Social Media as Channel of Satirical Presentations of Health Issues: Analysis of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* on Covid-19

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Adama Adamu[1]

Abstract
The social media have provided an avenue for near excessive freedom of expression. This is especially true in most developing countries such as Nigeria, where there are no much technology-related measures to curtail excessive freedom. The social media freedom gives rise to excessive satire on social media. This is a source of concern to people especially that it may pose concerns about vital issues such as those of health. The study analysed the satirical presentations of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* which relate to Covid-19. The Agenda Setting theory of the press was used as the framework within which the study is anchored. This is with a view to determining the themes, the interpretation and the type of agenda set in the themes identified relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Six episodes were found relevant to the Covid-19 pandemic. As such, they were purposively selected and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The study found three basic themes as prominent in the presentations; they are economic, political and social themes. The interpretations of the messages are found to be stereotypically inclined to suit the understanding of the presenters (who are laymen in terms of knowledge of health issues, and specifically, the Covid-19 issue) rather than from the health knowledge-related point of view. The major agenda found to be prominent is that of undermining the conventional laid down protocols of curtailing the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, notably, the lockdown, which according to the presenters, compounds the already existing economic hardship being experienced by the masses. The study, therefore, recommended that satirical presenters should endeavour to have adequate knowledge of sensitive issues such as the Covid-19 issue in order to disseminate right information to their audiences so as to help in curtailing the spread of diseases.

Keywords: Traditional media, social media, freedom of expression, satire, *makarantar mallam mai dalla dalla*

Introduction[1]

Historically, freedom of expression gained recognition with the emergence of the mass media. Developments such as the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg and the subsequent emergence of broadcast technologies - notably radio and television, paved way for mass dissemination of information. This was further strengthened by the advent of computers and the internet which ushered in the social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, among others. Specifically, social media platforms provided the means through which messages and information are conveyed in unprecedented ways. This made the social media to pave way for more freedom of expression in societies across the globe. In most cases, this freedom poses concerns in terms of either helping or hindering the spread of diseases such as the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in various societies.

Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla, which literarily means 'the school of the scholar who

[1] Department Of Mass Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ahmadu Bello, University, Zaria, Nigeria
Corresponding Author's Email: adamuadama@gmail.com

explains in detail', is a Hausa-cum-Arabic language (the Arabic language being in an adulterated Hausa language form) satirical political presentation done on social media platforms (notably, YouTube and Facebook). The presentations employ the style of the traditional *Wa'azin Turmi* (village square preaching) presentation, which is done by two mallams (Islamic scholars), with one mallam reading the 'Arabic' text and the other offering the necessary meaning and interpretation of the text read to the audience.

The presentations of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* focus on burning societal issues which are deemed important enough to be given attention by the presenters. The presentations are generally politically inclined; as such all the topics addressed are linked to politics. One of the topics which featured prominently in the presentations is that relating to the novel Coronavirus disease (Covid-19).

The worldwide explosion of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the exposure of the entire population to a disease without a specific pharmacological treatment and with exponential levels of infection, has underlined the value of digital media (among which is the social media) as the preferred communication channel about health (Machado, De Souza, Oliveira, Junior & Boran, 2020). There is no doubt that "users of social media in Nigeria enjoy a very high degree of latitude in expression of views, ideas and opinions on broad perspectives" (Okolie, 2019, p.166). This is an issue of concern especially as it relates to the satirical presentations of health issues as serious as the Covid-19 pandemic, which are done on social media. In view of this therefore, the current study analyses the social media presentations of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* with a view to understanding the messages disseminated regarding the covid-19 pandemic.

Research Questions

1. What are the themes of the presentations of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* regarding the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What type of interpretation can we give to the themes identified?
3. What kind of agenda do the presentations set regarding the Covid-19 Pandemic?

Health communication, social media and the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic

Communication plays an essential role in crisis situations, especially in natural disasters and catastrophes, accidents, terrorists' attacks, epidemics and pandemics. During crisis, it has mainly a warning function and helps to minimise negative health impacts on the public, loss of lives and social and economic divergences which may occur as a result of any risk situation. It is also a very important tool for prevention of panic which might cause more damages than the crisis itself (Simko, 1997 cited in Krajcovic, Zibolenova, Halasova & Hudeckova, 2015).

Risk communication often contains uncertainty information associated with technologies, behaviours, medical procedures, etc. To be effective, such messages need to incorporate ideas, images and logic that will promote comprehension among the lay public (Garrick & Gekler, 1991). Due to the knowledge gap, experts and lay people tend to perceive risks in different ways and tend to use different terms to discuss them. Communicating uncertainty effectively requires assessing the different levels of perception among different audiences, and utilising an evidence-based approach to convey uncertainty (Zhang, Li & Chen, 2020).

Effective communication contributes to public awareness of health risks and other solutions, provides motivation and skills needed for prevention of those risks, as well as increase demands of the general public for suitable healthcare services (Maibach & Parrot, 1995, Northouse & Northouse, 1998). Effective dissemination of information to and among separate groups requires specialised communication strategies (Covello, McCallum & Pavlova, 1987). For uneducated persons, using vivid or graphic metaphors for exemplification can illustrate the epidemiological characteristics in a direct, simple and visual way, which can match people's various capacities to understand the transmission and treatment of the epidemic (Zhan, Li & Chen, 2020).

The main aim of public health communication before and during pandemics is to provide the public with fast, exact and relevant information which will help them to make decisions and take measures for protection of their health. The key

element for effective communication with the public during pandemics is to consider specificities and needs of particular target groups (age, sex, linguistic competence, education, health status, etc) and ensure effective distribution of information materials by means of all available channels and media of communication (Krajcovic *et al*, 2015). This is inclusive of the social media.

Social media, according to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) cited in Iorliam (2020 p.5), is defined as "a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content". Social media revolution has changed the way communication, specifically news creation and consumption; take place (Appel, Grewal, Hadi & Stephen, 2020).

According to O'Brien, Moore and Nicholas (2020), the social media facilitate dissemination and sharing of information, ideas, pictures, videos and share knowledge during the covid-19 era. Also, the social media may be used to engage the public in discourses, facilitate peer-to-peer communication, create situational awareness, monitor public reactions and concerns during an emergency, monitor and respond to rumours as well as facilitate other local-level responses.

The nature of social interactions in the 21st century, transformed by the change into a digital, connected, and globalised context, and concentrated in digital media, has become a phenomenon which has transformed the organisation and representation of knowledge (Garcia-Jimenez, 2016 cited in Perez-Escoda, Jimenez-Narros, Perlado-Lamo-de-Espinosa & Pedredo-Esteban, 2020). This transformation has resulted in a media metamorphosis, triggering a change not only in the communication information ecosystem, but also in the roles of the consumers and producers of news, information and knowledge (Scolari, 2019, Wolton, 2011 cited in Perez-Escoda *et al*, 2020).

Thus, according to Mayo-Cubero, (2020), aside from the traditional media, as the drivers of the social communication thread in situations of crisis, to which they greatly contribute by providing a truthful, informative story, other social agents have appeared. These new agents are supported by social networks, and are massively and efficiently contributing to the re-direction of the management of communication in a worldwide pandemic, along with the social instability it has brought. An increased use of social networks is one of the most far-reaching consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On 31st December, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) was notified of an outbreak of respiratory illness in Wuhan, China. On 7th January, 2020, the causative agent was identified a novel coronavirus, SARS CoV-2. As a result of a rapid escalation and spread of the virus to other countries, the Director-General of WHO, on 30th January, 2020, declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (IHR,2005); and, on 11th March, 2020, the 2019 coronavirus disease (Covid-19) received the status of a pandemic. In Nigeria however, the Federal Ministry of Health confirmed the first coronavirus disease (Covid-19) case in Lagos State on 27th February, 2020 (NPHCDA, 2020).

The emergence and global spread of the 2019 coronavirus disease (Covid-19) poses a significant threat to public health globally, especially for health systems in low and middle income countries (NPHCDA, 2020). According to Iorliam (2020), the coronavirus disease is a pandemic of the digital age. Some of its effects include alarming crises, rising death toll, huge unemployment, unimaginable hungers, lockdown of education system (and the economy at large) as well as creating constant fear, thereby making the entire world to panic.

Social media and freedom of expression

The advent of the social media has transformed the way in which people connect with each other and the manner through which information is shared and disseminated. The social media have become a crucial part of our day-to-day interactions with one another. Social media refer to web or mobile based platform that enables an individual or government establishments to communicate interactively (NITDA, 2019).

Modern trends in communication, especially communication done through the social media, have eroded barriers that existed in information sharing and dissemination. In essence, the advent of the internet has altered the traditional means of communication such as through the print media,

radio and television. The social media has provided the means for users to disseminate information at their comfort zones, thereby paving way for more freedom of expression. According to Okolie (2019) "traditionally, the province of the media was confined to print and electronic media but due to evolving nature of communication and social formation, social media have evolved to a prominent position in the telecommunication industry" (p.162).

The social media have provided a platform for various interactions in the public sphere. They provide higher levels of participation for younger people and even marginalised groups, who have not been very active and vocal, with a voice. According to Counterpart International, (2014) cited in Jimada, (2019), the social media are dynamic online media that have changed the way we work. They are similar to traditional media in the sense that they offer opportunities to collect and share news, communicate with audiences and advocate for change. However, unlike the traditional media, the social media allow this to happen on the web in real-time, through highly interactive local or regional social networks.

The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees the right to freedom of expression and that of the press. Section 39 sub-section (1) states that every person should be entitled to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference (FRN, 1999 cited in Jimada, 2019). Despite this freedom, however, it is observed that in some instances, people, and specifically press people, do not enjoy this constitutionally declared freedom of expression.

On the other hand, however, social media activists do enjoy this freedom; as such explore it to the fullest. Assenting to this, Jimada (2019, p.17) posited that "in African countries, journalists who dare to report on corruption and injustice are targeted with killings and beatings while traditional news outlets are censored; bloggers and social media activists have become the new independent media by providing the much-needed space in the demand for accountability and open governance". This means that the Internet, with its attendant social media platforms, provides the freedom and the means to convey messages and information that the traditional media outlets dare not.

There is growing concern with rulers and governments, especially in Africa where corruption and other scandals have fuelled discontent with the conduct of governance (Jimada, 2019). On the other hand, the social media have given people the ability to not only receive information, but also moderate it, and most of these people are not licensed journalists or media persons, who are guided by ethical requirements. This means that "the liberty to express oneself has breached the requirements of fairness, reasonability and proportionality" (Okolie, 2019, p.165). This makes the social media to have unrestricted freedom of expression as against the traditional media.

Satire and the social media

Satire is a form of cultural criticism. It represents a form of public discourse that unties critical judgement of some sociopolitical folly, absurdity or contradiction. Through devices like exaggeration, irony and imitation, a satirical text (or presentation) aspires to cut through spin, deception, and misrepresentation in order to spotlight a given state of affairs as they are or could be (Peifer & Lee, 2019).

Satire shows often contain a high proportion of politically substantive content compared to traditional news broadcasts. Satire presents its contents in styles that potentially better match the capacities, experiences, and interests of non-elite citizens (Baym, 2010). Satire serves to expose societal problems with the hope of improvement (Peifer & Lee, 2019). Political satires uses humour to criticise, ridicule, and expose the shortcomings of politicians, government policy or regimes. The explanations offered by political satire differ greatly from regular news in ways that could improve better comprehension. Rather than assuming the audience already knows the background of complicated topics and rapidly present new facts, satire presents such topics in larger segments while explaining the background information in detail using common language (Baym, 2005). Many people are more comfortable with such styles of communication than with the fact-based, objective reporting offered in traditional news. Political satirists use counter-narratives to portray societal issues in different

light than the news media would do, thereby surprising their audiences (including politicians) with convincing insights that could have a direct influence on public and policy agenda (Hill & Holbert, 2017 cited in Baikes, 2018).

Traditionally, satire was presented in a theatrical or literary form. However the advent of radio and television prompted experimentations in delivery, aesthetic and form. Similarly, new technologies have allowed for a shift in the presentation of satire (LeBouef, 2007 cited in Jones, 2017). Political criticism and satire expanded online in the web 2.0 era, and satire on the Internet has now taken various forms, which has given rise to satirical blogs, YouTube channels and satirical websites (Plevriti, 2013). This has, therefore, made social media activists to subvert censorship hitherto experienced by the traditional media outlets. The social media, thus, have become a free medium for communicating other genres of communication such as satire.

Theoretical Framework: Agenda Setting Theory

This study adopts the agenda setting theory as its theoretical framework. Also known as the Agenda Setting Function of the Media, the agenda setting theory suggests that the media set the public agenda by telling people what to think about, although not exactly what to think. The theory states that while choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. The audience learn not only about a given issue but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position (McCombs, 2003).

In its most basic sense therefore, agenda setting is the location of public awareness and concern of salient issues by the news media. The two most basic assumptions of agenda setting are (1) the press and the media do not reflect reality; they filter and shape it; (2) media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues. The time frame for this is one of the most critical aspects of the agenda setting role in mass communications. Agenda setting occurs through a cognitive process known as 'accessibility', which implies that the more frequently and prominently the news media covers an issue, the more that issue becomes accessible in the audiences' memory (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

With the emergence of the Internet, agenda setting function of the media has become more advanced. For instance, media users are able to acquire information through various media channels according to their differences and preferences (Kim, Kim &d Zhou, 2017). New media (social media inclusive) have grown in popularity and some of their components are becoming part of the mainstream.

The internet and social media allow the public to engage in discourses with other media sources. This means that people can push their ideas back at the media, the public or even at policy makers, thereby also setting a new pace for the agenda setting process. As a result of this therefore, this study attempted to examine the prominent themes of the presentations as well as understand the interpretation and the agenda set by the presentations of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* regarding the Covid-19 pandemic

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative content analysis as its research method, specifically, the interpretive content analysis. Osgood (1959) cited in Drisko and Maschi (2016 p.16) defines interpretive content analysis as "a procedure by which one makes inferences about sources and receivers (of communication) from evidence in messages they exchange". In this way therefore, both manifest and latent content may be considered and analysed. Interpretive content analysis is an approach that uses researcher-generated summaries and interpretations rather than word counts or other quantitative analytical methods. Interpretive content analysts code both manifest and latent or contextual communication content, typically using inductively generated code lists (Drisko & Maschi, 2016).

In the context of this study, the emergent design is adopted. Emergent design refers to the ability to adapt to new ideas, concepts, or findings that may arise in conducting qualitative research (Pailthorpe, 2017). This means that the research findings will be generated through what the data reveals as the research proceeds. This is because it is totally inappropriate to set out a definite account of a research schedule and the data to be collected at the

outset, and the flexibility within the design is seen as strength as well as an essential part of the methodological approach (Taber, 2013).

In the emergent design adopted therefore, the unit of analysis consisted of analysing the entire content of each of the selected episodes. Consequently, the following content categories were outlined from the presentations, which served as themes for the data. They are:

i. Economic Theme: This refers to anything that relates to the financial or any material aspect of the economy in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.
ii. Political Theme: This refers to anything that relates to the ruling elites and the policies they stand for, which relates to the Covid-19 pandemic.
iii. Social Theme: This refers to anything that relates to the cultural, religious or even semantic interpretations relating to any aspect of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The population for the study consisted of episodes of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* presentations. From the start of the presentations till the time of writing this article (December, 2020), 54 episodes have been recorded. However, six (6) episodes out of the 54 presentations have been found to be strictly devoted to the Covid-19 pandemic. This study therefore, purposively selected and analysed the six (6) episodes, thereby making the sample size stand at six (6). The sampled presentations are episodes 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Results

The Presentations of *Makarantar Mallam Mai Dalla Dalla* on Covid-19

Episode Ten (10)

Duration: Ten (10) Minutes Thirty (30) seconds

Topic: The Relationship of Coronavirus with the Masses

The scholar (mallam) starts by saying that corona is real and, equally, hunger is real. In between corona and hunger is where the major issues are found. However, even before the advent of the coronavirus (Covid-19), the masses have not been finding life easy. The scholar goes ahead to state that what is annoying the masses more is the failure of the ruling party (All Progressives Congress) to ease their affairs. He reflects that before the coming of APC into power, there is the belief that, rice and other essential commodities such as kerosene, would be in abundance contrary to what is obtainable presently.

It is in the midst of this hardship that the coronavirus unexpectedly arrives, thereby increasing the hardship experienced by the common man. According to mallam, coronavirus brings about the emergence of two kinds of deaths; (1) the death that results from hardship as a result of hunger (which he calls *Mautatu kwandawiyyatun* literarily, meaning 'basket' dealth) and (2) the death that results from contracting the coronavirus (*Mautatau haqiqiyyatun* meaning, 'true or natural' death)

The scholar explains that the 'basket death', which is more critical, results from hunger experienced by the common man due to the total lockdown imposed. The mallam further explained that there is no harm in locking down the economy if only those in authority provide the adequate palliatives (food and other incentives) needed by the common man. Mallam goes further to explain that if he were to be in a position of authority, he would ensure that all monies are channeled to only paying salaries and feeding the poor. According to him, only the health sector and provision of food to the common man is to be prioritised.

The scholar ends the topic by lamenting about the inadequacy of the palliative given to people (masses), emphasising that if this is not greatly improved, hunger might kill more people than the coronavirus disease.

Episode Eleven (11)

Duration: Fourteen (14) Minutes 24 Seconds

Topic: The Relationship of Coronavirus with the Masses (Cont'd)

The scholar starts with expressing sympathy to the masses that have been in complete lockdown without adequate alternative in terms of palliative from the government.

The discussion starts with a question: what is the news regarding the palliative that has been promised the masses by the government? Mallam goes further to state that there are serious problems among the masses (which are in the majority). According to him, these problems need immediate attention from the authorities concerned. The

mallam emphasises that his school acts as a representative of the masses as well as of the authorities – watchdog.

The Mallam states that news reaching the school is that government is planning to provide some (little) palliative to the masses. He explains that what is actually needed is not some palliative but real (big time) palliatives that could be felt well by the common man. He also explains that the masses have obeyed the lockdown; it is, therefore, left for the government to provide adequately for its citizens, especially the common man. He calls on the authorities concerned to fear God and be upright in their dealings with those they are ruling.

Episode Twelve (12)
Duration = Fifteen (15)) Minutes Six (6) Seconds
Topic: Deaths as a Result of Coronavirus

The concern of this episode is about life and death regarding the issue of corona. Mallam gives background information on the two types of deaths earlier identified in the previous episode, namely: 'basket' death and 'corona' death.

The emphasis of today's episode is on the corona death, which mallam further categorises into two, namely: (1) Big death and (2) small death. As such, the emphasis that death is in classes.

According to Mallam, the 'small' death is that which affects the masses. The 'big' death, on the other hand, is the death that affects the elites. He goes further to explain that coronavirus disease, as we all know, targets and kills the elites more than the masses. Mallam cites the example of coronavirus killing elites around the globe. Names of elites such as Mohammad Mirmohammadi (a key figure in Iranian government), Giorgio Valoti (the Mayor of Cene, a municipality in Italy; even though a wrong name was mentioned as well as wrongly described by mallam, as a legislator in Italy), and Abba Kyari of Nigeria (the then Chief of Staff to President Muhammadu Buhari) were given by mallam. According to him, these are all big deaths as a result of the coronavirus disease.

Mallam further explains the status of Abba Kyari within the context of Nigerian leadership, as one of the few close allies of the president who directs the affairs of the current administration. Despite the power and closeness to the president however, dying as a result of coronavirus disease reduces his status to nothing. This could be seen in the manner his burial rites were conducted. According to mallam, had it been Abba Kyari's death was not as a result of the coronavirus disease, his burial would have been very well attended by key figures in government. In fact, some days of mourning would, probably, have been officially declared.

Mallam calls on his students to pay attention to the fact that the president, despite his close relationship with Abba Kyari, did not attend any aspect of the burial rites. He further points out that his 'school' reliably gathered that everything that was used during the burial rites of Abba Kyari was burnt. Further to this, all the people that attended the burial rites were denied entry into the presidential villa and were asked to self-isolate themselves for a period of two weeks.

On a final note, mallam draws the attention of elites and those in authority to the power of death, and advises them to take heed and do what is expected of them because, according to him, death is surely certain. As such; they should be cautious and do the right thing.

Episode Thirteen (13)
Duration: Eleven (11) Minutes 56 Seconds
Topic: Explanations on Coronavirus

Mallam starts by explaining the meaning of 'raw materials' within the context of his 'school'. According to him, this is because there are a lot of questions being asked about its meaning. He explains that within the context of his 'school', 'raw materials' simply means the masses or the common man.

According to mallam, the focus of today's discussion is on examining the relationship between doctors and patients. The first question raised is; who is a doctor? According to mallam, within the context of his school, a doctor refers to that person that looks after the affairs of a patient with expertise and empathy until either the patient gets well or dies 'naturally' and 'peacefully'.

The next question asked is about a doctor's attitude to patients in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. In answering this question, mallam starts by swearing (which, according to him, he seldom does) that in view of his 'school', doctors are not living up to expectations. They shy away from treating patients – whether patients have the

coronavirus disease or not. In fact, mallam, at this juncture, advises coronavirus to 'sue' doctors in a court of law after the pandemic because of what he refers to as stigmatisation and wrong attribution with every sickness.

Mallam goes further to ask: why are doctors scared of coronavirus? Asking further that: are they not the ones that say the coronavirus disease does not necessary kill in most cases? Don't they have personal protective equipment (PPE) to work with? Or are those in authority negligent of their welfare and plight? Why are they not contributing in the research to tackle the pandemic? Mallam goes further to enquire about the level of research conducted by asking leaders, researchers, academics, scientists and all those concerned, challenging them to achieve some kind of breakthrough in the area of the coronavirus disease.

On a final note, mallam commends the leaders of Madagascar for a job well done in the efforts he made in getting allegedly local remedy as the cure of the coronavirus disease. Mallam stirs the attention of his students towards the next topic of discourse, which he said will focus on 'the politics of corona'**.**

Episode Fourteen (14)
Duration = Thirteen (13) Minutes, 52 Seconds
Topic: The Politics of Coronavirus Disease

The topic of this episode is on the relationship between corona and the masses. That is, the intricacies of politics in relation to the coronavirus disease. According to mallam, coronavirus disease is a pandemic but it has generated a lot of controversies. One of the controversies is the issue of the origin of coronavirus; that is, whether it is natural or man-made. Mallam explains that a majority of people are of the view that the virus was created by man and this is as a result of politics of the world super powers. However, it is unfortunate that the disease has now become a pandemic, affecting even the weakest of nations, and this has made developing countries such as Nigeria, Chad, Niger and others to continue to struggle for survival.

Mallam goes further to observe that within the context of Nigeria, the politics of the coronavirus disease is further divided into two; (1) the true politics of corona and (2) the politics of money-related corona. According to him, in the 'true politics of corona', the ruling party (APC) is calling on people not to link corona with politics. He, however, observes that the ruling party has forgotten that whatever happens in a democracy, whether good or bad, must be attributed to politics. Mallam further observes that the same was also applicable during the last political dispensation when PDP was the ruling party and was always blamed for the activities of hoodlums.

He concludes that his 'school' is of the view that the ruling party should listen to the masses and the opposition with a view to making improvements. They should try and curtail the spread of the coronavirus. Mallam observes that the next episode would pay attention to the issue of politics of money related corona.

Episode Fifteen (15)
Duration = Twelve (12) Minutes 29 Seconds
Topic: The Politics of Coronavirus Disease (Cont'd)

Today's topic, according to mallam, is a continuation of the previous one, and pays attention to the intricacies of money regarding the issue of 'Nigerian corona'.

According to Mallam, statistics indicates that at least there were 200 million Nigerians and there is an Agency that is vested with the responsibility of providing palliatives. It is also said that this agency is headed by one big elephant (woman) and as gathered from the grapevine, this elephant (woman) is likely 'untouchable' and therefore, cannot be interrogated. This, according to him, clearly indicates the politics of money-related corona issue at the level of the central government.

Information reaching the 'school' also indicates that there is another agency in Nigeria which is responsible for disseminating corona-related information. It is also gathered that this agency had spent at least one billion naira for giving out messages regarding corona hygiene. This agency, however, has debunked the information as untrue. From the understanding of this 'school', this issue cannot be separated from the intricacies of the corona money-related politics. In the midst of this argument, mallam deviates to ask a question about who had seen the president in public, in any gathering or even at the airport, ever since the declaration of the pandemic?

Part of the intricacies of the corona relating to money is the arrest of a local government chairman (Kumbutso Local Government) in Kano State over the allegation of diverting corona palliatives. This, according to mallam, is an example of money-related issue of the corona at the lower level of government in Nigeria.

Another issue mallam raises in this episode is on a question relating to the fifteen billion naira that was to be given from the top (federal government) to the bottom (Kano State) just like the ten billion naira that was given to Lagos State? According to mallam, information reaching the 'school' was that there was fear that the fifteen billion naira might be diverted. Mallam further raises a question thus: why is the leader (governor) of Lagos trusted? And that of Kano not trusted? According to him, this is the intricacies of the politics. There is trust for someone somewhere and there is mistrust for someone elsewhere!

Mallam goes further to implore students of his 'school' to know that he had earlier on had a dream, and in the dream, there was fear and there was victory. This should be interpreted accordingly. Mallam states that this was the end of readings from the book of *mallam mai dalla dalla* regarding the coronavirus issue. Subsequent episodes of the programme may entertain viewers opinions regarding the issue if need be.

Discussion of Findings

In all the six presentations, we can clearly identify three basic themes. These themes are the economic, political and social themes.

Episode ten clearly focuses on the dwindling state of the Nigerian economy even before the emergence of Covid-19. However, the emphasis is on the Covid-19 aggravating the state of poverty among the masses, thereby increasing the hardship. The issue of palliative not being adequate and equally distributed is economic related. Episode eleven also dwells more on emphasising the need for improvements in the distribution of palliatives to the masses for the economy to bounce back. It is no wonder that Peifer and Lee (2019) assert that satire serves to expose societal problems with the hope of improvement.

The political theme is also clearly identified in the above presentations. In episode twelve, examples of key political figures across the globe that died as a result of the Covid-19 are given by mallam. Further, the deaths are classified as 'big deaths' because of the political status of the victims. In episode thirteen, mallam indirectly raises a concern about the authorities (government) not adequately providing the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the doctors, which makes them to flee their duty posts. There is also a poser for concerned stakeholders in Nigeria as to why they could not make any visible effort in providing a cure just like their counterparts in Madagascar. The next two episodes (fourteen and fifteen) visibly have political themes. However, financial aspects related to the Covid-19 are specifically addressed and related to politics and political leaders. Allegations of misappropriations are explicitly made in the presentations. This gives credence to the assertion by Okolie (2019, p.166) that "users of social media in Nigeria enjoy a very high degree of latitude in expression of views; ideas and opinions on broad perspectives".

The social theme relating to the Covid-19 could be seen in the context of addressing issues that are real to us. Specifically in the presentations, the scholar identifies that Covid-19 and poverty (hunger) are two realities we must contend with. This is clearly identified in episode ten. There is further identification of death as a social reality.

Death, which has been identified as inevitable by the scholar, became further humorously classified into two; death as a result of poverty (hunger) and death as a result of Covid-19 (*mautatu kwandawiyyatun* and *mautatu haqiqiyyatun*). In the presentations, even though 'Covid-19 death' is explained as being 'natural', mallam identifies the 'death as a result of poverty' (basket death) as more critical for the masses and can be aggravated as a result of the lockdown. This is discussed in episodes ten and twelve. In episode thirteen, attention is paid to defining certain concepts as used within the context of the presentations. This is in tandem with the assertion of Baym (2005) which states that satire presents topics in larger segments while explaining the background information in detail using common language.

Further to this, the classification of 'Covid-19 death' into two basic types (big and small) indicates another social theme prominent in the presentations. This is also discussed in episode

twelve where it is stated that 'Covid-19 death' is usually found among the cycle of the elites. This is followed by a call on the elites to fear God and treat the masses right (before death catches up with them). This clearly is an issue of stereotypical belief system, which is social rather than scientific in nature.

In trying to understand the interpretations of the themes raised in the presentations, we can say that in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic, the explanations of mallam are stereotypical in nature; meaning that interpretations of issues related to Covid-19 are done from a layman's perspective that the mallam is. For instance, there is the belief that economic hardship experienced as a result of the lockdown during the pandemic could lead to untimely death. There is equally the belief that Covid-19 mostly affects only the elite class; as such, there is no need for enforcing the Covid-19 protocols on the masses. We have seen instances where the scholar, using humour, semantically classifies death into two types and extensively explains each of them. Further, the mallam explains that the politics of the coronavirus is largely related to the financial gains that political leaders get rather than with the protection of the lives of the masses. In the end, there is an indirect ridicule of a state governor regarding some allegations of corruptions.

In episode eleven, mallam emphasises that his school acts as a representative of the masses as well as of the authorities. This means that the presentations imply to serve as a societal watchdog. Analyses of the contents, however, have shown that the presentations are more inclined to criticizing the government and its agencies regarding the Covid-19 protocols.

Regarding the kind of agenda set by the presentations as it relates to the Covid-19 pandemic therefore, we can say that one clear agenda is that of undermining the issue of lockdown. This was seen in the way the presenters implored the government and its agencies to ease the Covid-19 restrictions. Specifically, they identified lockdown as a stringent measure because it prevented people from going about their daily livelihood pursuits without the government providing the necessary assistance to cushion the economic effects it had on the masses. Another agenda is that of exposing the negative attitudes of health workers towards patients during the pandemic. The presenters identified that whether patients had Covid-19 or not, they were all regarded as Covid-19 patients. This according to them, led to more health problems created by the health workers. Another agenda set by the presenters is that of corrupt practices, specifically, mismanagement of funds by some government officials as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The pattern and types of issues addressed in the presentations as well as the agenda set clearly shows that the level of freedom of expression which the social media offers has enabled the presenters to discuss and present issues in a way that the conventional media (traditional media – such as radio, television or newspaper) dare not do. This affirms the assertion that in African countries, while traditional news outlets are censored; bloggers and social media activists have become the new independent media by providing the much-needed space in the demand for accountability and open governance (Jimada, 2019).

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the emerg ence of social media has given credence to individuals having more channels through which they get or disseminate information. This has helped in boosting the popularity of satire as a form of communication. The social media have given satirists the opportunity to disseminate information freely without the restrictions embedded in conventional media usage. This is especially found in countries such as Nigeria, where legal restrictions and sanctions on the effective use of social media are not given much attention. The presentations of *Makarantar Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* have no doubt, explored this freedom in its presentations.

Unfortunately however, serious health issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic, which was presented in a number of episodes, was not treated as a health concern with underlining health implications. The issues discussed therein are more economically, politically and socially inclined, thereby undermining the health-related concerns associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, the imposition of lockdown, which happens to be an important protocol in the curtailment of the spread of the disease at the early

stages of the pandemic, as suggested by global health experts was criticized in the presentations. This may be as a result of lack of adequate knowledge of Covid-19 as a global health pandemic by the presenters of this programme. In view of this therefore, it is recommended that satirists such as *Mallam mai Dalla Dalla* (who have clearly identified themselves as societal watchdogs) should endeavour to have adequate knowledge of health issues before discussing them in their presentations. This will go a long way in providing their audience with the necessary information that could help curtail further spread of any virus or disease with a global threat.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Adama Adamu is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. She holds a PhD and MSc degrees in Mass Communication from the Bayero University, Kano and a BSc Mass Communication degree from the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. Dr Adamu teaches mass communication courses both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Her research interests majorly focus on media studies (both conventional and new media) relating to development, health and cultural communication. She is a member of the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals in Nigeria (ACSPN), the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE) and the Africa Women in the Media (AWiM)

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