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Framing Ethnic Stereotypes in Kenyan Stand-Up Comedy: A Case Study of Churchill Show Comedians

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the framing of ethnic stereotypes by comedians performing on the popular Kenyan stand-up comedy show, Churchill Show. Ethnic stereotyping in Kenyan stand-up comedy has generated sustained public and scholarly debate, with criticism especially directed at the Churchill Show, which ruled television screens for close to two decades. While many studies have examined the prevalence of ethnic stereotypes in the show, no study has examined the comedians and their reasoning and justification for using them. This study adopted a qualitative research approach, involving interviews with six comedians who appeared on the show over a one-year period from July 2017 to June 2018. The participants were purposively selected to represent performers active during that timeframe. In-depth interviews with key informants were carried out to explore how comedians frame and justify ethnic stereotypes, and the strategies they use in doing so. The findings suggest comedians mainly view their show as a reflection of society and don't believe the comedy show plays any role in perpetuating and entrenching ethnic stereotypes in society. But they do take care not to offend the audience as they deliver the ethnic stereotypes. Some of the comedians favoured positive ethnic stereotypes rather than negative ones. This study recommends against the the use of ethnic stereotypes in television comedy shows and the training of comedians producing content for mass consumption on ethics, stereotypes, and the potential for humour to perpetuate them and cause harm.

Key terms: Ethnic stereotypes, humour, Kenya, media ethics, stand-up comedy.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic stereotypes, both negative and positive, have been in use in Kenya for a long time, some dating to pre-independence. Others have developed over the years as social and political changes have occurred (Naituli & King'oro, 2018; Ndonye et al., 2015; Mahoney, 2009). A study by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) in 2013 noted that, across all Kenyan ethnic groups, there are deeply rooted beliefs amongst members of ethnic communities about the behaviours, characteristics, attitudes, abilities, and weaknesses of people from other ethnic groups (NCIC, 2013).

Comedians using media platforms, especially on the Churchill Show, which aired on television for nearly two decades, have been accused of "thriving on stereotypes and simplicity to excite the audience while hiding under freedom of expression" ("Stereotypes, coded language," 2013). Former Kenyan chief justice Willy Mutunga is quoted in Kiberenge (2012) as saying, "ethnic profiling – ideally designed as parody – sediments into 'truth' and people from other tribes start making decisions in real life based on the emerging caricatures." While not advocating censorship of comedy shows, he says that, although well-meaning, they may end up hurting broader public interest.

Social media users regularly post criticism about the show. Some online users have accused the show of propagating ethnic stereotypes and ethnic jokes. Thuita (2020) says, "Churchill show made Kenya stereotypical of each other... try remembering if all these tribal jokes existed before that show began." Some believe the stereotypes play a role in entrenching animosity among various tribes, while some believe there are other jokes worth focusing on, other than tribal-based jokes.

This study examines how comedians featured on the Churchill Show craft and frame their jokes and decide whether to include ethnic stereotypes in their comedy. It aims to provide an in-depth look at the thought process comedians go through when crafting jokes that use ethnic stereotypes, and the considerations they put in place when delivering them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the existing studies shows an emphasis on the impact of stereotypes on the wider views of racial relations, namely between the White and Blacks, the Americans and the Africans, and Asians and Americans (Abreu et al., 2003; Adams-Bass et al., 2014; Bresnahan & Lee, 2011; Dickter & Kittel, 2012). Wa'Njogu (2009) notes, for example, how Africa has been portrayed in the West as "primitive". All these studies have focused on relations between large population groups and not relatively small ethnic communities within a country. Other studies have dwelt on gender stereotyping, with emphasis on women, who are also a large demographic group. King'ola (2008), for example, has looked at gender stereotyping as portrayed in the language of Kenyan print and electronic media, focusing on three lifestyle magazines.

For a long time, most literature and research also focused on stereotypes in hard news, which go through the normal gate-keeping process, and are regulated by available media regulations. The field of comedy, however, offers a tricky situation. Comedies carry messages and are aired through mass media technologies. The generators of the messages, however, often don't qualify to be journalists as defined by many laws. They are also not bound by journalistic codes, such as objectivity (Feldman, 2007). Landreville et al. (2010, p. 493) argue "that many of the potential effects of entertainment media in the context of politics are not intentional." In their study, they conclude that although the intention of entertainment media is mainly to entertain, it doesn't mean that people who interact with the content can't be influenced politically by the same content.

In Kenya, studies on ethnic stereotypes and comedy have mainly focused on the prevalence of the stereotypes in the comedy. Little has been done on how stereotypes end up in the shows in the first place, and on the thought process that goes into comedians' jokes. Ndonye et al. (2015), one such study, posit that the use of ethnic stereotypes in Kenyan comedy shows is harmful and should be eliminated. They apply the stereotyping theory and the accumulation theory. The stereotyping theory says mass media reinforces the attitudes, behaviours and views held by the dominant segment of society towards the minorities. The accumulation theory posits that the impact of any

one message on a specific person can be minimal, but consistency, persistence and corroborated media messages lead to minor changes among the audience. These gradually add up over time to create significant changes in society and culture. The study by Ndonye et al. (2015) suggests an association between ethnic stereotypes in television comedies in Kenya and changes in ethnic perceptions among the audience, albeit through accumulation and calls for the censoring of the shows. There is, however, no attempt at understanding how the stereotypes find themselves in the comedy in the first place by looking at the comedians as the originators of the messages.

Abuya et al. (2019) looked at performances by MC Jessy, a comedian featured on Churchill Show, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The focus of the study was on his performances on Churchill Raw Show, a programme curated using material which didn't make the cut for the main shows during the live recording for the show. The study also used focus group discussions comprising secondary school students to gauge the reaction to gender stereotypes and the jokes in his performances. The study by Abuya et al. (2019, p. 122) found "there is a lot of gender stereotyping in MC Jessy's jokes and in most cases women are negatively stereotyped as lovers of money, emotional and gossipers." The study only touched on ethnic stereotypes as they relate to gender stereotyping. It also didn't make an attempt at getting the intention of MC Jessy, as the producer of the jokes, in incorporating the stereotypes in his humour. This study seeks to examine going a step further and looking at why and how comedians on the Churchill Show choose and frame ethnic stereotyping messages for the show.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilises the case study method and a qualitative research design. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure to arrive at the sample to be used, which the researcher believes was useful at eliciting useful data for the study, mainly details about the use of ethnic stereotypes in the Churchill Show and the reasoning behind it.

This study focuses on the Churchill Show due to the popularity of the show and the diversity of comedians and content featured on the show. It looks at episodes aired on television and uploaded on YouTube for the period between 1 July, 2017 and 30th June, 2018, which overlaps between two seasons, Season 6 and Season 7 and was during a period when the show was at its peak.

Simple random sampling was then used to arrive at 6 shows from which comedians who featured were selected for interviews through non-probability purposive sampling. The researcher used subjective judgment to arrive at the comedians he felt would be representative and would provide detailed information relevant to the study. While in total, 60 comedians appeared on the show over the period, some of them only made single appearances, and others were guest comedians from outside the country and were ruled out as not relevant to the study.

Data collection involved in-person interviews using a guided questionnaire, which ensured that the information obtained addressed the study's specific aims and minimised potential misunderstandings. The researcher could further probe responses and clarify issues as needed. Prior to the interviews, informed consent was secured from all participants. Analysis and presentation of the data were done thematically, focusing on key themes emerging from the interviews.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented under various themes, focusing on the views of Churchill Show comedians on the use of ethnic stereotypes in comedy and the various strategies they employ in framing and crafting jokes with ethnic stereotypes.

Table 1: A List of the Comedians Interviewed During the Study

Number	Comedian	Real Name	Date of interview
1	Churchill	Daniel Wambua Ndambuki	11 August, 2023
2	MC Jessy	Jessy Jasper Muthomi	29 October, 2023
3	Nasra Yusuf	Nasra Yusuf Ahmed	30 July, 2023
4	Wambilianga	Duncan Kipkemei Kirwa	5 June, 2023
5	Nicki Bigfish	Nixon Andare Asitwa	26 June, 2023
6	Professor Hamo	Herman Kago Gakobo	4 November, 2023

Comedians' Views About Delivering Jokes with Ethnic Stereotypes

All six comedians interviewed have at some point delivered jokes with ethnic stereotypes. Most were of the view that ethnic stereotypes aren't bad and that members of the audience are able to detect that they are just jokes and that they should not be taken seriously.

They believe the stereotypes are just a part of society, and their jokes are just a mirror of what is in the society, so they shouldn't be blamed or criticised for using the stereotypes on the show. Professor Hamo says, "comedy is just a portrayal of life", and it is something Kenyans cannot run away from. Churchill, the main host of the show, says:

> *You know, in Kenya, we are 42 tribes, and you ask any Kenyan, they will tell you who love [working on] tyres, they will tell you it is Kambas, who loves money, Kikuyus. Who love eating fish, who love boasting and big TVs …. so, they are mannerisms that are really us. When you try to run away from it. You will see one of your characters representing your people.*

But he quickly adds that Kenyans are moving away from that, and comedy will too eventually. He doesn't expect ethnic jokes to feature a lot in the show in future. This, he says, is mainly because of the changes happening in the population, whereby most of the young generation, who are a main part of the audience, no longer resonate with ethnic jokes. "The new generation, the children do not even know their tribes. They don't speak in their mother tongue. So, a lot is changing," he says.

MC Jessy has an interesting take on why the comedians on Churchill Show would use ethnic stereotypes. He believes the tribal jokes featured on the show actually helped to fight them by taking them from the serious to humour, making them trivial as opposed to promoting ethnic stereotypes. He believes this happens through exaggerations that take place when tribal jokes are being delivered.

> *Like, if people say Kikuyus are thieves, stereotyping that Kikuyus are thieves, comedians will do jokes about Kikuyus being thieves, exaggerate it for so long, that it will stick in people's minds that Kikuyus are thieves, until it stops becoming serious, now it just becomes a joke, and Kikuyus don't become thieves anymore.*
>
> *People stop fearing Kikuyus, people stop believing that Kikuyus are thieves.*
> *They will say there is a joke that is normally told that Kikuyus are thieves. You get? So, it goes a whole 360 [degrees].*
>
> *When we say that Luos have money and brag, it starts as an insult, then becomes funny, then goes 360, it goes 360 until it becomes like, you know, it is just a normal thing to say.*
>
> *Luos really don't have money. It is just talk. But it starts as they drive Range Rovers, buy big cars, buy big TVs, big everything, until it*

becomes a joke that actually, uh, they can't, they can't be rich, and they throw stones.

He says this was a strategy employed consciously to change people's perceptions about other ethnic communities and promote cohesion, especially after the post-election violence that rocked Kenya in 2007 and 2008. "We've done it actually strategically, knowing what we're doing, because before in the country, people used to have a lot of tribal clashes," he says. "So, we jumped in with comedy and humour to stereotype tribes to make them not to be as serious as people think they are," he adds. So, it becomes funny, and it no longer becomes something to be taken seriously and believed.

For Professor Hamo, the way Kenyan comedians feature ethnic jokes is the same way comedians in other countries around the world talk about aspects of their communities that are closest to them and that they can relate to. They should not be criticised for that. "That's comedy in the world. I was in London, and when they're performing, they have stereotypes. Because that's… you've seen a Scot, you have seen an Irishman, you have seen a Londoner," he says. "The essence is you have seen a Luhya man; your gateman is most likely a Luhya… You know these people," he adds.

Nasra Yusuf says, "one thing about Kenya, tribal jokes are very funny, extremely very funny, and stereotypical jokes are also very funny." But she says the tribal jokes are okay to use, but need extreme care when delivering because they can very easily backfire and cause backlash. Stereotypical jokes, to her, are the funniest jokes in this world; anything that someone will say about how people are normally and what they are known for is always a killer joke. "So, I wouldn't say that it is harmful, I would say that that is just appreciating who you are and laughing about it and, I don't think it's a bad thing," she says.
She, however, says they can become a liability, especially if they are overdone. There is a risk of people associating you with that particular kind of joke, which would become a problem for any comedian who is trying to grow their own brand.

When she was starting, she would often deliver jokes focusing on the stereotype about Somalis being terrorists, what she calls 'bomb jokes'. For several years, there had been several attacks on Kenyan soil carried out by members of the al-Shabaab group from Somalia. The terror attacks led to the victimisation of Kenyan-Somalis in public spaces, and especially those wearing hijabs. She says that after a while, she made a personal decision and stopped featuring the 'bomb jokes' or using the Somali accent in her jokes.

Nicki Bigfish also says the stereotypes featured in the Churchill Show were just a reflection of what goes on in Kenya, and what people resonate with. "It's like expecting Trevor Noah to say, 'You know, Kikuyus?' Trevor Noah doesn't know Kikuyus, but if he was staying in Kenya, he would say 'Kikuyus do this and this, Luos do this and this," he says. In his view, the comedians found those stereotypes already there and should not be blamed when they talk about them. "We didn't come up with those things. The comparisons. They are there," he says. "We didn't come up with those things, when you find the Luo like flashy lifestyle and stuff. We found them. We didn't create it; it is just appreciating our diversity," he adds. He does agree that some members of the audience might find some of the ethnic jokes offensive.

Messaging in Jokes Within the Churchill Show

When crafting their jokes, most of the comedians interviewed said they don't really have a message to pass within the jokes they craft. Making people laugh is normally the key consideration. But some hinted at wanting to have the society reflect on itself and make relevant changes.

Churchill says he believes that the audience is able to understand that what is presented to them, especially the ethnic stereotypes, is comedy and should not be taken seriously. "That's why before the, the show, you need to prepare the audience that whatever is going to be said here it should never be taken out of context. Take it as a joke. You shouldn't judge a community because a comedian says so. That's why they are jokes," he says. He adds that even for those who might not get to understand that they are just jokes, with time, they will get to learn and know that people aren't as portrayed on the show. "They would…after a while, they will get to [understand that] … people are different. So you can't blanket an entire tribe, saying they are proud. There are those

who are very different. So, with time, they are able to judge for themselves," he says.

Professor Hamo views his performances as just 'a hangout' where nothing is serious, although he will, once in a while, have a message to pass across. He says, "In my comedy, you will find lessons, you will find moments where we are just hanging out, we don't want to learn anything, we are just hanging out. And in that, in the fifteen minutes we will be together, we'll enjoy everything about life." He believes comedy also has the power to make people open up and ease tension.

> *Comedy is the release valve for society. It gives us the opportunity, because when I speak about my wife. My imaginary wife and her habits. There is someone, it is a true story to someone, and they're seated there with his wife, and they're watching, and for the first time it breaks that ice, and they laugh, they talk about it, say badilisha hiyo kitu, si unaona hizi ni tabia zenu [you need to change that, you see your behaviours]? So, it… I help a lot of families come together.*

On ethnic communities, he says, talking about some of the negative issues makes the community reflect on itself and change for the better. "I think it would be wrong to think that it is wrong to talk about the Kikuyus and the way they live. It is exactly what … I'm just a reflection of society. If Kikuyus were not doing the things they're doing, I wouldn't talk about that," he says.

MC Jessy believes ethnic stereotypes in comedy have the potential to change people's perception of other ethnic communities.

> *You say something about a certain tribe, and people tend to think it's true.*
> *We've seen a lot of people say eh, Mimi siwezi olewa na mjaluo [I can't be married to a Luo man].*
> *Kwa nini [Why]?*
> *Hao nasikianga wanapenda kurusha mawe, na wako na maringo [I hear they like throwing stones and they are proud].*
> *Where do you think they heard that from?*
> *From the jokes. Yeah, it is stereotyping, and it can actually change someone's perception.*

Nicki Bigfish, however, is of the view that the jokes shouldn't affect someone's perception of other communities. "We are just joking, nobody means nothing," he says. Wambilianga also believes ethnic stereotypes in jokes shouldn't have any impact on ethnic perceptions.

How Comedians Choose and Frame Ethnic Stereotyping Messages for Churchill Show

This study also sought to investigate how comedians choose and frame ethnic stereotyping messages in comedy shows in Kenya, and any considerations they make when doing that. Through interviews with the comedians, various factors which guide comedians when choosing jokes with ethnic stereotypes for delivery on the Churchill show emerged, a key one being the composition of the audience.

Audience

The comedian gauges the composition of the audience and thus decides what jokes they would relate to and understand, and what would be appropriate for the audience and what wouldn't. "You change according to the audience. There are many times you go to an audience, you find it's all young people, or one gender, so you have to change and go to their level," MC Jessy says. The changes include the ethnic jokes being told and the accents used. The comedian adapts to what is relatable to the audience. "If you go to Kisumu, you can't go telling them jokes about the Meru. They might not be funny, so you tell them about themselves. People laugh at themselves. You don't laugh at the other person's pain; you laugh at your own pain," he says.

The comedian also prepares several jokes for a performance, some being back-ups, and actively monitors feedback to decide on the appropriateness of jokes. He will prepare, for example, four jokes, knowing at least two of them will work. When performing a particular joke, he will be gauging the audience's reaction and energy, and through that, he can tell whether his jokes are working and whether he needs to switch to another joke. When there are other comedians performing before him, he will use the reaction to their jokes to predict what kind of jokes

will be appropriate for him to deliver. "If there were others before you go on stage, that will be the easiest because you'll have known, you'll have gauged the audience and know, ah, these ones want this. So, you switch to them," he says.

The same is buttressed by Wambilianga, who says he used to watch performances by other comedians who delivered nearly similar jokes to his and check what the reaction was. This guided him on what to avoid and what to use. In many instances, he says, the live recording was in Nairobi, where the audience is a bit cosmopolitan, and it was easy to come up with jokes that would appeal to the audience. "If it is in Mombasa, I would watch old Churchill Shows recorded in Mombasa, how comedians performed there, if in Kisumu, the same case, watch old shows and how the comedians performed," he says. In addition to the live feedback, Wambilianga also developed a habit of watching previous jokes he delivered and checking the audience's reaction to them to help him make a choice on what would be appropriate.

MC Jessy says some locations were more favourable than others as they affected the composition and diversity of the audience. For performances at Carnivore, which is in Nairobi and cosmopolitan, the audience was diverse, so there was an expectation that most of the tribes were represented.

But even for the tribal jokes, there was a restriction on what could be featured. MC Jessy says they mostly went for what he calls 'soft stereotypes'. These are jokes that aren't too harsh and are not too controversial. "There are things you can't say about a particular tribe, you know, you can't go too ham," he says. For example, he says, for a tribe like the Luo, you can comfortably joke about how they love driving big cars because it will make them feel good. Or joke about how they love eating fish, eating fish with u*gali*, talking loudly and proudly, etc. But who can't say you can joke about Luos with true statistics? For example, by joking about the highest HIV infection rates in Kenya being in Nyanza. "You can't go joking with that. It's too, it's too sensitive. So, you keep off such," he says. The fact about HIV infections is there, but it would be insensitive and equal to portraying and showing the tribe as immoral or promiscuous. MC Jessy says there is a possibility of a tribal joke going wrong. He says there is a line that is to be drawn.

Nicki Bigfish, from the comedy group Rib Krakaz, says after studying the show for a while, he discovered they had to represent ethnic groups from various regions, because it was a national show. "We had to get people from Nyanza to the show, we get people from the Coast to the show, when the show is coming, to get people from Nairobi, and elsewhere," he says. It is then that they developed the style of contrasting communities so that they could "accommodate everybody in Kenya" in their performance. In terms of ethnic composition of the audience for Nairobi, they know there will be a sizable number of Kikuyus and people from western Kenya, Luos and Luhyas, which is why they would often do comparisons involving those tribes.

Nasra Yusuf will also be focusing on the audience and what they can relate to. This includes the location, too. "You might be in Mombasa, and your jokes can only be understood by people who live in Nairobi, so you have to be very sharp to understand your audience first of all," she says. Churchill says there is also a difference between the live audience, when the show is being recorded, and the TV audience, and there are different considerations for each. "Because on TV you now have to be extra careful, because there are rules that guide [on content]," he says. During the live recording, at times, and especially when it's recorded in a club, he says, you may want to allow the comedians to do those not family-friendly committee jokes. "These guys are in that space [the club], and there's a certain kind of humour that they are expecting. So, you give them that, and of course, now there is the one you package for television, which is conserved [conservative]," he says.

Sensitivity and Timing

Nasra Yusuf also looks at the sensitivity of what is being discussed in the joke. She says, for example, when she was starting, she would deliver jokes connected to terror attacks that were being carried out by members of the al-Shabaab group from Somalia. The terror attack caused the stigmatisation of Somalis in Kenya. "I did it [the jokes] for a certain time because I know how sensitive it is, yes, it's funny and all, but it's still not something you would want to be

fully associated with," she says. Coming from the Somali community herself, she was careful not to do something that would hurt her community. "Being the first Somali comedian on such a big platform, I couldn't just shy away from that topic so I had to do something in regards to that," she says.

Nasra also says a comedian needs to look at what is happening and the timing of the jokes. She says, for example, jokes comparing or pitting a community against another when it is election time and the two groups are on opposing sides wouldn't be appropriate. It could fuel hate and enmity between the two groups. She also says, for example, she can't make a joke about terror attacks just after a terror attack has happened, and people are still mourning the dead. "You would be crazy," she says. Churchill also mentions topics that are sensitive and controversial, which are to be avoided, for example, circumcision and initiation rites into adulthood. He would also not talk about physical traits and body appearances, such as skin complexions.

'Hitting and Soothing'

A strategy Nasra Yusuf employs for jokes that have stereotypes that are negative or too hard on a particular community is to pamper it with something positive, more like hitting and then pampering or soothing. "It was a strategy that I came up with, and I was also directed by the creative directors, they told me don't go too hard on them, *wewe choma ukisafisha* [you hit and then clean]," she says. This is something that is also seen with other comedians. After delivering a joke that is negative or could offend a specific group, they would end with 'let's clap for', 'but we love our [community] brothers and sisters', as a token of appreciation. This is aimed at making the community stereotyped feel loved and appreciated, and placate whatever anger they might have developed through being portrayed negatively. In some cases, the comedian will start with the appreciation, introducing something as the reason why he loves a particular community, then continue and deliver the negative stereotype.

Character Association and Personalisation of Jokes

For Wambilianga, one way he tries to reduce the impact of his stereotyping on the Luhya community is by making sure he identifies as one of them and talking about the character as himself. "I usually don't say Luhyas have done or do, I talk as Wambilianga so they see me, I am one of them. I own the joke," he says. He doesn't say that Luhyas love eating, but instead he will portray his character as the one who loves food. For example, he will pretend to be on a call and say: "It's Wambilianga, I'm done with supper now, is 12 *sambusas* [samosa, a savoury pastry, often stuffed with meat] something to make someone complain. Have I eaten really?"

Even for the accent, he says it wouldn't be a wonder to find there are some Luhya who have identified Wambilianga's accent, but they don't find it in themselves, while they could be having it without knowing.

Churchill is also for the personalisation of jokes as opposed to generalisation or appearing to refer to a whole community. He says:

> *When you're doing that humour or that joke, you need to start with yourself, personalise, and don't generalise. 'I had a friend. I had a friend called Ouma, who had such and such a character. It is not like, you know, ubaya wa Wajaluo [the bad thing with the Luo], no, no. So, you personalise, you don't generalise.*

Discussion

The researcher was working with Stuart Hall's Encoding and Decoding Model (Hall, 1999). The model says media content producers, who in this case are the encoders, usually have particular messages they want to pass on. These messages will, in most cases, be in tandem with the dominant social values at any given time. They will be perpetuating the status quo. The findings of this study suggest a conscious effort by the comedians, in their crafting of the jokes, to perpetuate and promote the existing status quo in society when it comes to ethnic stereotypes.

There was a general argument that the comedians, in their use of ethnic stereotypes in jokes, aren't coming up with or innovating the jokes themselves. They are just mirroring what is in society. Although there were suggestions of moving with the wave of promoting ethnic harmony and co-existence among the various ethnic communities, that conversation came about as just another way of justifying the use of ethnic

stereotypes as they are believed to exist within society.

The promotion of the status quo was well encapsulated by the comedian Nicki Bigfish, who said, "We didn't come up with those things. The comparisons. They are there. We didn't come up with those things [the stereotypes]." According to him, when they are dwelling on the comparisons about different ethnic communities, the comedians are "just appreciating our diversity". According to the model, the audience is expected to interpret the messages in various ways, mostly guided by their identities and positions within society (Woodstock, 2016, p. 399; Levine, 2001).
They are the ones who will define the meaning of the messages, whereby some will conform to the dominant cultural ideology while others will resist. Those who resist, in some cases, will accept some and reject some values, while others will resist in totality.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The findings of this study indicate that comedians featured on Churchill Show mainly view jokes with ethnic stereotypes which they perform on the show as just a reflection of society. They don't believe the comedy show plays any role in perpetuating and entrenching ethnic stereotypes in the Kenyan society. But they do take care not to offend the audience as they deliver the ethnic stereotypes using various strategies, and they frame and choose their jokes depending on the composition of the audience. They also consider the timing and sensitivity of what they are going to talk about in the joke.

Among the strategies they employ to be effective in delivering jokes with ethnic stereotypes and avoid backlash is personalising the jokes. This involves using themselves or specific characters to convey the messages as opposed to directly referring to communities when they are delivering the jokes. Some of the comedians will also include a word of appreciation for the referenced community whenever they are delivering a joke with a stereotype which is negative.

While most of the comedians said they support delivering jokes with ethnic stereotypes, there is a general consensus that positive ethnic stereotypes work best in comedy because they would help a comedian avoid antagonising part of the audience or drawing backlash.

Recommendations: This study recommends the development of training courses or programmes for artists and other comedians on ethical issues in comedy and what could cause harm or offence. Some comedians mentioned ongoing work with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to have a curriculum for training on comedy approved. It would be good to have this ready and approved, and it could be incorporated into schools or colleges offering performing arts as a course.

Secondly, to improve the quality of comedic content being aired on television in Kenya, it would be to facilitate the formation of a self-regulatory body for artists to offer guidance on what is acceptable and what is not. This could rein in the use of ethnic stereotypes, which could cause harm or offence, while not violating any laws.

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