

Stereotypes Applied in Designing Cartoons Depicting Women in Politics in Kenya- Case Study of the Daily Nation's Gado Cartoons

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to explore the use of gender stereotypes in designing cartoons targeting women in politics by Gado, a cartoonist in The Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper. This is an analysis of a specific tool used to convey gendered messages often ignored perhaps because cartoons tend to be humorous and satirical concealing the irony, satire and the serious messages behind the simple strokes. Data for analysis was received from 362 people using questionnaires as well as using content analysis analyzing 20 gendered cartoons. Whether intended or otherwise, gendered messages were portrayed even from simple gestures, signs, symbols and illustrations. 63% of the respondents said they are influenced by the cartoons drawings while 58% said negative portrayal of women in politics makes them doubt women's' ability to play politics. Women, often drawn frightened, weak, smaller and fearful indicates women live under attack of males in a perceived male dominated society. In the 70% of texts, 80% images, 85% size and 85% of themes, gendered stereotypes were observed. The images used were published between January 2009 and December 2013. The study recommended ethnographic research be conducted to identify more accurate responses on effects and attitudes of these gendered cartoons.

Keywords: Cartoons, Gender, Stereotypes, Newspapers, Women.

1. Introduction

Following the gender stereotype that men are rational and women are emotional, male politicians are referred to as rational policymakers, who make decisions based on factual

evidence while women make decisions based on emotion (Hawkesworth, 2003). These are seemingly the messages that the media through the various tools of communication like cartoons depicts today and unfortunately constantly too. Several sampled cartoon drawings in the The Kenya's Daily Nation newspapers shows the use of this tool advancing gendered stereotypes.

Cartoons have claims to truth, as do other forms of art that attempt to represent and reflect reality, and also supplement news presentations with statements of meaning (Streicher, 1967). Because cartoons are a printed record of history, they can be interpreted as reflecting contemporary cultural attitudes and values and serve to record and perpetuate commonly held beliefs (Berger, 1993). In this sense, Cartoons are thus used to pass gendered messages already held amongst communities to the audience either intentionally or otherwise.

This use is further made possible by a larger part of the audience just laughing at the hilarious drawings and forgetting the serious messages underneath the simple strokes. Ignoring cartoons however, should not be the case as (Lent, 2000) observed because the message can be so subtle that readers debate among themselves who is being attacked. The process of unveiling serious ideas through cartoon may involve the use of satire, humor, contrast, surprise and even nonsense. As (Douglas, 1975) observed, a social structure can be organized in the form of a joke or visually such as in a cartoon. Thus, the examination of the joke reveals common assumptions, dominant public values. This shows serious underlying messages beneath these simplified strokes of a cartoonist.

Additionally, (Templin, 1999) Cartoonists share fundamental biases with the societies they critique, and therefore cartooning has a heritage that has at times been racist and sexist. In this sense, cartoons are representations that are mediated forms of communication and often recycle ideas of ethnic/racial pictures that are common in society. This explains the observations of women being often drawn as frightened, small, weak, and fearful as if under attack of the male gender that are in return drawn as huge, powerful, ruthless, brutal and majority as the way society maybe or may have been.

To the audience however, cartoons images and the stereotypes they have seem innocent, suggests so, or the audience take them as so. In spite of this, the audience should know that gendered cartoons stereotypes have certain effects which according to (Rayner et al, 2001), stereotypes in the media dehumanize people by denying them the complex psychological make-up that an individual possesses by reducing them to a few generalized personality traits.

Also (Berg, 2002) observed that, stereotypical characteristics in popular media are short-hand messages to audiences, who recognize them quickly. Given the more constrained space of cartoons, this short-hand becomes more potent. Figures who represent those uncommon in the political arena (i.e. gendered and racial minorities) are portrayed as stock characters displaying stereotypical physical markers and characteristics.

According to (Wood, 1994), cartoons about women in politics speak to more varied themes, depending on the context of time and situation. Three particular themes in media representations of women surfaces thus. First, women are underrepresented, which suggests that "they are unimportant or invisible" Second, women are presented in terms of sex-role

stereotypes, which unfairly categorize women. Third, relational aspects between men and women emphasize traditionally divided roles, psychologically consigning women to limited nurturing and support roles. This is even further complicated by the fact that cartooning is overwhelmingly dominated by men. Women are thus seriously constrained and disadvantaged when drawn by men who are unlikely to use cartoons to help women express themselves in cartoons drawn by men.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

If a cartoonist supports an issue or a political candidate, a reader is not likely to see that issue or person featured in cartoon images, because “to be featured in a cartoon is traditionally to be criticized or to be the source of satire” (Conners, 2005). To be an issue or candidate supported by a cartoonist is to be ignored in the cartoon content—to be in a cartoon commentary is to be a target. Thus, when women are featured; they are being attacked which unfortunately and in many ways is based on their sex and appearance. Needless to say thus, women in politics are often attacked using irony and satire.

Further, political cartoons “need not follow the principles of objectivity we expect in news stories; rather, they are expressing opinions in parallel with newspaper editorials and opinion columns” (Conners, 2005). This gives a cartoonist freedom to draw and sometimes even use stereotypes that cannot be used elsewhere in the same publication.

From the aforementioned, the media which is seen as a tool capable of shaping perceptions of the world (Boulding 1956; Eagly 1987; Eagly and Wood 1999) is a powerful tool is used to reflect the values of society and creating new ones. Media has the potential to influence and to some extent control the minds of readers or viewers as (Klapper, 1960) observed. The media through books, newspapers, television and the internet have become the avenue for reflecting our societies. They create a representation of reality through their content. The messages that the media carries thus have an impact in the audience and if stereotypes on gender find space in the newspapers, then such messages takes the society years back or support aspects that should be discarded.

Some of the messages in the cartoons intertwines with the cartoon’s humor and can be a conservative force in society. An examination of the “joke” in them can reveal common assumptions, dominant public values, and general public expectations. The humor can also mock or point out absurdity and thereby challenge the status quo. Cartoons, therefore, can serve as a force of social and political change. In (Allport, 1954) further argue that stereotypes ‘act as justificatory device for categorical acceptance or rejection of a group and a screening or selective device to maintain simplicity in perception and thinking.’ The categorization function explains why stereotypes are over generalized while the justification function explains why they are illogical and contrary to fact (Jost and Hamilton, 2005).

As such, stereotypes are seen to be used to help in understanding information in a simplified way although this poses great and adverse effects to the viewers who attend to such messages. Even though these stereotypes seem widely accepted by people attending to them they continue to drive a wedge between genders and Cartoons as a part of a powerful media, is used to pass these gender discriminatory messages. The cartoonist involved-Gado, argued that images drawn about women are a reflection of the social cultural ideologies and beliefs

in the society. However, these cartoons seems out of place since women have considerably gained gender parity and where it is slow, steps to fast-track it are in place.

As such, this study was anchored on the constant attacks women in politics receive through the often ignored but immensely powerful the cartoons. The gendered cue that cartoons communicates effects gender. Thus the researcher sought to analyze how women are portrayed by the cartoons despite gender emancipation improvements.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 General Objective

a. To explore how Gado cartoons drawings portrays gendered stereotypes of women in politics in The Daily Nation newspapers.

2. Literature Review

Britain's political cartooning, an artist (Ralph Steadman, 1997) observed that the cartoon is generally regarded as little more than a 'readily digested pictorial version' of the written word, intended for 'those who do not wish to read, who cannot read, or who just will not understand'. This leads to many taking the view of the cartoon as a relatively simple and readily digested medium. This may also mean that cartoons are easier to pass messages even to those not interested in reading stories in the op-ed pages.

However, (Conners, 1998) cartoon representations of Saddam Hussein, cartoons 'can often be understood across cultures, ages, and levels of intelligence'. This is due to the common use of metaphors and symbols which 'simplify ideas' and thus enable readers to interpret the images 'quickly and easily'. While agreeing with Conners on the prevalence of symbols and metaphors in cartoons, the researcher also believe that, far from making the interpretation of cartoons easier, this reliance on non-literal thought processes also contributes to their complexity. This shows how complex messages can be delivered through cartoons although controversies lay beneath the simple strokes.

Political cartoons, according to (Refaie, 2009), constitute a very specific genre, with its own history, distinctive styles, conventions and communicative purposes. It is an illustration, usually in a single panel, published on the editorial or comments pages of a newspaper. Commonly, cartoons address a current political issue or event, a social trend, or a famous personality, in a way that takes a visual communication stand or presents a particular point of view. Although political cartoons are not always humorous, they do generally contain an element of irony or at least something inappropriate or surprising such as gender stereotypes.

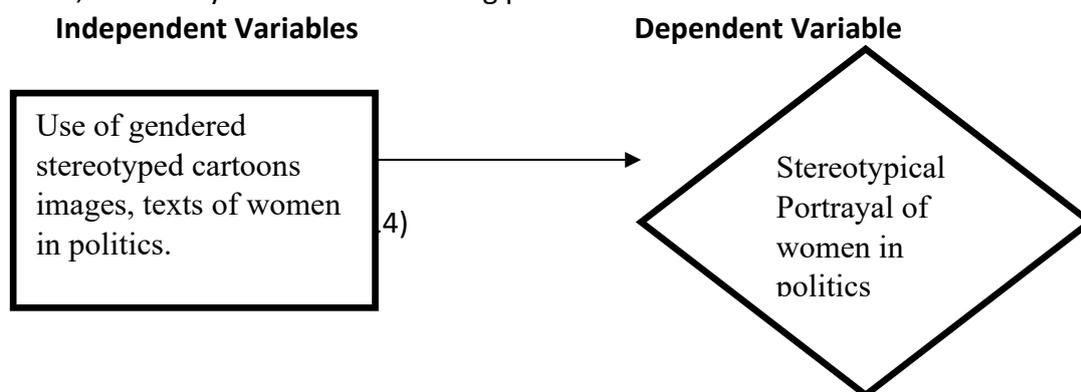
Because cartoonists must use gender in a manner relevant to readers' social experiences, cartoons provide a window onto pervasive cultural attitudes about gender. Gender ideals are continuously constructed, nurtured, and negotiated in American society at large as (Gamble et al, 2003) observed. Cartoons, which circulate widely among the public, participate in affirming themes purporting that presidential politics is a male domain.

In cartoons therefore, women are portrayed as passive, waiting for men's attention, while males are shown ignoring, exploiting or directing women according to (Brown et al, 1986). In

today's world, inclusion of women in the various political, religious, social roles can be seen in Kenya as supported by various gender sensitive policies and courses. However, in cartoons not much has changed on the view and representation of women.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

According to (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2001), even though photography, film and video actually record the reality that is out there, these 'realistic' media is constructed. They noted that we do not actually see three dimensional reality, we are exposed to two dimensional realities in film and television. The images presented by the media only give us a partial view. This is an illustration of how and the way media uses representations and biases in its attempt to present to the audience the world, events, and issues. A lot goes on in between such as attitudes, selectivity and even the editing process.



From the above conceptual framework, Cartoonists draws images and insert short texts to explain to their audience and this way, they use their opinions, knowledge and even certain attitudes. When creating these images and texts they present their attitudes, opinions to their readers. The prejudice that the cartoonists have about certain gender directly translates in the content he creates and pass to the readers/viewers. Therefore he has a direct, connecting, relationship to the content they create and so do the likely influence/impact to the audience. However there are intervening factors also influencing the cartoons images and texts such as institutions regulating the content of the newspapers, editorial policies, media ethics, and the particular roles of characters targeted.

3. Methodologies

For this study an approach of survey research design to obtain data was used. According to (Bernard and Morrison, 1992), survey research design is a systematic method of gathering information from a population using questionnaires.

3.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis in this study was used to analyze 20 gendered images and messages in the cartoons drawn by Gado. Thus, content analysis helped the researcher to describe how gendered cartoons images show gender stereotypes that are used to represent women in politics in the Daily Nation's editorial cartoons by Gado.

3.2 Sampling Procedure

A total of 362 questionnaires were issued using purposive sampling procedure and were later analyzed. They were issued to audiences within the larger Nairobi County to a section of the target population within 20-60 years age bracket. This group was sampled from the larger

Nairobi’s population which according to the (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2009) was at 3,138,369 people in Nairobi.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data obtained was analyzed in two ways. The data from the questionnaires was analyzed using the social sciences data analyzing tool called SPSS (package 21). Data from the 20 selected cartoons images with gendered stereotypes from the media under study was analyzed using content analysis.

4. Discussion of Findings and Results

In order to describe how cartoons portray gendered stereotypes by Gado while representing women in politics, data was analyzed and the findings interpreted for presentation. This was done using table of frequency of occurrences, pie charts and graphs. The images used for the study were also described with reference to the gendered stereotypes used.

4.1.1 Ways of Depicting Gendered Stereotypes by Gado.

The analysis of the 20 selected cartoons (samples attached in the appendices) indicates that cartoons often feature gendered stereotypes. From the figure below, the percentage figures indicates that from the 20 images, 14 images (70%) used gendered texts such the famous term Wanjiku, Hurricane charity, Rust in peace referring to the late Margaret Thatcher, Lady you may need a bigger bloom. 80% (16 images) had gendered pictures where women physical attributes such as clothing, beauty, were observed to have been unnecessarily emphasized to show femininity. As well, 13 images (65%) showed women in gendered contexts such as being shown as homely, religious. 17 of the images (85%) showed women in smaller sizes specifically to indicate how oppressed they are. Similar margin of 17 images showed gendered themes, 15 images used color, 18 images used plot while 16 used setting. This was done in reference to darkened context behind the image of a woman to imply darkness, hopelessness of their leadership efforts.

A graphical representation below shows the various ways cartoons from Gado depict/carry gendered messages targeting women in politics. Some of the ways are texts, dialogues, contexts, images etc.

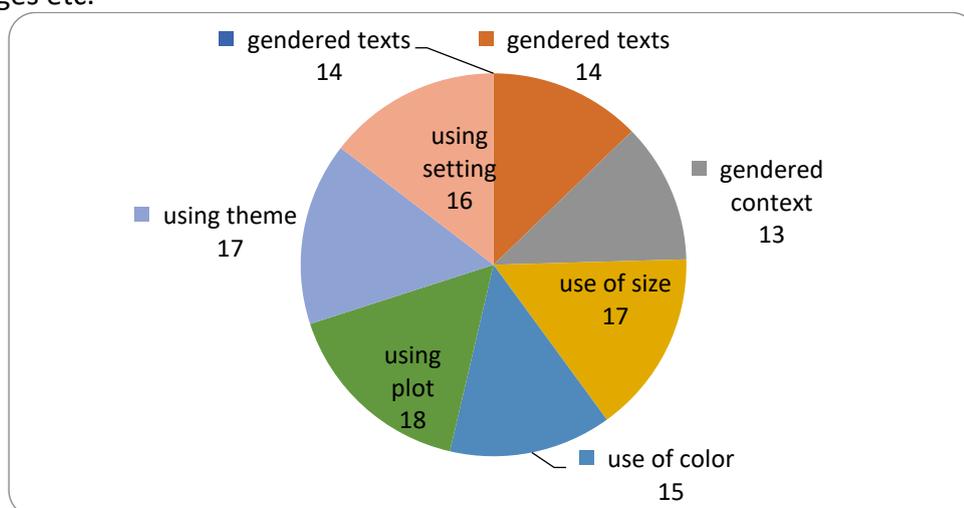


Figure 2: Uses of gendered stereotypes by Gado

Figure 2 above shows use of various methods and themes to illustrate that the cartoonist holds the notion that women are still inferior to men in similar positions in the society.

4.1.2 The effects of use of gendered stereotypes by Gado.

Having established from the literature review that messages from media have previously been proved to have certain degrees of impact/ effects on the audience, the effects of the cartoons on the audience which is a vital tool of communication used in the newspapers was analyzed. From the results, higher percentage figures revealed that cartoons have an impact on the audience members analyzed as the chart below indicates;

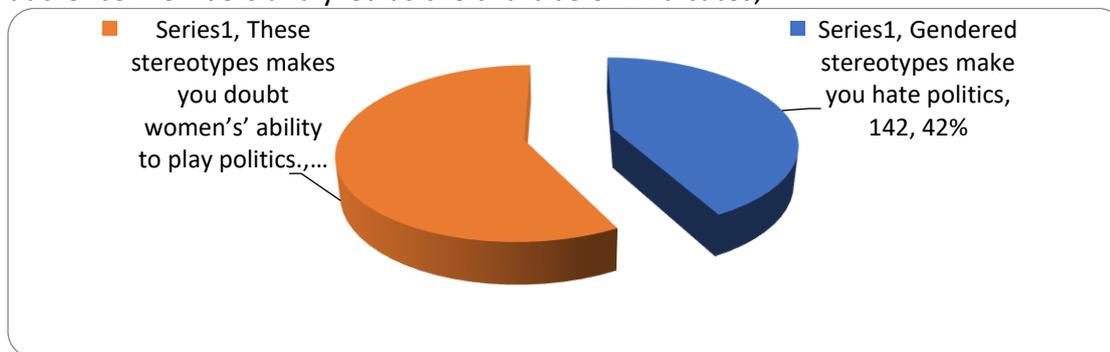


Figure 3: Effects of gendered stereotypes in cartoons on the audience.

From the pie chart above, the respondents indicated that gendered stereotypes have an effect on their perception of women’s ability to lead with 58% (202 respondents) indicating they doubt their ability to lead due to such negative portrayal. Further, 42% (154 respondents) said that the gendered cartoons images make them to hate politics. These are high percentages, a further indication of the way the social, political environment is still hostile to women leadership and the influence the media has on the audience. Further still, presentation of other effects of the cartoons images on the audience are shown in the histogram below that;

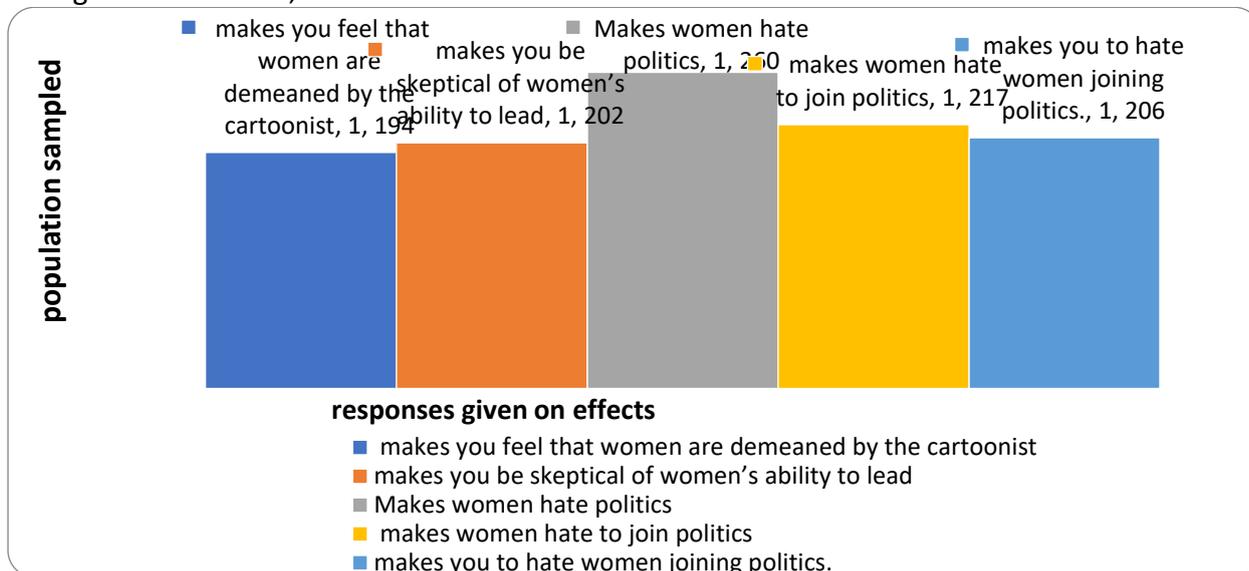


Figure 4: Gendered stereotypes in cartoons and their effects

From the figure 4 above, gendered cartoons images made 54% (194 respondents) feel that women are demeaned by the attacks of the cartoonist. Specifically, these attacks made 72% (260 respondents) of the sampled women to hate joining politics. This is a very high percentage which may explain further the hostility in politics which is scaring women to join.

Table 1: The proportion of respondents exposed to gendered cartoons stereotypes

The ANOVA table below shows the relationship between hours spent reading/ analyzing newspapers and cartoons and the skepticism formed about women’s ability to lead. It shows that hours spent is a significant contributor to the doubts and skepticism about women’s ability to lead. As (Pant’s, 2006) also observed that continued exposure to the now more dominant media makes the audience have a more increased bias against women politicians in America.

Responses on media exposure

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	29.310	2	14.655	11.457	.000
Within Groups	459.199	359	1.279		
	Within Groups	459.199	359	.488	
	Total	458.508	361		

4.1.3 Newspapers influence on attitudes towards gender due to use of gendered stereotypes

After establishing that the cartoonist makes use of gendered stereotypes in his caricatures which have effects on the readers/audience as seen above, the researcher posed questions to find out the likely attitudes the audience forms because. Analysis of the aspects of attitudes it influences amongst people such as making people to hate, like, encourage a particular behavior.

Table 2: * Newspapers influence on attitudes towards gender due to gender stereotypes.

Responses	Newspapers influence your attitudes on gender due to gendered stereotypes.					Total
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Female	129	22	21	0	14	186
Male	96	25	38	11	6	176
Total	225	47	59	11	20	362

From the figures illustrate that the newspapers influence the audience’s attitude in one way or the other as will also be illustrated here further. In total, 267 (63.8% respondents) agreed to being influenced by the newspapers in terms of the attitudes they have on gender. Only 8.6% respondents disagreed to this influence.

Table 3: Correlation between gendered cartoons images and women hatred of politics

Correlations^a

	Gendered cartoons	Women hatred of politics
Women hatred of politics Pearson Correlation	2	.554
Sig. (2-tailed)		.031
Women hatred of politics Pearson Correlation	.554	2
Sig. (2-tailed)	.031	

The Pearson correlation above shows that there is a high relationship between attitudes formed and gendered cartoons images drawn by Gado. Where women are portrayed negatively through cartoons there is an increased likelihood that more women ends up hating politics and (Carlin et al, 2009) noted, these negative attacks on women in politics like Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin etc scares more younger females from joining politics.

From the data collected and analyzed, it is evident that cartoons often attacks women in politics by concentrating on their feminine aspect. This analysis shows a direction of comparing women in certain political roles with men casting a doubt on women abilities.

5. Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore how Gado cartoons drawings portrays gendered stereotypes of women in politics in The Daily Nation newspapers. From the formulated questionnaires, a survey research approach was used to obtain data. The target population was audience members as the readers of the newspapers and the media's cartoons creator and editor Gado. Purposive sampling technique was used to choose a sample for the study of the 20 images used for content analysis.

5.1 Conclusions

From the data that was analyzed through content analysis, it was evident that The Daily Nation's cartoonist- Gado uses stereotypes while representing gender. The cartoons selected for this study had direct reference to gender stereotypes. Also, of greater concern is the indirect reference to gender stereotypes where the cartoonist used other aspects that also implied stereotype such as: size, colors, dressing/ costume, appearance, numbers, theme and the context.

A majority of the respondents 96% indicated that they prefer editorials, opinions and cartoons. 97.2% said that they also read and analyze the cartoons where subtle as well as humorous messages are found. When asked to name their favorite cartoons, some of those identified were chosen as part of the sample that was content analyzed.

The respondents argued that some stereotypes are old and not offensive anymore and so they can be used to depict the differences in gender in society. Also, this study found out that gender stereotypes are used to represent women in politics in the newspaper because they

are accepted by the society, are humorous, simple and interesting for a larger part of the audience readers.

This study found that a majority of audience members believed that gender stereotypes have certain effects yet ironically they do not see these gender stereotypes as bad. This was shown by many of them (85.1% respondents) indicating that stereotypes are good and 94.2% indicated that they help them process the bulk of information that they face every day. However, many respondents indicated that gender stereotypes they see in the Daily Nation Newspaper are not true. Consistently also, a greater percentage of them 70.4% said that the stereotypes were false.

However, this study results also challenges the widespread view that cartoons are simple and easy to read. Even some highly educated readers who are relatively well informed about political events the reading of newspaper, cartoons poses quite a challenge and requires a whole range of broad knowledge of current events, an excellent grasp of idioms and other linguistic occurrences, a vast understanding of cultural symbols, a familiarity with cartooning, and an ability for independent thinking. According to (Kleeman, 2006), these features make the political cartoon, used judiciously, a particularly good vehicle through which to develop an ability to identify bias and formulate opinions and an outstanding device for honing analytical skills.

According to (Elkins, (2003) even the apparently simple process of identifying visual elements and parsing them 'according to the ways they refer to the world' is far from straightforward. In this study therefore, the respondents had to be well aware of the main issues surrounding the gender insensitive cartoonist. In some areas, there were divergent responses explained to be coming from various other issues such as respondents' unique socio-cultural background.

5.2 Recommendations

Cartooning and caricature work is a serious means/tool of communication and cannot be ignored any more.

- a) Cartoons need to be studied more closely and the messages synthesized further as well as the cartoonists taking some steps in controlling, being objective and fair in their representation of society through their visual images.
- b) There is a need to have concerted efforts in controlling the media contents because as a powerful tool, it serves different, ethnicities, religions, genders, among other aspects. This research finding indicated that there is still use of gendered stereotypes when references to women roles are made in the newspapers by cartoonists.
- c) There is a need to tone down some of the unwarranted attacks on women in politics and women in general. This intervention therefore comes in between the cartoonist and the audience to ensure that the content portrayed is not in bad taste to any party involved.
- d) Also, more attention to the cartoons and the messages they have, needs to be in place so as to begin and continue this debate of the effects such cartoons could have on the audience. They have tended to be ignored especially after people laugh about them, but more should be done like analyzing the contents that often has serious messages on those attacked.

Therefore, this study suggests that further studies using closer methods to the respondents such as ethnography research be carried out. This would bring up more accurate answers on the way people react, respond, are affected once they see a gender insensitive message. Analyzing the interpretation process of these respondents in their natural settings could bring out accurate results.

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