

# The Nature of Gender Portrayal in Editorial Cartoons: Analysis of Kenya's *Daily Nation* and *Standard* Newspapers

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**Abstract:** Visual images often have lasting memory with the capacity to reveal the anguish of a tormented soul. It can stimulate sexual passion as well as generate intense feelings and excitement to the level of driving people to the bravery and barbaric acts. These images evoke responses in people based on their interpretation of meanings informed by common beliefs and values. In most cases, the victims are subjected to gender-based humiliation in the public eye. This paper investigates the nature of gender portrayal through selected editorial cartoons. This study is anchored on the relativist/interpretivist philosophical paradigm in which a qualitative case study design is adopted. The case in reference is the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers of Kenya's Nation Media Group and Standard Group, respectively. Data was generated from sampled cartoons published by the two dailies. The data was complemented by semi-structured in-depth interviews targeting the cartoonists, human rights activists, and gender specialists from selected organizations in Kenya. In total, 252 cartoons out of 2184 which is 11.5 percent, were sampled systematically through a six-week purposive sampling mechanism. Each week represented a month amounting to three years in a row. The findings of the study revealed that men were negatively represented in most of the cartoons. Specifically, men were linked to greed, corruption, political violence, and land grabbing among other issues. On the other hand, women were mostly portrayed as weak, helpless, vulnerable, and most afflicted. In over 30 of the sampled cartoons, women were projected as sexual objects and agents of beauty. And yet in some though only a few, the very women were projected as the voice of reason and one that could be entrusted with leadership and integrity. This study reveals the bias and increased stereotypical overtones and the inability of the two newspapers to adequately embrace gender sensitivity in the way cartoons portray both men and women to their readers. Editors, reporters, and cartoonists should remove bias and stereotypes in their portrayal of both men and women. To this end, urgent retraining and sensitization on gender sensitivity cartooning are highly recommended for media practitioners. Specific editorial guidelines for cartoonists and mentoring of female journalists to become cartoonists are equally required to mitigate biased cartooning.

**Keywords:** Cartoon, Gender, Image, Newspaper, Portrayal

## *How to Cite this Article:*

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## Introduction

Gender is a critical element of national development. Depiction of men and women in media is a matter of concern since the media exist to inform, educate, and entertain in addition to facilitating sustainable change. Many a times, it can also be an avenue to maintain status quo in each socio-political environment. Thus, in a UNESCO report of 1979 it is noted that:

Taking into consideration that Television programs give information and reflect on gender roles in real life, it must be stated that women images are distorted and unrealistic in these programs. All kinds of entertainment programs portray women in dual images. On one hand, they are decorative objects. Yet at the same time, they are passive individuals in the households and in marriages as dependent on men for financial, emotional, and physical support. Even in United States of America and Europe where feminist ideas are widely spread, and women have legally reached equal rights with men, media continue to have discriminatory attitudes towards women and rely on male world view when portraying women. (UNESCO report, 1979 :20)

Gender portrayal refers to the depiction of male and female gender or their description, picturing, and sketching; in what they are seen to be doing or associated with as highlighted in the cartoon or any other form of media. In this study, depiction or highlighting of the characters in editorial cartoons becomes the appropriate definition of the word gender portrayal. Editorial cartoons refer to the specific drawings or caricaturing of the newsmakers and their connection with the current news as published where editorial commentary or the voice of the media house appears in the newspaper. For instance, in 2016, the pictures of a woman who lost both of her hands to a brutal husband for what was described as “failing to deliver for him a baby boy” elicited public outrage, sympathy and intense debate in both mainstream and social media making the police and gender activists to act more decisively than ever before (*KTN news at Nine*, August 3, 2016). The culprit was handed outright imprisonment without any option while the victim was generously supported by well-wishers.

While the overall responsibility of the newspaper is to remain factual, objective, and fair in the coverage of news, beyond this, they lampoon characters who are mainly the newsmakers. Consequently, some cartoons ridicule news makers while remaining steadfast in holding the mighty and those in power to account.

## Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Newspaper cartoons play a significant role in educating, informing, and entertaining readers through caricature, symbolism, and metaphors. Cartoons are created and mediated to emphasize meanings assigned to them. In fact, many communication scholars concur that more than 80 percent of human learning is derived from images ([www.hp.com/go/printingimaging](http://www.hp.com/go/printingimaging)). If well utilized therefore, cartoons do serve well as platform for educating, entertaining, and informing the public. Beyond this significant role, cartoons can hold leaders and those in authority to account for what they do. To a great extent, cartoons just like the newspapers, radio, television and even the new media, can equally cause people to ask themselves fundamental questions regarding the issues that seem to catch the attention of the cartoonists. In other words, cartoons are equally agenda setting instruments of the media that help the leaders understand what is so crucial to the development needs of the people. However, it is not the obvious that what is highlighted makes the agenda of the day or the week; rather, it is the persistent and frequent observations by the cartoonist as witnessed in the editorial cartoon and the message they pan out over timer which culminates into an agenda. Consequently, cartoons do make the readers ask themselves the most important question; ‘*so what?*’ as they read through the newspapers. Therefore,

while playing well educational, informational, and entertaining roles, cartoons can at the same time, generate disharmony particularly if they lay emphasis on negative elements of life in a society using animation and comic manner that seem to undermine the social fabrics (Becker, Stephen & Rube, 1959). While the specific definition may have changed over time, modern usage refers cartoons to typically non-realistic or even semi-realistic drawings that portray people and their different world views using satire, caricature, and humor. However, it is also a form of art which substitute's imagery, provides illustration, persuasion, conviction, and beautification (Gowns, 1971). Cartoons are critical in providing humor to those who love reading them, but when considered beyond this, cartoons are no more than illustrations that point to specific behavior by individuals found in news. Although Smith (2009) termed cartoons as mere drawings meant for laughter because of the way characters are presented to the readers, the 'so what' question makes one to move a notch higher in interrogating what else is there beyond the laughter. This means what can be deduced or simply understood through denotation. This level of looking at meaning and reason beyond laughter is what this study focuses on in determining the nature of gender portrayal in editorial cartoons. In this regard, every cartoon has a clear message that lies underneath laughter. Therefore, it is important to note from the onset of this study that people take cartoons seriously in a manner that makes them see other messages beyond the laughter. This study has considered a cartoon as a drawing with an exception in the sense that it is satirical portrayal or reflection of personalities captured in the stories published in the main and social media. Such capture may be so often or a result of single occurrence or multiple occurrences depending on the magnitude of the news coverage that would warrant such capture in a satirical manner. Furthermore, these drawings arise from the continuous interaction of the cartoonists with the daily events as they appear in the news in Kenya, around the worlds and in the social media as well. It is such interaction that leads to interpretation of news and finally leads to some news forming the basis for generating cartoons. Generating a cartoon involves having deep thoughts and reflections besides serious consideration surrounding key questions such as the impact of the story to the public or its relevance y to the public, its proximity to the readers and its timeliness as part of the news values that guide selection and publishing of n news stories. Hence the cartoons are interpretation and analysis of news by the cartoonists for every issue that seem to catch the public eye. Each cartoonist or even newspapers have its own way of interpreting news. This interpretation is guided by the in-house style otherwise called editorial policy. Nevertheless, it is also affected by the larger principles of selecting news such as who, said what, where, when how and why. Besides these basic principles, there is the 'so what' question.

In America, cartoons were actively used to agitate for the removal of the corrupt political class known as *Tweed Ring* which controlled the government of New York as early as 1870s. In this regard, cartoons served as a mobilization tool to solicit for support for change in society. With the capacity to influence the mindset of the readers, the changes in the leadership were inevitable in America. Sooner than later the corrupt and selfish crop of leaders were thrown out of power. In another study, Matthews (2011) observes that editorial cartoons make arguments which interest readers. Editorial cartoonists construct images and language to persuade the readers to understand a specific interpretation of an event or phenomenon that so much affects the people. Therefore, by specifically being inclined towards revealing arguments which cartoons generate is enough to suggest that this was not concerned with just any cartoons appearing in the newspaper. Cohn (2012) studied comics, linguistics, and visual language. He states that comics (cartoons) themselves are not a language, but they are written in visual languages the same way that novels are written in English. The sequential images used in comics constitute their own 'visual language'. Hence, the behavioral domains of written/verbal language and drawing/visual language should be the object of linguistic inquiry, stripping away the social categories like comics and graphics. The study focused on comics, linguistics, and visual language while the present study focused on gender portrayal in editorial cartoons becoming a solution to the content and geographical lacuna created by previous studies.

The form comprising of symbols, words selectively chosen, and the implied impression make cartoons most influential in the minds of the people. Margulies (2010) is more precise with the form and content of cartoons by arguing that cartoons can only be understood when broken down into the finest units of symbolism which stands for larger concepts and meaning, exaggeration as the tendency to overdo or over-blow characteristics, labeling to ensure objects and subjects remain crystal clear, analogy for comparison and irony for the difference between the way things are and the way they should appear, all having to influence the form and the presentation of cartoons before the readers.

This study bases the interpretation of the cartoons on the discourse analysis and visual communication. In this regard, Hochberg (1970) argues that it is with symbols that people process and transform transient experiences into cognitive models that guide judgment and action. Through symbols, people give meaning, form, and continuity to their experience. In view of the literature discussed, it is evident that there is a glaring need to focus on the gender portrayal as reflected in the newspapers through cartooning. The gender connotation of the cartoons is an important direction to take especially if one wants to determine the nature of treatment that is accorded to both men and women in the newspapers today and the media in general. Such framework has also a bearing to determine whether there is an element of gender stereotyping rate and perhaps deliberate attack on either gender propagated by the nature of cartooning that exist in print media. This inquiry is informed by what other scholars have done as reflected in literature review, but more fundamentally by what the cartoons have churned out in the selected editions of the two dailies.

### *Spiral of Silence Theory*

Spiral of silence as propounded by Noelle-Neuman (1977) notes that the media only publishes what is commonly accepted or received by the majority audience. This suggests that the minority with the divergent views are shunned or isolated. In this regard, people who perceive their own opinion as being accepted will express it but those whose opinion seems unpopular will keep quiet; hence the spiral of silence that only affects those with opinions that do not carry the day. Indeed, many would fear further isolation just in case they express their divergent views against what the majority hold.

The only limitation with this theory is that it never approves divergent views that might be equally important and deserve to be adopted as well. In the context of gender portrayal especially in editorial cartoons, one would be tempted to imagine that most of the cartoons that are published are meant to sell and seemingly majority will like it. This implies that those who may be offended by the same might only be a fraction of the society. In this case, there could be a significant portion of the readers who feel offended when a cartoon portrays a particular gender in a negative way. At the same time, there could be a significant number of the media practitioners who want to portray a particular gender in a positive way, but they fear being isolated because that may after all not sell. It is important to state that the spiral of silence theory confirms that indeed there are two sides of the coin. It is within the purview of this study to emphasize that divergent views count especially when fairness and objectivity values must be upheld in the news environment. The fact that many editorial cartoons have been published against the will of so many does not mean that the publication has been doing justice to the entire readership fraternity. That is why this paper makes a case for appropriate, equal, and balanced portrayal of both genders. This quest is informed by the many incidences where groups of people have stood up against media organizations that seem to consistently publish news and opinions that annoy them. This paper aims at putting the record straight in so far as gender portrayal in editorial cartoons are concerned. The spiral of silence is critical in determining the extent to which gender portrayal has been to the advantage or disadvantage of both the male and the female gender as they interact with news.

## Methodology

This study adopted the relativist-interpretivist paradigm which emphasizes the fact that the motivation to reality is only through construction of meanings based on different realities. This paradigm was deemed relevant because it allows or is embedded in qualitative analysis arising from the interviews and secondary data which were used in this study. The qualitative methodology shares its philosophical foundation with the interpretive (relativist) paradigm which supports the view that there are many truths and multiple realities. Additionally, the interpretive paradigm is associated more with methodological approaches that provide an opportunity for the voice, concerns, and practices of research participants to be heard (Coleman et al., 2009) as is the case in this study through interviews that were conducted. Ong'ondo and Juan (2011) define qualitative research as an inquiry stressing a naturalistic search for relativity in many truths; and that there is always multiplicity of various interpretations, particularity, detail, and flexibility. In other words, there is no objective reality, but multiple realities exist in society and are culturally constructed. This ideological consideration not only sees people as primary data in terms of source but also seeks their perceptions or the insider view rather than imposing an outsider view. These philosophical considerations aim at focusing on various possible meanings of subject in its natural setting free from any form of manipulation. The qualitative approach provided an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon under study as well as the interaction with specific secondary data in this case sampled cartoons that were published in the selected newspapers. Moreso, with qualitative approach it was possible to adduce meanings from the samples drawing themes, frames, and possible messages that each cartoon conveyed to the reader.

Selected cartoons from two dailies formed the basis for analysis, interpretation and eventually the discussion and conclusion of this study. A case study design was preferable as the two media houses, the Nation Media Group (NMG) which publishes the *Daily Nation* and the Standard Group that owns the *Standard Newspaper* are both strong in using editorial cartoons to complement their position regarding issues that affect the Kenyan people. Furthermore, the two dailies are consistent in coverage of issues thus making it possible to have sufficient data (in terms of the published editorial cartoons) for collection and analysis. In this regard, data from the two dailies was instrumental to facilitate the study to its conclusion.

Purposive sampling was done in selecting the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard Newspaper* on the account of popularity, the coverage, and the general circulation that each carry to the audience. The research has utilised the constructed week sampling which according to Luke, Caburnay and Cohen (2011) is more efficient than anything else. A sample size of six weeks per year formed the basis for analysing the newspapers for the three years (2012, 2013 and 2014). Out of a population of 2184, a total of 252 cartoons were sampled for analysis. Some examples of the cartoons are highlighted. The study takes a three-year focus, first year 2012 which was basically a build-up year for Kenya's political cycle. As was expected, indeed many political activities took place and ultimately many issues came up making it the basis for the development of editorial cartoons. The year 2013 was actually an election year characterised by intense and hyper political activities coupled with issues around land grabbing, corruption and political prostitution. On the other hand, 2014 was carefully chosen to reflect what could happen in post-election period. The attendant news stories were equally important to demonstrate how the country navigated through the elections and whether it was settling down or not after the 2013 general election.

Content analysis of the specific cartoons appearing within the sampled weeks of the study was undertaken. The study was more inclined towards analysing the framing of the cartoons, the content of the cartoons particularly paying attention to the way they depict and represent gender in relation to the roles assigned to them. Specific characters in each of the sampled cartoons were observed with a keen eye on the roles that were given to each gender whether it is single gender or both genders in the same cartoon. Thus, gender of the characters in the cartoons were also identified and noted for reference in the analysis. Furthermore, messages whether single or multiple attached to the gender were also identified

for each cartoon that was sampled. In addition, the *mascot* voice-the little voice of what looks like a mouse or cat normally situated at the bottom of the cartoon was also considered to determine the possible embedded meaning that is attached to the cartoon. Looking at content also included identification of the issues in the cartoon, characters involved, roles assigned to them, levels of exaggeration and recognition of the irony in each cartoon was critical.

The data analysis was done based on the thematic areas including corruption, bribery, leadership and integrity, governance, sports, land grabbing. Others were examination cheating, which was also linked to electoral cheating, and election malpractice. Then were significant others including science and innovations and individual achievement in life. The voice of the mascot was another area that was keenly observed as to determine the message the mascot always brought out whether it was mere riddle, challenge or a question that is meant to challenge the readers and the news makers. These themes were critically observed and analysed in relation to the gender portrayal. A seven-point reference was used to dissect the selected cartoons for easy of understanding and extracting information that was necessary in responding to the three questions that were set out in the study namely determining the nature of gender portrayal, how gender was depicted, what accounted for such portrayal and whether there were any traces of stereotypical approach in developing editorial cartoons. The study coded cartoons collected, and summary is as shown in Appendix 1.

## **Results and Discussion**

In year 2012, a total of 84 cartoons were sampled out of a population size of 728 thus, 11.5 percent and analyzed from the two newspapers. The sampled cartoons focused on several thematic areas. Each cartoon was described the way it appeared in the newspaper for the purpose of easy conception and reference. Dates were also revealed for the reasons of certainty. The analysis revealed that most of the cartoons focused on politics, security/insecurity, governance, leadership, and integrity as well as development. Other areas covered by the selected cartoons included justice and administration, medical health, public health, justice, *Wagalla* massacre (the mass killings that the government is said to have committed against the people from Northeastern region for allegedly being involved in what was called *shifita* war), immigration, corruption, taxation, immorality, terrorism, tribalism, elections, and voter registration. Some of the cartoons also focused on disaster and youth-related issues such as drugs and alcoholism. The sampled cartoons were analyzed and discussed concurrently.

In the *Daily Nation*, a total of 42 editorial cartoons were analyzed out of which 18 mainly highlighted the male gender. This translated in to 42.8 percent of the total number of the selected cartoons for that particular year. 38 percent of the selected sample cartoons were male-female dimension. However, a paltry 4.8 percent of the sampled cartoons focused on the female gender. In other words, the findings revealed that most of the themes that were captured by the *Daily Nation* cartoonist majorly brought out men as the key news makers regardless of whether this was negative or positive way.

As for *Standard*, 52.4 percent of the sampled cartoons reflected the male gender, 35 percent took male-female dimension while 7.1 percent of the sampled cartoons focused purely on female gender. Nevertheless, another 7.1 percent of the sampled cartoons appeared neutral. Neutrality in this sense would appear to suggest that the cartoonists would appear not to highlight either gender in a superior or inferior way. In other words, the cartoonist would appear deliberate about focusing and highlighting both gender as they interact with news.

On the scale of ten, the analysis of the sampled cartoons for the two newspapers revealed that politics (activities involving politicians) received the highest percentage of attention by cartoonists in 2012 than any other theme. Seemingly, politics played a significant role in the generation of news than any other subject matter sampled out in the selected cartoons. This was the focus and the concentration by the actors as were captured in the cartoons for the two newspapers. Both genders were highlighted in the

news although they were captured in the cartoons in different forms and proportion. On the other hand, security/insecurity was ranked second in terms of the focus of the cartoonists in the year. Security is a critical element that determines how poorly or well the country is managed or administered. This implies that in the absence of security, there is anarchy.

On the other hand, according to the *Standard* of January 3, 2012, the cartoonist gives the readers a scenario of a football match where Uhuru Kenyatta of Kanu, Kalonzo Musyoka of Wiper Movement, and the late George Saitoti of Party of National Union (PNU) are all in a football contest in a bid to show which party is more popular than the other. The crowd is cheering but some of the fans are asking "I'm not sure- are we in PNU Alliance, Kanu, Wiper, or United Democratic Forum (UDF)" This statement is a pointer to the possibility of confusion seen among supporters of political leaders.

This cartoon was published at the time when parties were involved in push and shove in a bid to demonstrate more popularity than others. In a denotative context, the cartoon is reflective of the biased gender approach in showing the nature of political landscape that existed in Kenya. All the players are of male gender and perhaps the nearest we can see the female gender is in the stands where the cheering squad is located. Each of the players is fully concentrating on his own dance to lure the onlookers. This means the female gender is only best visualized as the spectator especially when it comes to matters of politics. The male gender is therefore depicted as strongly inclined towards participating in politics as the female gender. From this cartoon, we are confronted with the stark reality of the male gender getting more responsibilities of leadership and popularizing parties while the female gender is reduced to mere spectator in the stands with the sole responsibility of cheering the male gender.

In essence, there is outright bias demonstrated in the cartoons in terms of the character and their roles which seemed to affect men more than women. For example, some of the outstanding cartoons with such bias included the very first that was published in the beginning of 2012 (*Daily Nation*, of January 4, 2012) which was captured on the stage where an old man referring to 2011 leaves the stage as he ushers in a baby boy with the message "make *sure your get the election date right*". According to the sampled cartoon, the bias cut across most of the cartoons that touches on very critical issues in life including leadership and governance. In this cartoon, there was absolutely nothing wrong to accord the female gender some critical role to play either in the exit and entry characters. In other words, there is nothing wrong to portray the female gender in the comparisons that were made regarding the exit and entry of the both the old and new year's as the cartoonist wanted to bring out.

It is further indicated that the sampled cartoons mostly gave coverage to the male gender as if to suggest that the male gender were frequently highlighted in the news than was the case for the female gender. Interestingly, most of the male gender covered in the media were associated with negative behavior and actions such as lack of integrity, poor leadership and management, autocracy as well as corruption among the male gender as compared to the female gender.

The female gender reflected in the cartoon was considered the voice of reason. Sometimes what they said or did would almost be equal to the *mascot voice* which is normally used to pose a challenge or offer a solution in a funny way. But the female gender was also adversely portrayed as weak and helpless in some situations. In rare occasions was the female gender given the prominence of taking decisions and perhaps taking responsibility in whichever way. Nevertheless, they showed more honest, reliability and focus in their dealings. For example, in cases where the cartoonists highlighted corruption, it was almost obvious the culprits and architects behind this menace were mostly the male gender.

The question that begs is whether the female gender is perfect in everything except in cases where the female aspect must be portrayed such as beauty, hunger, constitutionalism, and prostitution among other areas. One would also be interested to know whether given an opportunity or sufficient publicity, the female gender could also turn out to be as equally bad as the male gender has been portrayed in most of

the cartoons. There is no doubt that while the male gender is extremely dominant in matters that touch on security/insecurity, the dominance is heavily tilted towards the negative perception. It is plausible to conclude that in most of the cartoons analyzed, the male gender is depicted more of the problem than a solution.

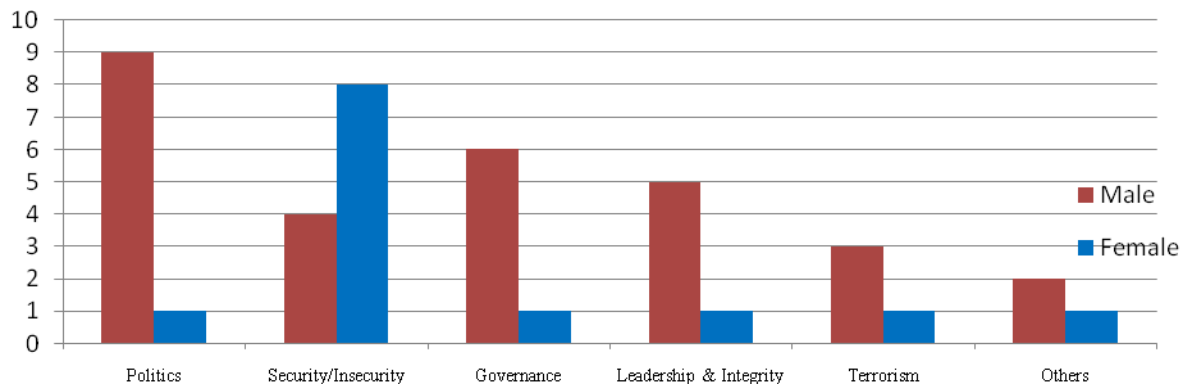


Figure 1: Gender portrayal in Kenyan Newspapers 2012

The study further shows that in comparison, the coverage of the two dailies regarding gender portrayal varied significantly from year to year. Even within the two media houses, there was no automatic convergence. Thus, it was evident that more negative attribution to the male gender was more realized than it was the case for the female gender in 2012. It was further noted that specific themes also played a significant role in determining the nature of the gender portrayal. For example, in cases of corruption, there was outright bias on the part of the cartoonist to portray the male gender as more corrupt than the female gender. The cartoonists were also biased towards portraying the female gender as weak and one that lacks the moral authority to make sound judgment and decisions anywhere anytime.

In the year 2013, a total of 84 cartoons were sampled and analyzed based on the themes as published by the *Daily Nation* and the *Standard* newspapers. The analysis showed that politics mostly featured in sampled cartoons throughout the year. This could have been attributed to the fact that 2013 was an election year in Kenya and obviously everybody aspiring for electoral positions was actively involved. According to the analysis, most of the cartoons featured critical themes such as governance, justice, devolution/disasters, corruption, and freedom. Other important issues that were highlighted included sports, land matters including land grabbing, crime, insecurity, education, and immorality among others. All these themes received varied levels of attention from the cartoonists of the two dailies. There were only a few times the cartoonists agreed to highlighting what was critical in the news as at that time.

In politics, most cartoons portrayed male gender as strong and dominant in leadership while the female gender on the other hand was considered weak, helpless, and vulnerable. Although the male gender was dominant, it was found that most of the men that were captured were portrayed as liars, greedy and pretenders while women captured in politics were considered genuine and capable of making sound political decisions. This was evident in the instant of the *Sunday Nation*, February 10, 2013, where six presidential candidates stood against one woman in a debate.

In a nutshell, the sampled cartoons of 2013 show significant level of bias that was demonstrated against both the female and male gender although not in unequal proportion. While the female gender in many cartoons represented the weak and those afflicted by many issues in life such as hunger, starvation, war



and lack of security, the same female gender was still accorded heroic stature, always serving as a sense of reason where the male gender has failed. On the other hand, the male gender was reflected as one responsible for causing societal problems such as insecurity, corruption, and poor governance. In many of the selected samples, the male gender was significantly associated with failure in society. However, at the same time, it is the same gender that was accorded power and authority. Therefore, comparatively while the male gender was portrayed in a bias way such as strong and powerful, the female gender was negatively portrayed as weak and vulnerable. In whichever way both genders were portrayed in excess or exaggerated way pointing to the possibility that the portrayals that were reflected in the cartoons may not necessarily be the appropriate picture for the both genders.

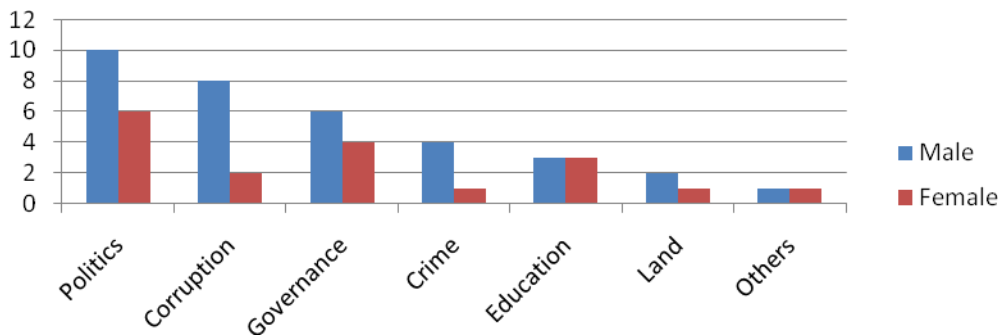


Figure 2: Gender portrayal by editorial cartoons in Kenta's Newspapers

*Note: More men were captured in politics, crime and in incidences of corruption than was the case for the women. But they were level in issues of education and other issues*

In year 2014, the data that was collected revealed that most of the cartoonists paid attention to matters politics in the same way previous cartoons demonstrated. In this regard politics played a significant role as a source of news to the extent that it was extremely important for the cartoonists to develop their themes around the same. This was similar to the previous year where the male gender was prominently featured. The female gender was further eclipsed in making contribution to the political landscape based on their minimal involvement or engagement to either controversial issues or the news generations that touched on the politics of the day. The data that was collected further revealed that politics, corruption, insecurity, and impunity received the highest level of attention in the editorial cartoons and by extension news coverage by the two leading dailies. In additions, fraud, national dialogue, and justice were equally covered by the cartoonists just in the same way they were covered in the news that made headlines during the selected period. There was, however, significant focus on sports, poor governance, and greed especially among leaders across the board. Such greed was more directed at public money than anything else. In addition, the cartoonists also focused on land reforms, unemployment, violence against women, police brutality, hypocrisy, abuse of power, ethnic violence, transition, and traffic accidents as these issues featured in news that made headlines. Equally important areas covered by the cartoonists included terrorism, digital migration, and education matters. In specific terms, politics was top on the agenda of the cartoonists and by extension the newspapers. It was found that that the male gender dominated the coverage even though they were increasingly portrayed as selfish, inhuman, and corrupt.

A man carrying a briefcase written 2014 in his right hand pulls a belt christened *Budget constraint* tied in the waist of a woman with an envelope written 'expectations lifted high up'. The belt is written budget constraints and the woman is *wanjiku* - which was a name used to imply the common citizen. The man pulling Wanjiku tries to encourage her saying "Tighten your belt Wanjiku, we are already experiencing turbulence" The turbulence in reference is the financial difficulties that seems to come with heightened expenditure from those in leadership. Wanjiku has no option other than being forcibly driven through this scathing experience.

The cartoon was published at a time when Kenyans were going through economic crisis characterized by high cost of living, inflation, and increased food prices in 2014. Even when such are happening, the citizens of the country must pay tax in a manner that satisfies and supports the operation of the government. In this context, *Wanjiku* is the common *mwanaanchi* who is forced go through hard economic times to survive. The cartoonist imagines that using the female gender will be telling enough for the readers to understand the extent to which the year 2014 was economically tough.

In reference to the *Standard* the cartoon appearing on January 1, 2014, Kenyans are captured celebrating the dawn of the New Year. Happy New Year 2014 is like a bright sun just beginning to rise; and people are shouting "A New Dawn has come! We expect no greed, corruption, zero road accidents and bring laptops to our children" These are the words that are coming from the people as they celebrate the new year. The message seems to be directed to the government to act against corruption, greed and increased road carnage. Of course, the then Jubilee Government was on record having promised laptops to the primary school pupils once they got in government. All these and others make up the expectations that Kenyans had as they ushered in the New Year.

Here, the cartoonist provided an all-inclusive gender setting with both the male and female gender having been represented in the cartoon. Indeed, both genders are in celebration mood because of the New Year. But it is also important to note the New Year comes with many challenges. Some of the challenges that face both genders include corruption and greed being the two evils that have bedeviled the Kenyan society. The celebrations also come with the reminder to the government of the day that there is need for zero tolerance to accidents while at the same time urging it to provide the laptops as was highlighted in the Jubilee government campaign manifesto. This cartoon does suggest that both the female and male genders are affected by the good and the bad that comes with the New Year.

Summed up, the sampled editorial cartoons of the year 2014 were diversified in terms of the issues that were highlighted. The cartoonists highlighted governance, post-election politics and the issues revolving around the International Criminal Case as well as education matters as areas highlighted in editorial cartoons. Furthermore, politics around the 'Okoa Kenya' initiative played a critical role in influencing the nature of the cartooning that was witnessed in the time frame that was given. In addition, matters corruption also took centre stage in the sampled cartoons. Some of the scandals that were mentioned included the National Youth Service loss of millions of cash, the chicken gate scandal, and the loss of money from the Ministry of Health, among other scandals.

Therefore in 2014, selected cartoons emerged with various themes that focused on various issues including and not limited to scandals, fraud, post-election politics and particularly those revolving around the call for a national referendum and the opposition quest for dialogue to address some of the areas in which the country was ailing. Critical areas of concern included need to reform the Independent and Electoral Commission of Kenya. Devolution and the fight against corruption suffering of the people and education took the centre stage during the year. That politics around the 'Okoa Kenya' initiative which later heavily engaged the Jubilee Government was the major focus of the year. Other issues that made headlines included corruption which has always played a major part in the rise and fall of Kenyan politicians. They suggest that much of the suffering that the citizens go through is partly attributed to the

leaders. The budget constraints have to do with the many burdens arising from the taxes and huge sums of public funds lost through corruption and bloated government structure, hence higher wage bill among other issues. The cartoon of 'Upgrading our Game, that is our New Year resolution' had striking message to the reader pointing out corruption, greed, neglect to the marginalized among others.



Plate 1: Cartoon pointing out corruption, greed and neglect to the marginalized

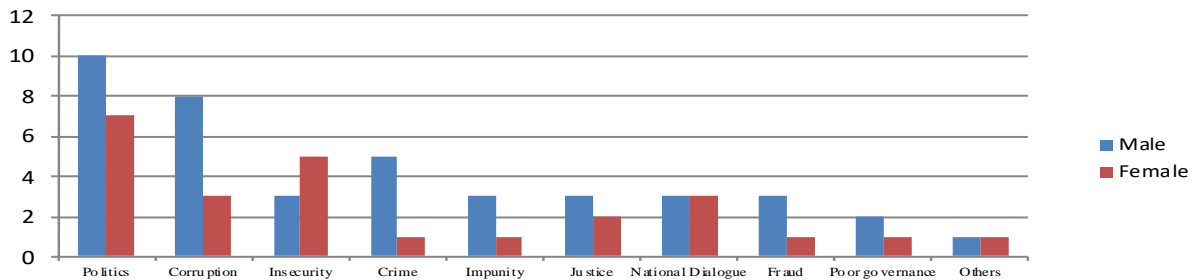


Figure 3: Gender portrayal in Kenya Newspapers 2014

The specific details now follow how every issue that has been identified was covered and the gender portrayal that played out in each of the selected cartoons. The analysis of the sampled editorial cartoons revealed that the male gender was most dominant in the cartoons. This scenario is not accidental as there are enough hurdles to change the situation. According to the cartoonists, they can only work on cartoons based on the information accrued from the current news. Interestingly, the male gender dominated the news and therefore most of the cartoons captured what the male gender said or did in the news. The Media Council Report of 2015 revealed that there still exists a serious gap in the portrayal of both men and women in the media in Kenya, largely due to the fact that men dominate newsrooms and active news sources and actors they are bound to eclipse women in the coverage. It was observed that in most cases, women are unlikely to offer interviews or even feature as strong sources of news to the report. This report further reveals that female stereotypes in the media tend to undervalue women while at the same time reducing them to sexual objects and passive human beings particularly in gossip stories, leisure, advertisement and commercials.

Arguably, gender imbalance in the society have inherently been reflected in the institution of media. This is reflected in the editorial content by either commission in the stories that are never covered or commission by the way the stories are covered (Media Council 2015 Report on gender, p. 3). It is important to understand that gender equality is not about men and women being the same or equal, but it is about their treatment in relation to their rights, responsibilities and access to the opportunities that come their way. Regarding the media in Kenya, this study has noted that there is no equal treatment of both genders in relation to the way they are portrayed in the newspapers particularly through cartoons. This is confirmed by the Media Council of Kenya Report (2015) states that there still exists a serious gap in the representation of both men and women as men continue to dominate newsrooms and the news sources and actors thereby placing women on the periphery. It is therefore this dominance that eventually played out in the cartooning. For example, looking at all the sampled cartoons, majority of the issues that each cartoon brought out had a connection with the male gender.

The other element that was brought out in the cartoons is the issue of stereotypes. Now stereotypes in the media tend to “undervalue women as a whole and diminish them to sexual objects and passive human beings. UNESCO also notes that media (newspapers, radio, television, and the new technology) are part of culture and society. It is widely accepted that media are transmitters of culture and engines behind globalizing culture” Now if this globalizing culture has more to do with the male gender, then the overall culture will be skewed towards enhancing the male gender culture and socialization than that of the female gender.

## **Conclusion**

This paper highlights the inability of the cartoonists and by extension the editors of the two dailies to embrace and demonstrate gender sensitivity in the portrayal of men and women as they appear in cartoons. It further shows how editorial cartoons are heavy laden with gender bias and stereotypical overtones that could undermine the quest for gender parity. In this respect, cartoonists and by extension editors have unconsciously demonstrated this bias and stereotypical overtone by selectively linking more men than women to corruption, land grabbing, examination cheating, election fraud, robbery, and terrorism among others. This study underscores the importance of cartoons in general and editorial cartoon for amplifying issues for national conversation on matters critical, gender inclusive. Therefore, what is published must be critical enough and equally must be carefully packaged devoid of any form of bias and stereotypical overtones that can easily undermine the quest for gender parity.

On gender sensitivity cartooning, this study finds the dire need to remove any form of bias and stereotypical overtones in cartooning from development to publication. Although punitive, the ultimate responsibility to removing bias and stereotypical overtones lies with the media house. As was evident when Radio Africa had to fire two of its staff for contravening gender sensitivity guidelines while live on air, it is the onus of the individual media house to root out bias and stereotypical tendencies in their outlay of news. Borrowing from Ramsak (2017), gender sensitivity reporting, and cartooning is part and parcel of the norms that support efforts that depict the world in a more inclusive way.

This study also points to the urgent need for retraining and sensitization of the media practitioners on gender sensitivity reporting and cartooning. This media ingredient will remind journalist to appreciate that giving attention to both female and male gender in the generation of news is the ultimate solution to gender bias and stereotypical tendencies that work against the quest for an all-inclusive society. The media houses, m gender and human rights concern organizations, media training institutions including colleges and universities have a duty to partner and work together towards reaching this level.

In specific terms, training institutions need to develop a training curriculum that singles out cartooning as key aspect of journalism. Furthermore, to make cartooning an exciting talent and skill, introduction of annual awards focusing on intelligent and skillful articulation of issues affecting society devoid of gender

bias is another step that would promote gender sensitivity cartooning in Kenya's media industry. Kenya's media require to make an affirmative action to ensure female cartoonists are not only trained but also encouraged take keen interest in cartooning.

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**Appendix 1**

<b>Cartoon statistics</b>		
<b>Year</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
2012	84	33.3
2013	84	33.3
2014	84	33.3
Total	252	100.0
<b>Paper</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Daily Nation	126	50.0
The Standard	126	50.0
Total	252	100.0
<b>Theme</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Missing	21	8.3
Hope	8	3.2
Politics	63	25.0
Justice	29	11.5
Security	16	6.3
Health	4	1.6
Leadership	5	2.0
Constitutionalism	6	2.4
War	4	1.6
Governance	24	9.5
Immigration	1	.4
Taxation	1	.4
Development	3	1.2
Floods/ Disaster	7	2.8
Integrity	4	1.6
Elections	4	1.6
Theft of public resources	1	.4
Tribalism/ethnicity	3	1.2
Terrorism	5	2.0
Banking	1	.4
Economy	8	3.2
Corruption	20	7.9
Religion	4	1.6
Sports	4	1.6
Education	3	1.2
land issues	3	1.2
Total	252	100.0
<b>Gender</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Missing	16	6.3
Male	127	50.4
Female	11	4.4
Both	98	38.9
Total	252	100.0
<b>Mascot voice</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Missing	16	6.3
None	180	71.4
Yes	56	22.2
Total	252	100.0
<b>Judgement</b>		
	Frequency	Percent
Missing	16	6.3
Biased&stretotypical	205	81.3
Unbiased	31	12.3
Total	252	100.0