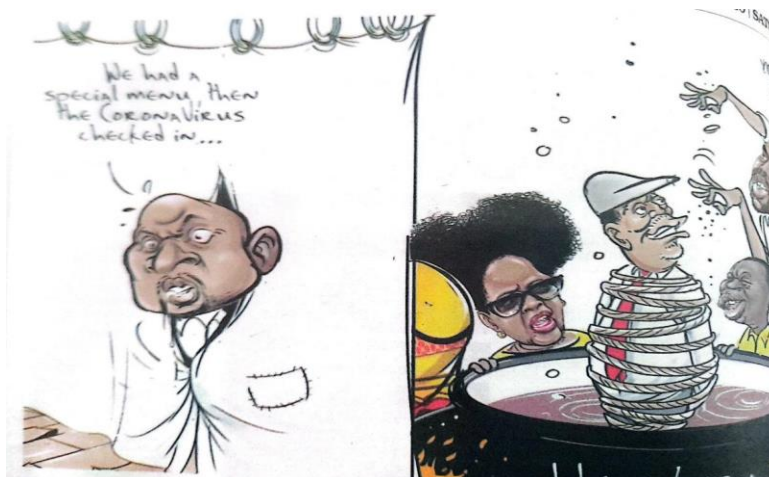


Image 3: Misplaced Political priority in the face of Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya

Source: Nation Newspaper 14/03/20

The caricature in Image 3 aligns well with the WHO's taxonomy of economic and political influences in health messaging. In this taxonomy, economic and political factors are projected as outstanding actors in determining public health communication and influencing how information is disseminated, received, and acted upon. The economic context of a country has an impact on the public health infrastructure, access to healthcare and the quality of health information that is available to its citizens.

Similarly, political contexts also play a vital role in shaping public health responses, particularly during crises. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, various governments' political stances influenced their communication strategies and the public's trust in health authorities (Gollust et al., 2020). Politicized messages can lead to increased skepticism or acceptance of health guidance, depending on individuals' political alignment with the ruling authorities (Gollust et al., 2020).

Health messaging framed in political agendas has the potential of escalating misinformation, particularly when officials downplay or exaggerate health risks for political gain. When health messaging is blended with political agendas, misinformation can be escalated (Han et al., 2021). Therefore, effective public health messaging should ideally remain apolitical, focusing instead on science-based facts to avoid compromising trust.

Image 4

The image 4 caricature was published in the Star Newspaper on 18/03/2020. It states that "Reggae has been stopped" in Kenya. Kenyan politicians dressed in reggae-inspired clothing seem to have stopped dancing as they take notice of the COVID-19 virus in their presence. The disease is presented as a reality that has finally arrived in Kenya and disrupted politicians' daily politicking. The phrase "reggae has stopped" is an informal allusion to the Kenyan elites politicking during that time where the then Kenyan President H.E Uhuru Kenyatta and his political brother, the Rt. Honorable Raila Odinga (former Kenyan Prime Minister) were campaigning to make a constitutional amendment to the Kenyan constitution. The amendment was aimed to reflect some political re-alignments policies they had agreed on among themselves also known as the handshake deal of 2018 in Kenya. Their constitution-change campaign used the phrase "nobody can stop reggae" as a rallying call to mobilize their supporters and convey the idea that theirs was such a strong movement that nobody in Kenya could stop it. None would be able to stop their agenda of changing the constitution. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic stopped their campaign and put their movement into limbo (See Image 4).



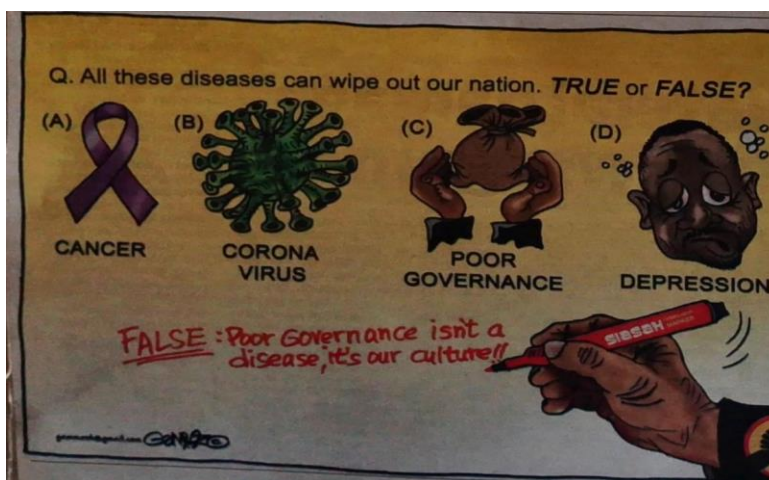
Image 4: Reggae has stopped

Source: Star Newspaper on 18/03/2020

The caricature projects the reality of the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya and some of its political implications, such as halting the usual politicking business in Kenya. The caricature invites the audiences to reflect on issues that are beyond Kenyan local politics and to start to look for solutions to issues that are global in nature, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The Kenyan ruling elites are presented as clueless on how to respond to this new threat in Kenya.

Image 5

Image 5, a caricature published in the Standard Newspaper on 1/3/2020, invites Kenyans to reflect on four major things that can wipe out their nation from existence. The caricature then proceeds to pose the question, 'All the following diseases can wipe our nation: cancer, coronavirus, poor governance, and a depression; true or false? The audience is invited to state whether the statement is true or false (See Image 5).



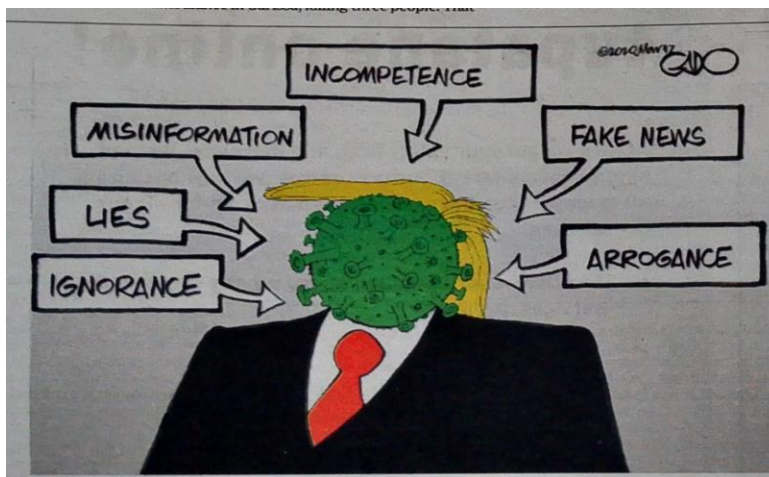
*Image 5: Make a judgment...true or false Source
Standard Newspaper on 01/3/2020*

The political elite reacts to the question by stating that, corruption cannot wipe out the nation of Kenya, for it is not a disease but the ruling elites' culture. The ruling class is presented as incapable of seeing bad governance as a threat to national survival. They (ruling elites) are presented as blind to social evils and unable to connect their activities (bad governance) as a vice that should be fought and eradicated just like ordinary diseases are dealt with. The caricature, therefore, invites the audiences to reflect on bad governance and see it analogically as a disease that needs to be fought and cured. The ruling elites in Kenya are presented as a threat to the nation's survival, for they have cultivated bad governance as their way of life and culture. Therefore, they are a threat to the nation's survival.

Image 6

The caricature shown in image 6 was published on 17/03/20 in the Standard Newspaper and introduced an international angle to the question of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It presents his excellency, Mr. Trump, the 45th President of the United States of America, as being ignorant of the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the world. Cognitively, Trump is projected as arrogant, ignorant, and incompetent on matters concerning the COVID-19 19-pandemic. He is also projected as fueling misinformation about the COVID-

19 pandemic via lies and fake news. This is a worrying projection, given that, Mr. Trump, as the president of USA was politically the most powerful man on earth during that time and therefore capable of having considerable impact on the way the pandemic was to be handled globally (See Image 6).



*Image 6: USA President Trump and the Covid 19 Trump Source
Standard Newspaper on 17/03/2020*

The caricature aligns well with WHO's taxonomy of health messaging on trust in Health authorities. The taxonomy of trust advocates the building of public trust in health authorities as a crucial for compliance with health recommendations and successful communication (WHO,2022). Trust in health authorities is a fundamental factor influencing public adherence to health guidance and the effectiveness of public health interventions. Siegrist and Amp Zingg (2014) argue that trust can reduce anxiety and promote compliance with challenging directives like social distancing and vaccination. Indeed, Jennings et al. (2021) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals with low trust in health authorities were more susceptible to vaccine hesitancy and skepticism of government-imposed health measures. When the most powerful man on earth negatively perceives a critical issue such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the probability of its messaging failure is increased to those who follow him. He can also generate policies that can hinder health interventions.

Image 7

The caricature in image 7 was published in the Stars Newspaper on 25/03/2020. In the caricature, President Uhuru of Kenya is depicted to be at work trying to fix the state of affairs in the country including; the COVID-19 pandemic, the transport sector, the economy, and health. The caricature presents the reality that the COVID-19 pandemic is real and needs fixing at the highest office in the country, the Presidency (See Image 7).

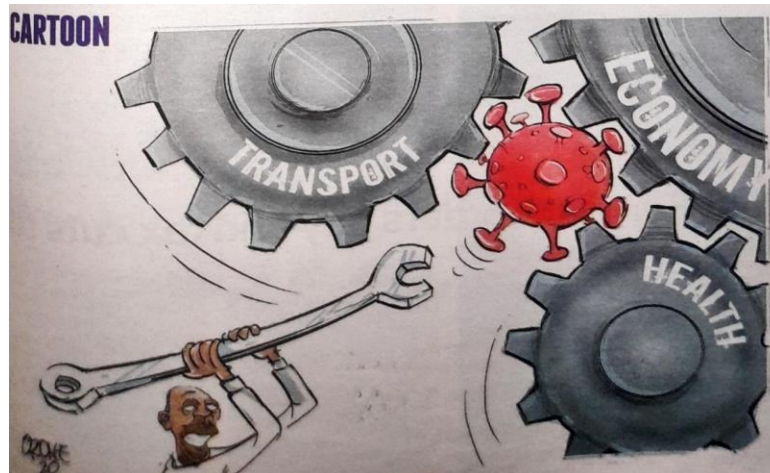


Image 7: Fixing the nation amidst COVID-19 Source: Star Newspaper on 25/03/2020

The caricature aligns well with WHO's taxonomy of Political contexts in health messaging. The taxonomy argues that health messaging starts to become effective depending on how it is taken and treated by the ruling political elites. The taxonomy projects that politicized messages can increase skepticism or acceptance of health messaging guidance. In this particular instance, the COVID-19 pandemic is projected as a grave danger to the sectors of transport, economy and Health of the nation. Furthermore, the caricature invites audiences to reflect on specific tools and strategies that can be used to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Image 8

The caricature in image 8 was published on 18/3/2024 in the Standard newspaper. It outlines some simple strategies that can be used to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The caricature depicts two children navigating a series of health and social protocols that should be followed to control the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the procedure and posture for sneezing, handwashing, using sanitizer, and maintaining social distancing. It then illustrates how to handle activities such as greetings, official communication, misinformation, and appropriate actions (See Image 8).

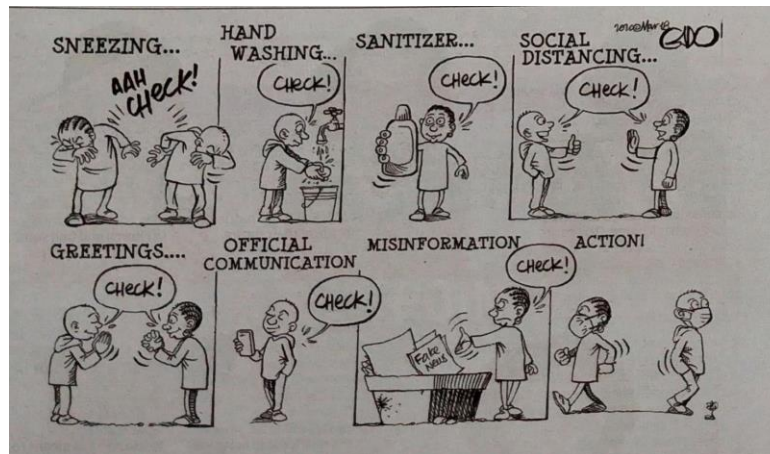


Image 8: Strategies of controlling Covid-19 Pandemic

Source: Standard Newspaper on 18/03/2024

This caricature aligns with Public Health Messaging: Clear and transparent messaging is vital for addressing misinformation and guiding public understanding of health recommendations (Open WHO, 2024). Public health messaging is critical in combating misinformation and guiding public behaviours toward healthy choices. To ensure clarity and credibility, successful messaging is required in routine health campaigns and health crises. Noar and Austin (2020) posit that efficacious health communication relies on messages from trustworthy sources, shared with clarity and repetition, to shape public perception and encourage behaviour change. Moreover, framing health messages influences how people perceive risks and recommendations.

Kim and Niederdeppe (2013) emphasize that positive framing, which focuses on benefits rather than potential negative consequences, is often more effective in encouraging preventive behaviours. Furthermore, the WHO suggests that supportive, non-alarmist language helps prevent fear-driven misinformation and promotes a more engaged and informed public (WHO, 2024).

Image 9

The caricature in image 9 was published in the Star Newspaper on 30/03/2020. It invites the audiences to reflect on some of the very unreasonable tactics that the Kenyan police were using to enforce the COVID-19 pandemic curfew. The police are portrayed as being extremely violent against the very people they are supposed to protect. The picture that emerges is the police insensitivity to the people's suffering and a picture of police brutality. The caricature portrays the Kenyan police as having abandoned their capacity to think. Consequently, to protect themselves against this police brutality, the audiences are urged to use their mind and do what is required of them – obey the COVID-19 curfew or die at the hands of the police. The Kenyan masses perhaps faced more danger of being killed not by the COVID-19 pandemic but by the police officers who were supposed to be protecting them.

The caricature is a rallying call for the masses to follow the government directives and for the police to rethink their strategy for enforcing the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. It also invites the police to reform and be pro-people (See Image 9).



Image 9: Dual Crisis of COVID-19 Curfews and Police Brutality in Kenya

Source: Star Newspaper on 30/03/2020

The Kenyan police strategy for fighting the COVID-19 pandemic is presented as barbaric and out of touch with what rational people should do. Consequently, the police officers are projected as having abandoned their capacity to think and, therefore, are portrayed as brainless in their behaviors and actions. Their strategy of enforcing the COVID-19 curfew in Kenya was portrayed as wrong and thoughtless.

The caricature aligns with WHO's taxonomy of social solidarity vs. individualism. It encourages a balance between community-wide action and individual rights as necessary for cohesive public health responses (WHO, 2024). The social solidarity versus individualism theme addresses the tension between collective health actions and individual rights within public health. Social solidarity places emphasis on collective responsibility. In this context, the community members support one another in achieving shared health goals, particularly during public health crises (Reiss, 2021).

This approach has been crucial in managing public health emergencies, as collective actions like mask-wearing, social distancing, and vaccination protect individuals and the broader community. In contrast, individualism, which focuses on personal choice and autonomy, may sometimes undermine these efforts when prioritizing personal freedoms over community welfare (Strohmeier & Stoltenberg, 2020). The conflict between these perspectives became especially pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, where individualistic attitudes in some regions impeded efforts to control the virus spread (Krause et al., 2021).

Research shows that societies with high levels of social solidarity tend to have better public health outcomes due to greater compliance with health policies and guidelines (Reiss, 2021). For instance, studies have found that countries with a strong emphasis on communal values, such as Japan and South Korea, experienced relatively high compliance to COVID-19 pandemic prevention public health measures (Strohmeier & Stoltenberg, 2020). This compliance contributed to controlling infection rates and reducing mortality rates.

In the contrary, inhabitants of highly individualistic societies, for instance those in the United States of America, often resist collective health measures and are influenced by personal choice and distrust in

government mandates (Krause et al., 2021). The divergence underscores the importance of understanding cultural and social dynamics in shaping health behaviours and the effectiveness of public health policies.

Image 10

The caricature in image 10 was published in the Standard Newspaper on 27/07/2020, and portrays two policemen arresting the statute of 'Justice' for infringement of mask regulations. This is humorous since the statute of justice is ordinarily projected as blind (blindfolded on those it serves; thus, all are equal before the law). The police officers are portrayed as ignorant of basic concepts of justice and thus incapable of enforcing law equitably and fairly. Indeed, arresting a statute for improperly wearing a mask inappropriately is quite stupid (See Image 10).



Image 10: Beyond the Mask: Arbitrary Arrests and Ignorance of COVID-19 Regulations in Law Enforcement in Kenya

Source: Standard Newspaper on 27/07/2020

This caricature aligns with WHO's taxonomy of satire and humour. WHO (2024) appreciates that satire and humour are captivating tools in public health communication. Satire attracts attention and makes messages more memorable. They also help in conveying complex information in an accessible manner. Research shows that humour in health messaging can foster engagement and reduce anxiety. It is a valuable tool during health crises, where stress levels are typically elevated (Myrick & Oliver, 2015).

Image 11

The caricature in Image 11 was published in the Standard Newspaper on 25/03/2020. It shows a medical doctor declaring to the Kenyan Masses that "We are not the frontline in this battle; we are the defence. The frontline of this epidemic is you, the people in the community tasked with the challenge of keeping each other safe" (See image 11).

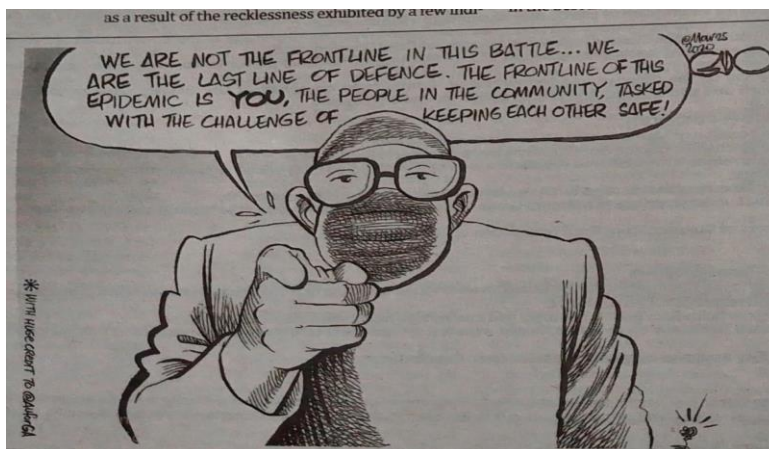


Image 11: Safety starts with you and me

Source: Standard Newspaper on 25/03/2020

The caricature is a rallying call for the Kenyan masses to realize that they were indeed on the frontline in the fight against the disease and not the doctors and nurses. The caricature aligns with WHO's health misinformation versus accurate information taxonomy of social listening. The taxonomy emphasizes that health misinformation requires multifaceted strategies to promote accurate, evidence-based information (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). There is a need to correct information before misinformation spreads. By identifying and countering misinformation sources, health organizations can target interventions more effectively and improve public trust in accurate health guidance (WHO, 2022).

Image 12

The image 12 caricature was published in the Star Newspaper on 21/03/2020. It portrays the then Cabinet Secretary of health in Kenya, Hon Mutahi Kagwe, as having done well to contain the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya by declaring, "You have done better than expected". The caricature is also cautionary for the Minister to remain focused on the COVID-19 control policy because the disease is yet to be controlled entirely and still lingers around (See Image 12).



Image 12: The Covid-19's devil's shadow

Source: Star Newspaper on 21/03/2020

Conclusion and Recommendation

From the foregoing discussion, it can be inferred that the three newspapers: The Nation, the Standard and the Star newspapers used caricatures in similar manner. They deployed the caricature as a platform to voice their criticism of the way the Covid-19 pandemic was handled by the Kenyan Government. The caricatures exposed the many failures of government and pointed out its success even as they gave factual guidelines about how the Covid-19 pandemic was to be handled and contained. The caricatures in these three-newspapers demonstrated very well the watchdog role of the mass media in checking the excess of governments, its lack of vision as well as its misplaced priority on they it handled the covid-19 pandemic. All the caricatures aligned their covid-19 messaging with selected WHO's taxonomy of social listening and health messaging. It can then be concluded that the caricatures are appropriate messaging techniques for any given health campaign and were used as communication tools for stimulating social reflection and action on critical matter such as covid-19 pandemic. The messages carried in caricatures were diverse and variegated and included cautionary, criticism, lobbying, congratulatory, sarcasm, and goodwill messages. The WHO taxonomy of social listening is therefore alive and applicable in caricature health messaging. Caricatures are therefore a potent tool for communication and the WHO's taxonomy of health messaging is a strategic asset that can be and is deployed by cartoonists in framing their messages. Consequently, caricatures are useful platform of communication and can be used to tailor make health messaging for effective communication. It is recommended that print media should continue using them in crafting thought provoking visual messages that are capable of inspiring social transformation and action. It is also recommended that further studies should be undertaken to probe how caricature impact readers of newspapers in decision making on matters that affect them such as bad governance. Furthermore, cartoonists in these three newspapers are encouraged to broaden their use of the WHO's taxonomy of social listening to address matters of society beyond health issues such as politics, economics, social vices as well as social revolution. The power of imagination for social commentators such as journalists and cartoonists is given broader meaning via visual communication of caricature.

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