



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

**Multimodality in Saudi Arabian COVID-19 Cartoons: A Thematic and  
Humour Analysis**

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, December, 2023

## **Dedication**

To my grandfather, Abdulmohsen Almohissen (May Allah bless his soul),  
my father, my mother, and my lovely family

## Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the individuals who have been by my side during this phase of my academic journey. I want to especially honour the memory of Dr Martin Thomas, who sadly passed away in early 2022. Dr Thomas played an instrumental role during the first two years of my studies. He was an exceptional supervisor, and his impact on my academic growth will forever be remembered.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr Elisabetta Adami for her continuous support and guidance throughout the entire thesis process. Her encouragement and assistance were invaluable, and I will always be indebted to her unwavering support. Dr Adami brought a wealth of expertise and knowledge to my thesis, and her contributions illuminated my research journey.

I am also deeply indebted to Dr Timothy Thurston for stepping in as my second supervisor following the untimely passing of Dr Martin. Dr Thurston's support and mentorship have been essential in illuminating my research, particularly in the realm of humour studies. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr Hanem El- Farahaty and Professor Janet Watson for their great help in the research and their valuable insights and comments, especially with the Arabic part of the study.

My appreciation and love also go to my family, who have been a great support to me on this journey. I am indebted to their endless support and the continuous praying to me for strength on this journey. Thank you, my mother (Hassah Alhoshan) and my father (Mohammed Almohissen), for believing in me and encouraging me. I would also like to express my gratitude to my older siblings, Soha and Abdulmohsen, for patiently listening to my complaints and supporting me through the ups and downs; thank you for your support. Another appreciation goes to Abdurahman, my lovely brother, for being kind-hearted and being there for me when I needed you. The other siblings- thank you for bringing me joy against all odds.

Lastly, I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Ehsan Alatawi, a friend and sister who has played a significant role in my journey. Thank you for your unwavering encouragement, cheerfulness, and support during this journey.

## Abstract

The present study investigates how the COVID-19 pandemic was portrayed in Saudi cartoons and how humour around it was created. The Youm7 website was employed as a data source. A total of 212 multimodal cartoons were collected between December 2019 (the date on which COVID-19 was announced to the world) and March 2021 (the date when Saudi Arabia lifted all the restrictions related to the pandemic). These cartoons underwent two different types of analysis and resampling to address the two primary aims specified above. In addressing the pandemic's portrayal in the cartoons, content analysis and multimodal analysis were employed to deduce the thematic presentation and participants' representation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerning humour creation, adapting and adopting Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classification along with humour forms (Dynel, 2009; Alsadi & Howard, 2021) was applied with a more stratified sample involving 61 cartoons.

The findings reveal ten main themes with their sub-themes. These are virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, the impact on education and work, vaccine rollout, lockdown, international political discourse, public protection, the change in social relations, the impact on travel and tourism, as well as the economic impact of COVID-19. Moreover, these themes show some similarities and differences with existing research in relation to phases of the pandemic. On the other hand, the deduced sub-themes depend more on the Saudi phases, government actions, and people's reactions. The findings also present five main subjects: COVID-19, earth, Saudi men and women, Saudi authorities, and international countries and governments. The representation of the participants varies multimodally in relation to the four phases of the pandemic in Saudi Arabia. Regarding the humour creation, the results show that the three Yus' (2021) incongruities (frame-based, writing-image and writing-based) and resolutions (implication-based, frame-based, and writing-based) are presented in the data. However, the findings show the addition of a fourth classification (image-based) along with the three presented classifications to be applicable to cartoons, resulting in 15 common taxonomies. Moreover, eight humour forms were identified: joke, putdown, pun, irony, exaggeration, metaphor, metonymy, and comparison. These humour forms are mostly shown to occur multimodally, but they also sometimes occur in image or in writing mode alone. The relationship between humour forms and incongruity was found to be mostly dependent on the shared mode. The representation of humour, in general, is found to be based on three factors: the cartoonists' interest, linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge.

This study contributes to understanding the history of Saudi Arabia during the pandemic (2020-2021). Moreover, the study contributes to the growth of multimodality by showing its essence in deducing the thematic presentation and the creation of humour. It also contributes to the field of humour, specifically making a methodological contribution by introducing an adaptation of Yus' (2021) incongruity-resolution theoretical approach, as this represents the first application of the approach to cartoons. Overall, the combination of humour and multimodality contributes to the shifting tendency from focusing on pure linguistics to multimodal communication.

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## List of Abbreviation

SFL.....	Systemic Functional Linguistic
CMDA.....	Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis
GTVH.....	General Theory of Verbal Humour
KRs.....	Knowledge Resources
SSTH.....	Semantic Script Theory of Humour
IR.....	Incongruity-Resolution

## Scheme of Transliteration

This study has adopted the transliteration system endorsed by the Library of the Congress and the American Library Association (ALA-LC, 2012).

ا	ā	ب	b	ت	t
ث	th	ج	j	ح	ḥ
خ	kh	د	d	ذ	dh
ر	r	ز	z	س	s
ش	sh	ص	ṣ	ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ	ظ	ẓ	ع	‘
غ	gh	ف	f	ق	q
ك	k	ل	l	م	m
ن	n	ه	h	و	w
ي	y	آ	ā	أ	a
و	u	إ	i		

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

When COVID-19 swept across the world in 2020, it promptly became evident that nothing comparable had occurred in living memory. The pandemic was considered to be "the biggest global health crisis seen to date" (Anwar et al., 2020, p.1) as it began as an incredulous rumour that quickly became a [harsh] reality (Arkhipova & Brodie, 2020). This pandemic impacted different facets of life, including politics, economies and societies. Since then, this impact has been a debated topic in media. The media during the pandemic were constantly reporting and broadcasting new developments concerning COVID-19, including the infection and death rates, peoples' positive and negative attitudes, together with the restrictions applied by the government to prevent the virus spreading and the correct information regarding COVID-19 and how to tackle it (Tsao et al., 2021). The variation in regard to discussing the COVID-19 topic from the different spheres in the media "could be characterised as a discourse of sympathy, raising awareness of the pandemic, educating the public and holding governments and policymakers accountable for their actions", as ascertained in relation to broadcasting (Lahlali, 2023, p.1). These characteristics were not only presented in the news but also depicted in cartoons.

Cartoons might have a greater impact than a critical political report (Connors, 1998) as they can communicate the message "in a much more immediate and condensed fashion" (El Refaie, 2003, p.87). Due to their multimodal nature, particularly their image mode, cartoons are more appealing and powerful than traditional opinion columns or editorials (Connors, 2010, p.309). During the pandemic, cartoons have been found to play a crucial role as they were used to communicate messages pertaining to COVID-19. The depiction of the pandemic in cartoons has received attention from various research endeavours, holding different theoretical perspectives. Researchers have used thematic analysis for cartoons in South Africa (Wasserman & Joubert, 2023), Jordan (Lulu, Habeeb, & Abdul Racman, 2021) and Canada (Labbé et al., 2022). Others focus on the multimodal characteristics of cartoons in Pakistan (Aazam et al., 2020; Shahzad, Ul Din & Ahmad, 2023). On the other hand, other studies focus more on the presentation of humour in cartoons in the Philippines (Imperial, 2020) and Nigeria (Asiru & Bello, 2021).

Drawing on the extant research, this study combines and intertwines all three foci above, applying them to the Saudi context by examining how Saudi cartoons about COVID-19 have portrayed the pandemic and produced humour multimodally. The first aim of the study is to investigate the portrayal of the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi cartoons. To do so, content analysis and multimodal analysis<sup>1</sup> were employed to address the thematic presentation and participants' representation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi cartoons. The analysis is conducted on over 200 cartoons, which allows the study to derive both quantitative and qualitative results; the cartoons were sourced with considerations of time of publication (spanning the whole pandemic), variety of media outlets and cartoonists to ensure enough variation and comprehensive coverage for all the phases that Saudi Arabia experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore ensures different thematic coverage. This research contributes to providing an overview of the pandemic from the perspective of Saudi Arabia, as it is understudied compared with other regions examined by the literature. It also contributes to understanding Saudi Arabia's history during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021) and how people and authorities reacted to, fought, and overcame this unprecedented challenge.

The second aim of the study pertains to humour, specifically how humour is produced in cartoons in relation to the themes expressed and with which semiotic resources. To understand how humour is created in cartoons, the study developed an adaptation of Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications and intertwined it with the types of humour forms (Dyner, 2009; Alsadi & Howard, 2021). Such adaptation was necessary as Yus developed his framework for the analysis of verbal jokes (Yus, 2016), while cartoons use both images and writing. Yus also later applied his framework to memes (Yus, 2021), which are multimodal, but the function of image and writing in memes is rather different than in cartoons. The types of humour forms were also adapted in the present research from Dyner's (2009) analysis of linguistic humour to account for the multimodality of cartoons, also following Alsadi and Howard (2021). This second aim contributes to understanding how humour is created with COVID-19 cartoons. It also contributes to providing evidence of the effectiveness of Yus' incongruity-resolution classifications and humour forms in understanding the humour creation in this multimodal artefact.

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<sup>1</sup> Certain tools from multimodality are used to achieve this goal (see methodology Chapter)

The present study has the following objectives:

1. Provide a unique insight into Saudi society through how cartoons express beliefs, customs, traditions and actions during the pandemic.
2. Investigate the themes covered by Saudi cartoons during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these themes are represented, including the main participants represented.
3. Provide an understanding of how humour is created in cartoons.
4. Scrutinise the role of each mode, writing and image in constructing humour in cartoons.
5. Test the applicability of Yus' incongruity resolution and its intertwining with humour forms in the analysis of humour in cartoons.

These objectives can be achieved by answering the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How have Saudi cartoons portrayed the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - **1a:** What are the main themes and sub-themes presented in the Saudi cartoons relating to the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - **1b:** What types of participants related to the pandemic do these cartoons predominantly represent, and how is this undertaken multimodally?
- **RQ2:** How do Saudi cartoons produce humour pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - **2a:** What roles do image and writing play in producing humour?
  - **2b:** How is humour expressed in relation to COVID-19 themes?

## 1.2 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Following the introduction, the literature review is presented. It comprises two chapters that introduce the main theoretical concepts that underpin this research, which examines the portrayal of COVID-19 in Saudi cartoons and how humour is produced in cartoons. Chapter 2 marks the first part of the literature review, which introduces the history of the cartoon genre in general and in the Arab context in particular. It also reviews studies that have explored the cartoon genre while focusing more specifically on cartoons that covered the COVID-19 pandemic. As the cartoon is a multimodal artefact that depends on two modes, image and writing, Chapter 2 also introduces the concept of multimodality prior to moving on to a more specific discussion of the studies that investigate cartoons from the perspective of multimodality.

As argued by many scholars, for example, Tsakona (2009), the primary function of a cartoon is humour. Hence, Chapter 3 focuses more explicitly on the theories that explore the field of humour studies more comprehensively. This chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical

background of humour from two separate perspectives: psychology and linguistics. Subsequently, forms of humour are then introduced and discussed in light of multimodality and linguistic studies. The methodology used in the present study is explained in Chapter 4. The chapter begins by investigating the source's reliability with respect to collecting the data. It provides the selected criteria that led to a database of 212 cartoons for the content analysis of the themes. The coding steps are described and exemplified before discussing criteria for stratified sampling to enable a fine-grained analysis of humour in its mechanisms (through Yus' incongruity resolution) and in its humour forms. The chapter concludes by examining the reliability and trustworthiness of the selected data, the analysis process and the findings.

The analysis is presented in two chapters. Chapter 5 provides in-depth results of the themes presented in the Saudi cartoons, together with the ways the subjects are portrayed, and correlates the results with key phases and events of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 6 presents the results of the humour analysis: it shows the main ways humour is produced both cognitively, monomodally, and multimodally through the different patterns of incongruity-resolution types and on the level of forms. The discussion based on the two analysis chapters is presented in Chapter 7, which indicates the answer to the research questions that result from the analysis. The chapter concludes with the study's limitations and a number of valuable recommendations and ideas for further research.

In conclusion, this comprehensive research endeavour reveals rich insights about the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia from a multimodal and humorous perspective. It is considered the first study with a substantial dataset that gives an overall understanding of the pandemic in Saudi Arabia and how humour is created within such a disaster topic. This study mirrors the life of the pandemic, presenting ten themes that mainly reflect Saudi beliefs and perspectives concerning the pandemic. This study also offers a comprehensive discussion of humour creation in the cartoons based on Yus' incongruity-resolution classification, as no existing studies have done that before. This study has not only been based on this framework to analyse the humour, but it also investigates the humour types and humour techniques that emerged in the cartoons to get a full understanding of humour creation with a multimodal artefact-cartoons. Moreover, the potential relationship between incongruities and humour forms is investigated to add to the overall knowledge of humour. Generally, this research contributes to the history of the pandemic in Saudi Arabia along with the two fields of study: multimodality and humour.

## Chapter 2

### Cartoons and Multimodality

This chapter presents the main topic underpinning this study, which is the cartoon and its multimodal nature. It begins with an overview of the historical development of cartoons in the world generally and in the Middle East particularly, examining Saudi Arabia as the study population (Section 2.1). Next, the different purposes of cartoons are presented in Section 2.2, followed by a more specific engagement with the studies that have addressed cartoons pertaining to COVID-19 in Section 2.3. Multimodality, as a communication principle and a field incorporating different proposed approaches, is then introduced in Section 2.4. Finally, Section 2.5, emphasising multimodality in cartoons, highlights some of the studies investigating cartoons from different multimodal theoretical approaches.

#### 2.1 Cartoon History

A cartoon is a text that is created via two modes, image and writing, and presents individual, social and political issues in a sarcastic and humorous way (e.g., McCloud, [1993] 2006, Berger, 1998; Tsakona, 2009). Lobo (2002) explains that the word cartoon is originally derived from the Italian term "cartone," meaning "large paper". In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the cartoon emerged as a result of a rebellion against "high art". Leonardo da Vinci first painted a cartoon in the form of a caricature, an exaggeration of a person's physical shape in a humorous way that brings out the character's "inner nature" (Walker, 2003). As such, caricatures became the first medium to deliver the political perspective (Walker, 2003). However, as caricatures were employed as a platform through which to mock and mimic political figures, the French King Louis XIV had them banned, fearing the consequences of the portrayal of the 'revolutionary character' (Boime, 1992, p.256). Nevertheless, despite attempts by those in authority to suppress it, this genre's strong influence has remained steadfast and has been referred to through the ages (see Wallis, 2007; Navasky, 2013).

Editorial cartoons have a different history in various countries. In Germany, for example, Martin Luther (1483-1546) drew his cartoons aimed at those in authority, and as he was part of the Protestant Reformation, his aim was to defend members of the lower class. However,



owing to the high cost of the production of cartoons in newsprint, cartoons disappeared for roughly three hundred years, before they were reproduced in 1884 when Joseph Pulitzer published his own cartoon satirising a Republican candidate in his New York World newspaper (Walker, 2003).

The history of graphic satire dates back to the 1720s in Britain. William Hogarth was the first artist to begin drawing social cartoons, and from then, political cartoons subsequently developed over the years. A famous cartoon from that time is known as “Idol Worship”. This cartoon critiqued Sir Robert Walpole, who was the Prime Minister of Britain for over 20 years. Interestingly, Walpole did not apply censorship to cartoons and allowed the artists to freely undertake their work. Artistic work and creativity peaked as a result of this leniency, and 1760 to 1830 was considered to be the golden age for the cartoon genre (Gresham Lecture, 2010). However, the presentation and production of cartoons began to change, especially with the introduction of modern printing methods, such as using copperplate and boxwood, and more recently, advanced digital technologies, including publishing software and printers. Many magazines published political cartoons, but the most popular one that lasted the longest, surviving the First World War, was *Punch* (1841–1914) (Gresham Lecture, 2010). This brief history of British cartoons illustrates how this genre has existed for three hundred years and became one of the most prominent genres presenting political and social perspectives in a unique and uncensored way. This resulted in the rapid spread and growth of cartoons in the West.

In the Middle East, the first cartoon, which covered social issues, was published during the Ottoman Empire in 1831. Cartoons covering political issues emerged in 1867. The thematic contents of these political cartoons were taken primarily from shadow puppetry that targeted the government authorities (Kilic, 2011). During this period, cartoons were severely censored by Sultan Abdulhamid II (Aviv, 2013), restricting the freedom to express views and limiting the spread of this genre in Turkey. This genre was also emerging in other countries in the Middle East. In the Arab press, Ya’qub Sannu was the first cartoonist to publish in Egyptian newspapers, marking a significant milestone in Arab cartooning. The Egyptian publications at that time were the main source of printed cartoons for the Arab world until 1925, after which they appeared in other countries, such as Iraq, Syria and Tunisia (Göçek, 1998).

In the Gulf region, Kuwait was the first country to publish cartoons influenced by Egyptian cartooning and literacy, as many students at that time had a scholarship in Egypt and had been

influenced by the modernised media and publications (Abdul Al-Mughni, 2021). The first published cartoon was published in Ba'atha magazine, a Kuwaiti magazine based in Egypt, by Ahmad Alamar in 1947. This magazine encouraged other different cartoonists to share their work, including Majab Aldosary (1947, 1948) and Abraham Alshaty (1954), who published social and political cartoons. Later, different newspapers and magazines located in Kuwait encouraged others to publish their work. Subsequently, Alshab newspaper invited Ahmad Alnafys, who was 18 years old, to start the publication with them as he had a unique sense of satire and bold political opinion; he published his first cartoon in 1958. Following independency<sup>2</sup>, many newspapers and magazines flourished and had more freedom in their publication; including Alwatan, which started to publish political cartoons in 1962, appointing Ahmad Alamar as the main cartoonist at the time (Abdul Al-Mughni, 2021).

The first published cartoon to appear in a printed newspaper in Saudi Arabia was in the 1960s, practically ten years later than the Kuwaiti publications. However, there has been widespread disagreement regarding the identity of the first Saudi cartoonist, while there are also different claims as to the date of the first published cartoon (Alateq, 2011). The first claim was proposed by Alshasha (2011), who argues that Ali Alarjya was the first Saudi cartoonist to publish his cartoons in the Al-Riyadh newspaper in 1964. The second claim was made by Alzamal's son (2011), who writes in his published diary, *From Neighbourhood Gate to Life Gate*, that his father's work was published in the Al-Qassem newspaper in 1961. However, Alateq (2011) disputes the two previous claims concerning the history of Saudi cartoons. He agrees with Halymah (2005) who claims that Ahmad Alsbaya published the first cartoon in the Saudi press in the Qurush newspaper in 1960. Considering the different dates and names of cartoonists that have been suggested, although there is no agreement as regards the identity, it can be at least conclude that the history of Saudi cartoons dates from 1960 at the earliest.

Although cartooning is in its early stages in Saudi Arabia, many cartoons are published daily in the Saudi media (Alsadi and Howard, 2021). Currently, audiences can find cartoons in printed media, for example newspapers or can access online versions. Cartoons are also posted on social media platforms, for instance Instagram, X (former Twitter) or Facebook, which allow the audience to repost and share with others, resulting in this genre spreading extensively. The constant exposure that today's audiences may have to cartoons may increase their ability

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<sup>2</sup> Kuwait became fully independent in June 1961 as it was under British protectorate since 1899 (Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, n.d.).

to recognise and understand the signs that cartoonists exploit to deliver political and social meanings.

## 2.2 The Purposes of Cartoons

DeSousa and Medhurst (1982) proposed four different functions of the cartoons:

1. Entertainment function: for them, the cartoon fulfils this function when it depicts a human failure. People laugh because they are not from the group that is portrayed and criticised<sup>3</sup> (DeSousa and Medhurst, 1982, p.92).
2. Aggression-reduction function: “cartoons are successful vehicles for symbolic aggression to the degree that reader satisfaction is achieved within the dramatic world of the caricature”, which is identified more as being a political figure that has been criticised and depicted with humorous features (DeSousa and Medhurst, 1982, p.92).
3. Agenda-setting function: cartoons introduce readers to some significant issues and topics that may cause in changing the individuals’ attitudes and behaviours (DeSousa and Medhurst, 1982, p.92).
4. Framing function: the cartoon in this function “serves a useful purpose”, discussing a topic, issue and event that “has a little personal experience” based on the simplistic characterisation to form metaphorical connections (DeSousa and Medhurst, 1982, p.95).

DeSousa and Medhurst's (1982) functions of cartoons are derived from the readers' perspectives, which differ somehow from the functions proposed by other researchers, who investigate the functions of cartoons from the cartoonists' perspectives.

DeSousa and Medhurst (1982) define cartoons as a mean of communication from ritual view citing Carey's (1975, p.6) definition to be an attempt “to provide not information but confirmation, not to alter attitudes or change minds but to represent an underlying order of things, not to perform functions but to manifest an ongoing and fragile social process”. The first function can be stated as confirming; it confirms the reality of the social and political issues in a humorous way (Giarelli, 2006; Sani et al., 2014). Al-Kenani and Banda (2018, p.48), assert that cartoons are used to “arouse their [readers'] feelings and instruct them to act positively”. The functions mentioned by Al-Kenani and Banda (2018) aligns with Carey's

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<sup>3</sup> It is associated with the superiority feeling explained in superiority theory (see Section 3.1.1.1).

(1975, p.6) assertion that cartoons aim to represent an underlying societal order rather than directly alter attitudes. These similarities guide us to the second shared function by researchers, which is persuasion. It is claimed that the cartoons are used to change society's ideologies (Padilla, 2019; Sani et al., 2014), and to shape public opinions (Noelle-Neumann, 1973; Everette, 1974; Conners, 2010) in relation to different religious, political (Keane, 2008) and social issues (Abraham, 2009). Coupe (1969, p.82) maintains that "like all journalists, the cartoonist is concerned with the creation and manipulation of public opinion". It has the power "to orient social issues and tap the collective consciousness of communities" (Abraham, 2009, p.162) as it offers "deep reflection" rather than "passing chuckle".

The last function proposed by Carey (1975, p.6), i.e., "to manifest an ongoing and fragile social process" could be classified and identified as criticism that the cartoonists used to discuss political or social issues. Sani et al. (2014, p.82) emphasise that "cartoons can also be used to criticise vice and folly as a way of transforming society and its polity. Essentially, they are utilised as agents of social and political reforms in society". They do that by depicting the target as "politically incompetent and/or morally wrong" (Marín-Arrese, 2008, p.9). This point of view is also supported by Schilperoord and Maes (2009, p.232), who conclude that "[t]he ultimate message a cartoon communicates is criticism or a particular political stance towards a certain public topic". El Refaie (2009) maintains that cartoons employ a variety of scenarios to critique different social, political and cultural realities. The issues could be related to political events, such as voting and elections (Edwards, 2001; Wekesa, 2012; Zurbriggen and Sherman, 2010; Mielczarek, 2022), or important political movements, for instance the Arab Spring in Egypt (2010-2012) (Woźniak, 2014; Elmaghraby, 2014; Al-Momani, Badarneh and Migdadi, 2017; El-Farahaty, 2019). Additionally, certain cartoons criticise different social issues in a specific community, for instance marriage and divorce (Alsadi and Howard, 2021), extensive use of social media (Alahmadi, 2022), and point to different cultural perspectives regarding gender roles (Giladi, 2013).

As illustrated above, different social and political topics have been discussed in the cartoons. Moreover, cartoons have also addressed specific diseases and health issues, such as COVID-19, which will be discussed in detail below.

### 2.3 COVID-19 Cartoons

COVID-19 was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on 11 March 2020, due to its rapid and uncontrollable global spread, with the first case appearing in China in December 2019 (WHO, 2020b). Emerging in China, the pandemic spread rapidly, leaving no part of the world untouched, primarily due to “the failure in virus control during its early stages in Wuhan and the remaining areas of Hubei province” (Shangguan, Wang and Sun, 2020, p.1). Izvorski et al. (2020, para.3) assert that “2020 is on track to witness the deepest global recession on a scale not seen since World War II”. Cartoons which depend on a unique style and content, were used regularly to provide social and political commentary on the pandemic, exploiting predominantly dark humour to focus primarily on the infection/deaths, as well as the negative social, economic and educational changes. Due to the unquestionable role that cartoons played in transmitting information and communicating with people during the pandemic and the ways in which cartoonists were able to confidently raise awareness of those disregarded and occasionally uncomfortable social and political occurrences that accompanied the pandemic, research has begun to renew its interest in this genre, with a focus on the main themes and issues portrayed, together with the unique presentation of humour in such illustrations.

It is worth mentioning that COVID-19 cartoons have been drawn by cartoonists all over the world, as the pandemic is a global issue that profoundly impacts all regions. In the context of Pakistan, different research papers have investigated the COVID-19 cartoons. The most shared newspaper that many researchers are concerned about is *The Dawn*, an English newspaper that is based in Pakistan. Aazam et al. (2020) collected the cartoons published in *The Dawn* between 1 May 2020 and 15 May 2020<sup>4</sup> to investigate how Pakistani cartoonists address the pandemic. They adopted Machin's (2007) multimodal analysis, with more focus on the connotation and denotation tools. They conclude that all cartoons present COVID-19 as an evil enemy that causes fear, death, mental and health issues, and economic crises. The cartoons in Aazam's study criticise the authority's failure to combat COVID-19 and reveal people experiencing hardships, such as poverty, divorce, and domestic violence. Other researchers, such as Shahzad,

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<sup>4</sup>While the precise number of cartoons analysed in the study remains unknown, it is estimated that the maximum number could be 15, considering *The Dawn's* typical daily output. However, the researchers' employment of purposive sampling to select cartoons that specifically portrayed fear and economic crisis obscures the exact number of cartoons reviewed. This ambiguity is considered a significant limitation of the study's data collection.

Ul Din & Ahmad (2023) scrutinise the cartoons published at a later date, specifically between September 1, 2020 and October 31, 2020. They examined only five cartoons<sup>5</sup> to investigate how cartoons change the readers' views using different linguistics and non-linguistic devices. They applied the same theoretical approaches used by Aazam et al. (2020), namely Machin's (2007) theoretical framework of multimodal analysis. They demonstrate that the cartoonists rely more on the visual language to influence the readers' point of view about certain political issues that had been significantly criticised, such as inflation, corruption and the Federal Board of Revenue. This conclusion pertaining to the two research papers shows that the Pakistani cartoonists are freer to condemn different governmental issues in *The Dawn*.

Alkhresheh (2020) also conducted a comparison study between *The Dawn* and *The Economist*, an international newspaper based in Britain. The study investigates their orientations in discussing the issues during the pandemic and the ideological approaches exploited. Both newspapers gathered data over different periods: the cartoons from *The Dawn* were collected between May 21 and June 11, 2020, whereas the cartoons in *The Economist*, were collected between June 4 and July 9, 2020<sup>6</sup>. The researcher used a blended methodological framework taken from the CDA model (Fairclough, 2003) and Barthes' Semiotic Model to analyse the collected data. The author ascertains that the content of the political cartoons during that period differ between the Pakistani and British publications. In *The Dawn*, the contents of the depicted cartoons centre around the economic and health impacts of COVID-19, alongside the presence of locusts and their effect on the agriculture-based economy. In contrast, *The Economist* highlights the anti-racism movement "Black Life Matters" as it appeared in the United States, in addition to the ineffectual government in Brazil that led to substantial numbers of the population being affected by the pandemic, including the president himself. In this regard, *The Dawn* is more concerned with the economic devastation that the pandemic caused, as many people lost their jobs, leading to further poverty across Pakistan, which was compounded by the escalating cost of living. The finding concerning the economic devastation is also found in

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<sup>5</sup>The small number of cartoons used in the study casts doubt on the trustworthiness of the findings. It is impossible to make generalisations about a broader population based on such a small sample.

<sup>6</sup>The difference in data range between both newspapers compromises the validity of the research, as the reliability of the presented findings comes into question. As both newspapers were examined on different dates, the distinction and difference between them may be more attributable to the time period covered than to their orientations. This denotes that the results may have some degree of inaccuracy.

Aazam et al. (2020) study. On the other hand, *The Economist* concerns more with the political campaign and issues.

Sattar et al. (2020) compare the cartoons in *The Dawn* with different national newspapers including *The Nation* and *Pakistan Today*<sup>7</sup> to investigate the discussed topics during the pandemic. They used Fairclough's (1995) model of critical discourse analysis and Barthes' model of semiotics<sup>8</sup>. The result in this study indicates that different topics are discussed differently in the three newspapers cartoons, and that they follow different orientations. For instance, *The Dawn* is more concerned with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) concerning the safety measures and the economy. *The Nation* discusses the impact of COVID-19 on education and criticises the public for believing that COVID-19 was fake news. *Pakistan Today* illustrates the possibility of a second wave of COVID-19. It should be noted that the cartoons in *The Dawn* in 2020 cover the economic devastation and political issues impacting the country compared with the other newspapers that share a few similar interests but differ in regards to others. Primarily, the orientation of the cartoons in the newspaper is closely correlated with the editorial orientation of the newspaper.

In the same context of Asia, Imperial (2020) examines how COVID-19 cartoons construct myth and its relation to the Philippine society, and he also argues how humour is constructed within these cartoons. He specifically examined 10 cartoons depicting COVID-19, published in the Philippine Daily Inquirer Newspaper between March 20 and April 20, 2020, using Berger's (2004) notion of humour (code violation), the Incongruity Theory of Humour (semiotic variation) and Barthes' (1991) connotative and mythological meaning of the sign. Imperial (2020) finds that the cartoons show how the public in the Philippines managed themselves to fight against the virus, and that the cartoonists "could communicate their views and speak their inner sincerity and thoughts through existing semiotic indexes and symbols" (Imperial, 2020, p.98). Cartoons not only create humour but also raise the readers' awareness about some political issues, "thus providing a form of civic education to editorial cartoon viewers" (Ibid, p.98).

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<sup>7</sup>The range of data collection is not stated in the paper. It only states the number of newspapers examined, without specifying the number of cartoons examined or the range of dates over which the data was collected.

<sup>8</sup> This blending methodological framework is similar to the one proposed by Alkhresheh (2020).

From the western context, Labbé et al. (2022) examine the presentation of stigma and blame in Canadian cartoons within the context of COVID-19 pandemic. The study covers the period from the beginning of the pandemic in January 2020 to March 2021. The authors identified 203 cartoons from 10 mainstream Canadian newspapers<sup>9</sup>. They utilised thematic content analysis to analyse the cartoons. They identify four main categories that are blamed for spreading the virus, including 1) Chinese people, as well as people from other countries or regions (Canadians from urban regions or specific provinces, and Americans); 2) international travellers; 3) individuals who do not follow public health guidelines; and 4) people who question scientific information pertaining to COVID-19.

Moreover, Nasirov (2020), an Azerbaijani cartoonist, investigates how the cartoonists draw their cartoons based on the way they perceive the pandemic and align it with the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Kübler-Ross, 1969). Nasirov's study takes a descriptive perspective and lacks validity as the number of the cartoons are not identified. Moreover, it describes the phases based on "the sheer number of deaths from coronavirus in Italy and in Europe as a whole and painted a caricature about it" (Nasirov, 2020, p.178). However, the classifications of the phases have a logical connection with the portrayal of the cartoons. The study shows that during the first stage of COVID-19, many cartoonists are in *denial* about the spread of the virus. Numerous cartoonists draw the problem of COVID-19 as a problem local to China. Many others deny the existence of the pandemic and attribute it to the Chinese community, whilst a few cartoonists portray the lockdown in Wuhan, such as Arcadio Esquivel from Costa Rica. The second stage that the cartoons presented relates to *anger*. The cartoonists depict anger over the virus originating in China and spreading across the world. A further illustration of anger is presented in a speech made by U.S. President Donald Trump, who criticises the World Health Organisation (WHO) and threatens to withdraw funding. Nasirov (2020) contends that a great deal of the anger is shaped by racism, and that the cartoons are against Chinese people who are accused of being behind the pandemic. Various myths emerge in the cartoons about the source of the virus, such as food (bat) or a leak from a secret laboratory. *Bargaining* is the third stage. This is observed in the cartoons through the many depictions of infection or death from coronavirus as being associated with gambling, for example the lottery. To avoid being infected, many cartoons refer to health instructions, such

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<sup>9</sup> They were "The Vancouver Sun, The Victoria Times Colonist [British Columbia], The Toronto Star, The Toronto Sun [Ontario], The Chronicle Herald [Nova Scotia], Le Devoir, Le Journal de Québec, La Presse [Quebec], The Globe and Mail and The National Post [national English-language newspapers]" (Labbé et al., 2022, p.3).



as maintaining a distance of two metres, washing hands, not touching the face, and only leaving home when necessary. The fourth, the *depression* stage, begins when quarantines are imposed. Many cartoonists reflect on how depressing it is to be in isolation from others and how that could affect low-income individuals and societies. In fact, isolation increases the use of technology in relation to communication, entertainment, education and work, causing feelings of loneliness and depression. Many cartoonists also depict how people will communicate after the period of isolation. Moreover, different cartoonists show the economic crisis, which for some is a greater danger than the virus as it causes death, depression, and elevated suicide rates. *Acceptance* is the last stage of grief. Many cartoonists describe how individuals accept the pandemic, isolation, and using technologies to communicate. This stage is presented in different cartoons by using adaptation, and applauding and encouraging healthcare workers, volunteers and the ones who are in charge of saving people's lives. Nasirov (2020, p.185) points out that cartoons not only address the political and social issues related to the pandemic, but also the psychological ones, as they provide the readers "with both additional information and emotional release".

Many research papers have investigated the presentation of the pandemic in the African cartoons. To cite a few, Asiru and Bello (2021) examine how humour and satire are used to depict the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nigerian healthcare system, and the country's key stakeholders. They analysed 10 editorial cartoons published on Facebook by Nigerian cartoonists between March and April 2020, using Suls' (1983) Incongruity Resolution (IR) model and Structuralism, which is based on the social system in which they exist in order to be understood, to analyse the data. Their study determines that cartoons are an important artifact that exploit incongruity to reflect the realities of the pandemic in Nigerian society, including public and government attitudes. Also, they find that readers have to be familiar with "their contexts of production" (Asiru and Bello, 2021, p.679) in order to understand the cartoons. In contrast to the study by Asiru and Bello (2021), who investigated a small number of cartoons, Wasserman and Joubert (2023) examined a large set of data, around 1196 cartoons, a large number of cartoonists (19 cartoonists), the language used in the publication (i.e., English, Afrikaans and isiZulu), the number of sources (24 publications), and a lengthy data collection period (1 January to 31 December 2020). The main aim of Wasserman and Joubert's (2023) study is to investigate the themes presented in the cartoons published in South Africa. Using content analysis, they identify ten themes presented in the published cartoons, including army and police, education, natural environment, society and social consequences of the pandemic,

crime, health, politics and government, economy, media and communication, and science and research. The politics and government theme is the most dominant theme in the published cartoons.

COVID-19 has been also discussed in the Middle Eastern cartoons. Some researchers study how the Arab cartoonists address the pandemic and what the presented themes are. Hameed and Afzal (2021) study how the pandemic is depicted in Arab cartoons, focusing on two newspapers: a Saudi newspaper, *Arab News*, and an Emirati newspaper, *Gulf News*. Six cartoons were taken from the work of Ramsi from *Arab News* and six from the work of Adam from *Gulf News*, producing a total of 12, which were investigated as the main data for analysis. The cartoons were collected between late 2020 to mid-2021<sup>10</sup>. Hameed and Afzal used semiotics to analyse the data and they focused on interpreting the meanings provided as visual and verbal signs based on the work of Barthes (1968 and 1977). Hameed and Afzal (2021, p.84) find that the “most prominent issues highlighted in the selected cartoons were related to life’s closure, the economy’s destabilization, the working class's sufferings, vaccine’s dissemination, and the world’s fiasco to handle the pandemic”. Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman (2021) investigate how the pandemic is depicted in one community (Jordanian cartoons) with a substantial number of published cartoons (150 published cartoons on *Alghad*<sup>11</sup>). They applied different analytical methodologies to classify the cartoons into the main themes, involving mediated discourse analysis (Norris and Jones, 2005; Scollon, 2001), multimodal discourse analysis: SFL for language (Halliday, 1978,1985) and Visual Grammar for visuals (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). Ten themes are found “including the quarantine and the lockdown, economic devastation, political discourse, social relationship discourse, wishes and occasions, greetings for medical staff, travel and tourism, work and education, health awareness, and dissatisfied citizens” (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021, p.2). The shared themes between them and Hameed and Afzal's (2021) study are the lockdown and economic changes.

Notably, the research that has considered COVID-19 cartoons in different countries has revealed both differences and similarities in presenting the themes across these studies and cultural contexts. Similar to the *Economist*'s perspective presented in the study by Alkhresheh

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<sup>10</sup>The exact date of the data collection is not given in the paper, but it can be inferred from the information given to be between October 2020 and June 2021.

<sup>11</sup>Despite the number of cartoonists not being announced in the data collection in the paper, it can be concluded that it was one as all the examples were created by Hamzeh Hajjaj, as signified by his signature and his drawing style. All the cartoons were gathered between the years 2020-2021. It does not give a more specific date regarding when the data collection began or ended (date and month).

(2020), the COVID-19 cartoons in other studies criticise authorities, their corruption and their failure to tackle COVID-19 and, ultimately, their inability to protect those who suffer from adverse circumstances, such as poverty and unemployment (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Asiru and Bello, 2020; Imperial, 2020; Aazam et al., 2020; Wasserman and Joubert, 2023; Shahzad, Ul Din & Ahmad, 2023). The impact of COVID-19 is not limited solely to its economic effects on countries and the global economy, as it also has devastating consequences on education (Sattar et al., 2020; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Wasserman & Joubert, 2023) besides the overall wellbeing of individuals, who were severely affected (Aazam et al., 2020; Nasirov, 2020; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Wasserman & Joubert, 2023). Indeed, COVID-19 is regularly portrayed in the public domain as an evil enemy that causes fear and death, which, in turn, may well have contributed to an escalation in mental health issues (Aazam et al., 2020; Asiru & Bello, 2021; Nasirov, 2020). In addition, it is believed that the mass panic and anxiety, as well as the decline in psychological wellbeing in the wake of the pandemic are partly due to the extensive and rapid spread of false rumours (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). Even more so, these rumours, particularly the ones based on conspiracy theories, could have contributed to the spread of the pandemic in different countries as countless people may have come to doubt or discredit certain aspects related to the pandemic, which could have influenced the extent to which they decided to exercise caution, or chose to breach many of the safety measures imposed by the government (Sattar et al., 2020; Asiru and Bello, 2021). Some studies blamed the government for not correcting the misinformation on COVID-19 (Asiru & Bello, 2021; Wasserman & Joubert, 2023).

Lockdowns, as a safety measure, has been imposed during the pandemic to save lives worldwide, and then has become the topic of many cartoons in different countries. In Canada, for instance, cartoonists point to the violators of such precautionary measures as being “self-centred” and oblivious to “solidarity and concern of others” (Labbé et al., 2022, p.7), while in Nigerian cartoons they are depicted as being foolish and selfish individuals (Asiru and Bello, 2020). In the Middle Eastern context, the lockdown is shown to be an essential measure to save the lives of others, besides illustrating some shared indoor activities (Hameed and Afzal, 2021; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). Interestingly, it is not just lockdown violations that are criticised in international cartoons, but also other precautionary measures, including wearing masks, social distancing and adhering to hygiene protocols (Asiru and Bello, 2020; Sattar et al., 2020; Al Khresheh, 2020; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Labbé et al., 2022).

Although these studies present some shared thematic content related to COVID-19 cartoons, some of the above-mentioned studies are based on small samples of data (range between 5 to 15) (Imperial, 2020; Asiru & Bello, 2021; Shahzad, Ul Din & Ahmad, 2023; Hameed & Afzal, 2021) and others are unclear about the number of cartoons studied, even though they present a range for the time period of collection (Nasirov, 2020; Aazam et al., 2020; Sattar et al., 2020; Al Khresheh, 2020) and, as such, generalisations concerning the orientation of thematic content in cartoons are problematic. Furthermore, some of the research studies mentioned above that examine the themes prevalent in cartoons related to COVID-19 are based on an extremely limited dataset that frequently extracts cartoons from a single source. This signifies that there is no variation either in the range of the cartoonists explored (Imperial, 2020; Hameed & Afzal, 2021; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021), the newspaper editors (Aazam et al., 2020; Alkhresheh, 2020; Sattar et al., 2020; Shahzad, Ul Din & Ahmad, 2023; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Hameed & Afzal, 2021) and the themes covered, as several studies have a tendency to focus on a single theme, for instance blaming (Labbé et al., 2022) or the five stages of grief (Nasirov, 2020).

Due to the severity of COVID-19 and the unprecedented nature of this global predicament, there was a push for economists, social scientists and psychologists to rapidly churn out research in order to provide their academic viewpoint on the situation, meaning that many of these publications focus solely on the first period of the pandemic around the first to the second half of 2020 (Aazam et al., 2020; Alkhresheh, 2020; Imperial, 2020; Asiru and Bello, 2021) or towards the end of 2020 (Shahzad, Ul Din & Ahmad, 2023). However, there is a holistic overview of the entire situation, with many essential themes related to COVID-19 that comprise data between 12 to 15 months from the start of the pandemic to the announcement of the vaccination being overlooked (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Wasserman & Joubert, 2023; Labbé et al., 2022). However, these studies have not covered the Saudi context, which still requires further investigation. Therefore, this thesis will fulfil this research gap by examining the portrayal of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Saudi cartoons. The limitations recognised in the previous studies concerning the number of cartoonists, newspapers, chosen topics, and the data collection timeline will be overcome via the data collection in this study, as discussed in the methodology Chapter. In the analysis, specific reference to the themes obtained by previous studies will be identified when necessary.

Given that cartoons are a multimodal genre, this study will explore into this aspect in the next section, introducing multimodality as a field of study.

## **2.4 Multimodality**

The concept of multimodality has been first introduced in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen “Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication” in 2001. Multimodality is “used both to describe a phenomenon of human communication and to identify a diversified and growing field of research” (Adami, 2016, p.451). Therefore, the structure of the following two sub-sections will follow the above definition.

### **2.4.1 The Phenomenon of Human Communication**

Multimodality considers “representation, communication and interaction as something more than language,” (Jewitt, 2009, p. 1) which is achieved through the simultaneous use of different modes. Therefore, all semiotic resources that are used in communication are needed to be considered in order to understand the presented meaning (Kress, 2010). This highlights the importance of multimodality in regard to the process of communication and how this interactive process transpires in a text or communicative events. Taking that from a daily conversation between people, different modes are used to communicate, such as verbal and gesture along with the possibility of using a different mode to communicate, for example, using an image when showing others an Instagram profile. Moreover, easily accessed technology promotes using multimodal interaction between people, as Adami (2016, p.452) asserts:

“In recent years, the social impact of digital technologies for text production, among other factors, has made more visible the fact that texts are multimodal and hence that language alone cannot suffice to explain meaning made through them [...] Online environments have provided sign-makers with platforms and easy-to-use interfaces for publishing their multimodal texts and distributing them to diversified audiences, thus making the phenomenon of multimodality visible to an unprecedented extent” .

#### **2.4.1.1 Sign Making and Communication**

In the communication process, multimodal text is composed through motivated signs that “are made—not used— by a sign-maker who brings meaning into an apt conjunction with a form, a selection/choice shaped by the sign-maker’s interest” (Kress, 2010, p.62). Inherently, the signs are selected by the sign- makers rather than being produced “from scratch” (Adami, 2016,

p.459). The agency of the sign-makers in selecting the relevant resources depends on their interests. The interest emphasises that any semiotic entity is a result of design which is shaped by designers' interest in reflecting the interests of the audience (Kress, 2010). Therefore, the interest is an essential criterion for communication in creating the message and its interpretation. Specifically, both the sign-maker and meaning-maker differ in their intention to communicate depending on their respective given interest.

Moreover, inter-semiotic relationships are essential in regard to examining how the different modal elements work together in synergy as “all modes of representation are, in principle, of equal significance in representation and communication, as all modes have potential for meaning” (Kress, 2010, p.104). Frequently, a mode may carry a specific message when it is presented separately, although when two modes combine, they may construct a totally different meaning (Jewitt and Kress, 2003). In this regard, unique meaning is created in each multimodal artefact through a conscious and careful selection of certain modes, or a combination of modes, which would not be achieved with a different sequence of modal resources. Lemke (2002, p.303) describes this multimodal interaction as an “essential incommensurability that enables genuine new meanings to be made from the combinations of modalities”. Thus, the interactions of the given modes contribute to comprehending the communicative message in the presented artefact, and that is what many studies in multimodality did as in the case of examining online newspapers (e.g., Knox, 2007, 2009; Caple and Knox, 2015), YouTube (e.g., Adami, 2009, 2012), interactive media texts (e.g., White, 2012), and cartoons (e.g., Alsadi and Howard, 2021).

#### **2.4.2. Multimodality Approaches**

Multimodality as a field of research is based on Halliday's (1978-1985) Systemic Functional Theory (SFT), “a theory of meaning as a choice, by which language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options” (Halliday, 1985, p. xiv) that are constructed and understood by how they are used in society. The provided “choices that form [the] language...are described as being based on three meta-functions underlying meaning-making” (Machin, 2016, p.324). These include<sup>12</sup> ideational, interpersonal and textual

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<sup>12</sup> The three metafunctions include a) ideational metafunction showing how the world is constructed; b) interpersonal metafunction examines the presented identities and the relationship between the text producers and

metafunctions (see Halliday, 1978; Halliday and Hasan, 1985). Certain scholars have built their research upon Halliday's foundational assumptions in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). In *Social Semiotics*, Hodge and Kress (1988) extended SFL “to explore any set of semiotic resources that people use in everyday life, the resources of language as much as the resources of image, and of other modes” (Bezemer and Jewitt, 2009, p.1). Additionally, Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006) developed Halliday’s three metafunctions to analyse the meaning presented in the image mode. These three metafunctions also have been applied previously in the work of O’Toole (1994) to illustrate the visual art and sculpture in his book titled: *The Language of Displayed Art*. As Bezemer and Jewitt (2009, p.2) assert, the works of Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006) and O’Toole not only draw from SFL, but also incorporate some insights from “film studies, iconography and art history”. Later on, in their book *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Communication*, Kress and van Leeuwen (2001, p.2) “move towards a view of multimodality in which common semiotic principles operate in and across different modes” instead of focusing on one mode. This suggests studying the mode which has to be investigated in relation with other presented modes rather than studying them in isolation.

Different multimodality approaches have emerged from different perspectives. As reviewed in Adami (2016), one approach is critical multimodal discourse analysis (Machin, 2013; Machin and Mayr, 2012) which is a combination of critical discourse analysis and social semiotics to examine the ideological presentations through semiotic resources. Another approach is geosemiotics (Scollon, 2001; Scollon and Scollon, 2003, 2004), which combines interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman’s interaction order), intercultural communication (space, signs, and situated action) and multimodal semiotics (visual grammar). It aims to study “the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our action in the material world” (Scollon and Scollon, 2003, p.2). Multimodal interactional discourse analysis (Norris, 2004, 2014) is another approach that investigates “a multiplicity of (inter)actions that social actors are simultaneously engaged in” (Norris, 2011, p. 2), that are face-to-face.

All the above theoretical approaches are not relevant to the current research as the focus of this research is not on criticising the target topic (MCDA) or exploring certain place (geosemiotics)

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the receivers; c) textual metafunction investigates the presentation of the texts and how the elements of the text are organised and constructed (Halliday, 1978; Halliday and Hasan, 1985).

or examining face to face interaction (multimodal interactional analysis), but it focuses on securitising the COVID-19 portrayal and humour creation in Saudi cartoons. Therefore, certain tools will be used from multimodality to help the researcher to deduce the themes and participants representation and to understand the humour creation that will be discussed in detail in the methodology.

In the following section, a review of the studies that have conducted multimodal analysis of cartoons will be presented.

## **2.5 Multimodal Analysis of Cartoons**

Many scholars have studied cartoons applying different methodological frameworks and tools from multimodality to analyse various cartoon corpora, addressing specific research objectives and questions. These studies indicate the importance of the image and writing in communicating political and social issues. To cite some, Akpati (2019) employs multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin and Mayr, 2012) to understand the represented ideologies about different political parties in the political Nigerian cartoons, analysing six cartoons. He acknowledges that the shared ideologies concerning the political parties' desire to either maintain or take the power are depicted using visual semiotic resources (i.e., the party's flag, political caricature, tradition attires and caps) and written semiotic resources (i.e., the abbreviation of the party name). The candidates and their parties are criticised significantly by using different "levels of exaggeration, satire and mockery" (Akpati, 2019, p.77). Moreover, Kulikova and Detinko (2014) examine how 'others' is presented in British political cartoons from two different perspectives: inter-cultural or intra-cultural, using van Leeuwen's (2008) dimensions to analyse "others," including distance, angle and gaze. To obtain further recognition of the outsiders' political issues (inter-cultural perspective), the cartoonists use the most famous and well-known characters, symbols and metaphors; for instance, the metaphor RUSSIA IS A BEAR. Moreover, the presentation of 'others' takes more neutral distance of the presented political character. On the other hand, 'others' from the intra-cultural perspective is mostly presented with negative connotation, "the accent is put on the detail, the image is "bound" to some phrase of concrete action of a politician" (Kulikova and Detinko, 2014, p.1390). Regarding the intra-cultural perspective, the 'others' is presented with more details by showing emotions through the character's facial expression and body posture. In general, the cartoonists make 'others' in the inter-cultural perspective using "generalized visual images characterizing the situation in general" (Ibid, p.1390) compared to the intra-cultural as being more detail. El-Falaky (2019)



examines how represented ideologies, identities and values pertaining to the Egyptian revolution were presented in the cartoons, examining eight cartoons<sup>13</sup> from *Al-Ahram*, an Egyptian newspaper, using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework of Visual Grammar and van Dijk's (1997) critical discourse analysis (CDA). The study determines that the cartoon as a multimodal text can inscribe its national ideological stances to the readers by using different semiotic resources where their meaning potentials are based on understanding the cultural context of 'intertextuality', 'colour modulations', 'symbol-associated meanings', 'gender roles' and 'stereotyping' (El-Falaky, 2019, p.1203). Concerning the COVID-19 context as illustrated in Section 2.3, a number of studies<sup>14</sup> used multimodality as an analytical approach to help identify and deduce the thematic presentations unearthed in the COVID-19 cartoons. Aazam et al. (2020), Shahzad, Ul Din and Ahmad (2023), and Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman (2021) investigate the verbal and visual semiotic resources in the cartoons and find some similar thematic presentation along with the shared conclusion about the main character - COVID-19- being an evil creature that causes fear, panic and negative economic consequences.

As shown in the above-mentioned studies, multimodality plays a crucial role in communicating the intended messages. Their results have proven and demonstrated that the cartoonists employ different semiotic resources to communicate their messages to the readers, not just focusing on one mode rather than the other. Thus, the two modes (image and writing) in this multimodal artifact are inseparable, as both are essential in communicating the meaning, which aligns with what Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) highlighted as the main principle related to multimodality. Therefore, multimodal analysis confirms its significance in deducing the thematic representations, recognising the targeted characters, and addressing social and cultural issues. In this thesis, multimodal analysis will also be used to analyse COVID-19 in Saudi cartoons, considering the interaction between both modes, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The multimodal approach has been also employed to understand humour creation. Among few studies that investigate the humour in cartoons from the multimodal perspective, Alsadi and Howard (2021) study the rhetorical figures as a means of humour with multimodality. In their

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<sup>13</sup>Between the 25 of January 2011 and the 30 of June 2013.

<sup>14</sup> The other studies mentioned in section 2.3 have used the Barthes' Semiotic Model to analyse the collected data, including Alkhreshah (2020), Imperial (2020) and Hameed and Afzal (2021). This approach was the base for the social semiotics of multimodality; however, they differ in their principle although they share the importance of the two modes in creating the artefact. Barthes' Semiotic Model is more concerned with the arbitrary meaning of the signs that oppose the principle of multimodality as it treats a sign as a motivated sign shaped by society where both the sign-maker and the meaning-maker might have a different meaning of the presented signs depending on their own experiences and personal background.

book “*The Multimodal Rhetoric of Humour in Saudi Media Cartoons*”, they examine 202 Saudi cartoons produced between 2011 and 2014<sup>15</sup> that discussed different cultural and social issues, adopting Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) theoretical approach. They find that five presented rhetorical figures are employed to create humour, namely intertextuality (allusion and parody), metaphor, metonymy, juxtaposition and exaggeration, which are shown in a multimodal manner. They are presented creatively by the cartoonists through the interaction of the two modes- writing and image, in its place using the image exclusively. Their findings reveal that two types of intertextuality, allusion and parody, occur multimodally in the cartoons to create humour. Allusions are typically made to various popular phrases and idiomatic expressions that their literal meaning is shown in the image mode while their figurative meaning is presented in the verbal mode (Alsadi and Howard, 2021, p.69). The other type which is parody occurred with a news headline which is presented in the writing mode while the image mode adds humour with satirical presentations. The other rhetorical figure is juxtaposition which is determined to coordinate the verbal and visual semiotic resources in a way to enable the readers to “draw comparisons between two metaphorical meanings, behaviours, cultural contexts, or situations most often for satirical and humorous effect” (Alsadi and Howard,2021, p.135).

In the cartoons, in particular those with the exaggeration, Alsadi and Howard recognise that one mode is more predominant than the other in guiding the readers to understand the humour. Two types of exaggeration govern the relationship between the two modes to include ‘visual exaggeration and verbal anchoring’ and ‘verbal exaggeration and complementary visual support’ (Alsadi and Howard, 2021, p.137-147). The former presents an exaggeration of the image mode, as the written mode helps the readers to understand the meaning of such an exaggeration while the latter holds the exaggeration in the written mode that is supported by the image mode to obtain the meaning being communicated.

Additionally, Alsadi and Howard study metonymy as a figure that has a strong connection with the metaphor to create humour. They establish that metonymy constructs two different interactional relationships with the multimodal metaphor. The first is that the visual or multimodal metonymy identifies either the target or source domain of the multimodal metaphors. The other interactional correlation is that the multimodal metonymy is independent and serves as a catalyst for the creation of metaphor, as it shares the same target domain that is

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<sup>15</sup> These cartoons were taken from the social media account of several Saudi cartoonists and from English Saudi newspapers, including Arab News, Saudi Gazette and Al-Riyadh newspaper.

typically presented verbally. The humour with the multimodal metaphor in their study is triggered by three ways: “activating similarities between two distinct entities that have not been thought of, reproducing a relatively conventional metaphor in a new multimodal form, and reversing the positive underlying mapping of a conventional metaphor into a negative one” (Alsadi and Howard, 2021, p.91). The multimodal metaphors are found to be creatively presented with the interaction of the two modes, but the creativity in the presentation is more attributed to the image mode as the writing mode is used more to label and state the phrases and idiomatic presentations. The complexity of the multimodal metaphors has been also seen in Alahmadi (2022)<sup>16</sup> who concludes that metaphors encourage the readers to be more willing to understand the messages communicated by the cartoonists.

Drawing on Alsadi and Howard’s (2021) work, this thesis also focuses on rhetorical figures, and their importance in creating humour by investigating them from the multimodal perspective, as illustrated further in Section 3.2.2, taking in account their potential to occur monomodally. Nevertheless, the focus will not only be confined to examining these rhetorical figures, but also will expand to consider the other humour types (see Section 3.3) to profoundly understand humour. Unlike Alsadi and Howard’s study, the incongruity which is considered as the foundation of humour (e.g., Kant, 1952; Suls, 1972; Morreall, 2009; Raskin, 1979; Attardo, 1997, 2017a) will be investigated in this study using Yus’ incongruity- resolution (see Section 3.1.3) to comprehend how humour is created. Additionally, the potential relationships between the incongruity, and the rhetorical figure and humour types will also be examined. This investigation will deliver a more nuanced understanding of humour within COVID-19 cartoons. The following chapter will discuss humour as being the main concept in conjunction with its theoretical approaches.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an introductory discussion related to the history of the cartoon in general, and more specifically in the Middle East. There was a particular focus on Saudi Arabia as the main context of this study where the cartoon genre began to emerge in the 1960s. The main functions of cartoons were discussed in Section 2.2., for example, to confirm, persuade,

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<sup>16</sup> The researcher examines 202 cartoons about the impact of smartphones and social media platforms on Saudi life between 2011 and 2020. The examined cartoons were taken from the work of Abdallah Jaber on Twitter and Instagram @jabertoon.

and criticise. Cartoons dealing with COVID-19 were explored more specifically in Section 2.3, as this represents the fundamental focus of this thesis. This section provided an overview of how different research studies have approached cartoons that tackled the pandemic from a range of perspectives. Multimodality as a communicative concept and approach of theories was discussed in Section 2.4. This section evaluated the development of multimodality and the significance of SFL (Halliday, 1978; Halliday and Hasan, 1985), which treats language as a social system, and which has supported the development of this notion with other theoretical approaches. Subsequently, a review of selected studies was presented to examine the cartoons with a multimodality perspective (Section 2.5). This resulted in the importance of other theoretical approaches to investigating humour being questioned, such as humour theories, as will be illustrated in detail in the following chapter.

## Chapter Three

### Humour

Humour is presented in everyday life by means of various genres that all feature different semiotic aspects, such as comedy films (speech, music, action, image), editorial cartoons (written, image) and stand-up comedy (speech, gesture, facial expression). Humour has been studied from the perspective of different disciplines such as psychology and linguistics. This has generated numerous alternative definitions of humour, as the different disciplines do not present a shared definition. Another reason for there not being a shared definition of humour, as Raskin (1985) states, is the confusing use of terminologies that are referred to, such as irony, comic, ludicrous, laughter, funny, joke and wit. Certain scholars use wit to talk about humour while others use irony, for example. Additionally, Carrell (2008, p.306) states that

[w]hile the definitions of humor abound and circle, like a wagon train, around the term, there is still no precise agreement on exactly what is meant by humor, and there may well never be. For some, humor is its physical manifestation, laughter; for others, humor is the comic, the funny, or the ludicrous. For still others, humor is synonymous with wit or comedy

Hence, there is widespread confusion as regards terminology. This difficulty in finding a shared definition of humour as a fundamental concept poses a considerable challenge; a challenge which extends to classifying its subtypes, for instance silliness, sarcasm, irony, puns and wordplay, and identifying the distinctions (see Section 3.3). However, many theories have been proposed to investigate the function of humour from two perspectives: cognitive and linguistics, as shown in Section 3.1. It began with the cognitive principle (superiority, release and incongruity), discussed in-detail the linguistic perspective (GTVH and STHT) and subsequently, the combination of both (Yus' incongruity-resolution). The relationship of these humour theories and the scope of the study is presented in Section 3.2. Later, the forms of humour are presented by multimodal and linguistics studies, as explained in Section 3.3. The last section in this chapter highlights the relationship between COVID-19 cartoons as the target of the study and its relationship to humour (see Section 3.4).

### 3.1 The Theoretical Background of Humour

The field of psychology studies humour from the emotional and intellectual aspects, introducing three different theories: *superiority* (Hobbes, 1812), *relief/release* (Spencer, 1860;

Freud, 1905) and *incongruity* (Kant,1952). Conversely, linguistics studies humour from the perspective of language, which incorporates manipulation in aspects of language, such as semantics, syntax, phonology and pragmatics. The two main theories used to study humour are *Semantic Script-based Theory of Humour* (SSTH: Raskin 1979, 1985) and the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (GTVH: Attardo and Raskin, 1991).

### **3.1.1 Psychological Humour Theories**

In this section, three common theories will be discussed as being the most influential theories in the field of psychology, notably superiority theory, release theory, along with incongruity theory.

#### **3.1.1.1 Superiority Theory**

In this particular theory, appreciation of humour is addressed more than the production of humour. The main concept is that superiority of feeling determines the success or failure of humour. Superiority theory dates back to the work of Plato and Aristotle. **Plato** as pointed out by Gosling (1975, p.50) says in *Philebus* that we can laugh at “the ridiculous aspects of our friends”. He specifies that laughing is related to a friend who does something ridiculous. The main theme here is the friend’s ignorance, and the reason behind the subject laughing is that they are not the person who has the trait of ignorance. **Aristotle** as in Janko (1987, p.6), claims that “the laughable is a sort of error and ugliness that is not painful and destructive”. He depicts “not being painful” as a condition in which the individual who is suffering the misfortune is laughed at. The person who laughs has the feeling of superiority for the reason that he/she does not have these characteristics: ugliness and error. Both Plato and Aristotle provide the basic concept of superiority which relates to individuals who are unfortunate.

Scholars in psychology drew on the philosophical work of Hobbes (1812) regarding superiority to analyse the psychological aspects of humour. Hobbes defines laughing from a superiority perspective as “[l]aughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly” (quoted in Berger, 1993, p.2; Morreall, 1983, p.5). It should be mentioned that this has a strong correlation with high self-esteem and comparing the self with others who are less fortunate.

This could be manifested in laughing at jokes, situations or actions that exclude the self from being laughed at. Laughing is not just restricted to excluding the self, but also to connected objects, as suggested by Wolff, Smith and Murray (1934, p.34). Being a member of a social group affects the appreciation of humour. For example, jokes about the political party that an individual belongs to are not found to be amusing if the joke is uttered by a member of the opposition. According to Priest and Abrahams (1970), the person may well find it to be in poor taste and humourless. There are certain characteristics associated with different groups of people which represent examples of stereotyping. Davies (1990) asserted that jokes related to stupidity are commonly about low-ranked people who share the same cultural background. Similarly, it can be assigned to other ethnic groups who are a geographical neighbour, have a similar language and culture, and who are considered backward. His findings and model represent the superiority, laughing at others and excluding the self.

The other factor related to the appreciation of humour from the perspective of superiority is the conceptual continuum of affective disposition (Zillmann and Cantor, 1996). It is based on the receiver's liking for the target of the joke. For example, in a study of cartoons, Zillmann and Cantor established that the position and rank of the cartoon's viewer affects their appreciation of its humour. High ranked individuals favour cartoons that have superior-subordinate relationships. They determine that these sorts of cartoons are funnier than subordinate-superior relationships. The opposite is applicable to low-rank individuals who appreciate subordinate-superior cartoons. Many researchers find that comments victimising a superior social group by means of humour are favoured (McGhee and Lloyd, 1981; McGhee and Duffey, 1983). As such, we can determine that jokes that are not about ourselves, the social group that we belong to, or have a positive feeling, will be appreciated as a result of the feeling of superiority that we have over others.

From the above discussion, we can suggest that solidarity and power are clearly presented in this theory of verbal and multimodal humour. Solidarity means having a similar degree of power between close and intimate individuals (Xiaopei, 2011). Thus, this indicates that the audience will not show their appreciation of humour when its target is either familiar individuals or a group, as a way of showing solidarity. In relation to this, Ruch (2008, p.29) states that "according to the [Superiority] theory, funniness of a joke depends on the identification of the recipient with the person (or group) that is being disparaging and with the

victim of the disparagement”. It denotes that there is a strong correlation between superiority, solidarity and power as both in-groups and out-groups have been distinguished.

Other researchers have a different opinion and claim that humour is not about a feeling of superiority, but more a release of tension and stress, as explained in the following sub-section pertaining to release theory.

### **3.1.1.2 Release Theory**

Release theory emphasises releasing stress and tension through laughing or smiling, as a positive effect of humour. It was initially alluded to by Spencer (1860) who points to the physical process of laughing which is a result of tension. He explains the physical mechanism of laughter as a release. However, Freud’s ([1905] 1960) *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* is the modern analysis of release from the psychological perspective. Freud (1960, p.180) states that “[w]e should say that laughter arises if a quota of psychical energy which has earlier been used for the cathexis of particular psychical paths has become unusable, so it can find free discharge”. Two theories are proposed regarding the degree of release and specific characteristics: Freudian theory and Saliency theory. Freudian theory refers to the inner desire measured by the laughable presentation of the topic. In particular, the degree of laughing and appreciation of jokes concerning sex or aggression is high with an individual who hides sexual or aggression stimuli. In contrast, saliency theory (Goldstein, Suls and Anthony, 1972) refers to the content of the joke in relation to the individual’s experience and personality. They establish that people with a positive attitude towards aggression have a high appreciation of aggressive jokes. The two theories are contrary to each other; Freudian theory depends on the inner and hidden desire, while saliency pertains to explicit characteristics.

Two scenarios are presented in release theory; pre-existing nervous energy is relieved through laughing, or humorous stimulus causes nervous energy and subsequently releases it (Morreall, 2008, p.222). The first scenario can be explained by employing humour to release stress within the audience. The employment of humour here is to ease the serious environment. As an example, applied to our case, some cartoonists create their work to dissolve tension that is prevalent in society, as in the case with lockdown, as a result of COVID-19. Cartoonists around the world employed their skills to entertain people in quarantine by providing humorous messages and depictions of the reality. The second scenario could be the result of creating tension through incongruity and then releasing it through resolution humour (Maase, Fink and



Kaplowitz, 1984). That release scenario is related to Incongruity Resolution Humour which has been extensively examined by psychological researchers (Shultz, 1976; Suls, 1972; Ruch, 1992). The tension is created by incongruity and released by presenting a solution, which will be presented later in section (3.1.1.3).

Different factors are related to humour appreciation/release, such as aspects of solidarity and morality. From a solidarity perspective, individuals provoke laughter or create a joke to others to release tension, in order to be involved in the group. Alternatively, there will be no release after listening to jokes that illustrated by an outsider (Afflerbach, 2015, p.97). Morality has a strong correlation with the release of humour (Yam et al., 2019). For example, some individuals will not consider a racist joke funny, and a laugh will not be released as a way of exhibiting rejection.

To conclude, the success or failure of humour depends on the degree of release. Humour is deemed to have failed if the audience does not experience any release or relief. Conversely, humour is successful when the audience experiences relief (see Morreall, 2008). The degree of release differs between individuals, it could be smiling, giggling, belly laughing or sniggering.

Release theory and superiority theory discussed above are considered psychological theories, and that the appreciation of the humour is connected more to the psychological impact pertaining to how the humour's text is presented and how people deal with it. Other researchers were more concerned with the cognitive aspect of the text as presented next with respect to incongruity theory.

### **3.1.1.3 Incongruity Theory**

In contrast to the feeling of superiority exhibited in superiority theory, and relieving tension demonstrated in release theory, incongruity theory takes a different direction. The direction that it takes is connected to the cognitive approach. Kant ([1790] 1952, p. 538) explained the focus of this theory as condensed in the concept of incongruity, i.e., “[l]aughter is an affectation arising from a strained expectation being suddenly reduced to nothing”. Also, incongruity theory has a surprise as the main element to create humour (Shurcliff, 1968). People laugh at the contradictory nature of the event, action or speech that they have visualised in their mind.

In other words, incongruity is the contrast between the reality and imagination surprises the individual and makes them laugh.

Intellectual activity is the basis of incongruity theory. Laughter is a result of figuring out the incongruity to understand the humour within. Cognitive ability is essential to first recognise the incongruity, understand it and then respond to it. Following Kant ([1790]1952), Suls published the incongruity-resolution model (IR) in 1972. This particular model enables us to analyse how incongruous humour works. The first stage is finding the incongruity which is usually at the end of the joke, i.e., the punchline. The second stage is “find[ing] a cognitive rule which makes the punchline follow from the main part of the joke and reconciles the incongruous parts”, which is called resolution (Suls, 1972, p.82). This model is similar to a problem-solving activity in the sense that the incongruity is a problem, whilst the resolution is the process of solving the presented problem (Ruch, 2001). In multimodal cartoons, Suls (1972) determined that incongruity is presented in the picture, while the resolution is found in the caption. The incongruity relationship is inter-semiotic between the image and writing modes. By pointing out that the visual plays the role of opposition and the verbal text is a solution, it limits the possible range of functional roles of both image and writing in multimodal artefacts. Yus’ (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications is a theory that would be used to overcome such a limitation (illustrated later in Section 3.1.3). Other researchers claim that incongruity theory should not be illustrated just from the cognitive principle, but also from the linguistic perspective, as realised in the following theories; Script Semantic Theory of Humour (SSTH), General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) and Yus’ incongruity-resolution classification, which are discussed below.

### **3.1.2 Humour Theories and Linguistics**

According to Morreall (2009, p.10), incongruity theory is “now the dominant theory of humour in philosophy and psychology”. This theory is not just dominant in the two presented fields, but also in linguistics. Researchers such as Simpson (2003) and Oring (2016) refer to the linguistic theories of humour, Script Semantic Theory of Humour (SSTH) and General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), as examples of Incongruity Theory. As the two theories are based on incongruity (script opposition) and resolution, Brône, Feyaerts and Veale (2006, p.203) assert that the SSTH and GTVH are the “two most influential linguistic humor theories of the last two decades”. Compared to the SSTH and GTVH, Yus’ (2016) incongruity-resolution

classification is seen as a new contribution to linguistics and was extended to include multimodality in 2021. The following sub-sections introduce each of the three theories.

### **3.1.2.1 Script Semantic Theory of Humour (SSTH)**

For humour to be effective, Raskin (1979) initially stresses the need for knowledge to be shared between the speaker and the hearer, then the importance of script opposition, which is an overlapping of two scripts, as explained below. As a result of the capacity that human beings have to distinguish the grammaticality of a sentence (“competence” in Chomsky’s 1965 term), individuals have the ability to identify humorous sentences, too (Raskin, 1985). The cognitive structures that individuals have constitute “common sense” which refers to the prior knowledge that human beings have of different situations, events and so on. In relation to his definition, Raskin (1979) states that “common sense” denotes the script. He defines script as “a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it” (Raskin, 1985, p.81). He argues that it is “a cognitive structure internalized by the native speaker and it represents the native speaker’s knowledge of a small part of the world” (Ibid, p.81). The text in relation to script is considered funny under two presented conditions:

1. The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts.
  2. The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite in a special sense.
- (Raskin, 1985, p.99).

In his analysis of 32 jokes, Raskin (1985) establishes that they all share two features: script opposition, in addition to shifting from bona fide (BF) to non-bona fide (NBF) mode. The relationship between the presented scripts is opposition. Opposition is classified into three classes in real/unreal situations, i.e., actual/non-actual, normal/abnormal and possible/impossible. These three oppositions are shown as concrete oppositions that are “essential to human life” (Raskin, 1985, p.113) that include five common oppositions: good/bad, life/death, obscene/non-obscene, money/no-money and high/low stature (Ibid, p.113-114,127).

Raskin (1985, p. 100) claims that the difference between bona fide and non-bona fide modes of communication is that bona fide communication is “the earnest, serious, information-conveying mode of human communication”. It follows the Cooperative Principle developed by Grice (1975) that is essential for effective communication. The Cooperative Principle includes four maxims: quality, quantity, relation and manner. The quality maxim denotes truthfulness in

speech. The quantity maxim refers to the required length of contribution to the conversation to be informative. The relation maxim signifies the relevant utterances to each other, whereas the maxim of manner indicates that the utterances represent clarity.

Humour is presented by violating “bona fide communication in a pleasurable way” (Davies, 2010, p.3). This means humour is presented by violating one or all of Grice’s maxims. Raskin (1985, p.103) modifies the original Cooperative Principle to cover humorous texts where he calls them *non-bona-fide* (NBF) mode of joke telling:

1. Maxim of Quantity: Give as much information as is necessary for the joke;
2. Maxim of Quality: Say only what is compatible with the world of the joke;
3. Maxim of Relation: Say only what is relevant to the joke;
4. Maxim of Manner: Tell the joke efficiently.

In other words, a person moves from a bona fide to non-bona fide mode of communication to create humour. For example, one asks his friend ‘what is a dangerous hobby that you have?’ The second man responds: ‘talking to my wife while she is angry’. The change from a serious mode (BF) to a humorous one (NBF) is presented by violating the relation maxim. With the first man’s question about dangerous hobbies, the second man has to select a hobby to fulfil the relation maxim, for example scuba diving, hunting or heli-skiing. However, he violates that by presenting a different answer which is ‘talking to my wife while she is angry’. His answer is not relevant to the question ‘dangerous hobby’. Thus, the humour is created when the second man employs the NBF mode by providing a non-relevant answer. The joke teller has to follow the four maxims in the NBF mode to make his/her joke funny. Zhao (1988) mentions that jokes do not just convey NBF but also in specific situations, they convey BF information depending on the hearer’s knowledge about the cultural script, and occasionally, a stereotypical script. For example, joking about one characteristic of an elected candidate in a foreign country that the hearer is not aware of, in that case, the joke is not just NBF, but it is also BF, seeing as it adds specific new information for the hearer. However, the SSTH has two limitations as stated by Attardo (2017a, p.5):

first, the SSTH did not distinguish between referential and verbal humor, unsurprisingly, because they are semantically indistinguishable. Second and most significantly, the SSTH could not account for the fact that some jokes are perceived as being more similar to one another.

As a result of these two limitations, General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) has been proposed and will be introduced in the next sub-section.

### **3.1.2.2 General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)**

Attardo and Raskin (1991) developed the Script Semantic Theory of Humour (SSTH) to create the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH). It has six knowledge resources (KRs), particularly: Script Opposition (SO), Language (L), Logical Mechanism (LM), Target (TA), Situation (SI) and Narrative Strategy (NS). “[E]ach KR is a list or set of lists from which choices need to be made for use in the joke” (Attardo and Raskin, 1991, p.313).

GTVH applies not only to verbal jokes but also to multimodal artefacts. In his analysis of the sitcom *Chuckle Bites the Dust*, Attardo (1998, 2001) explains the importance of analysing visual aspects with the language, as he does with the characters’ movements and gestures. Although he does not elaborate on his explanation to cover the KRs, his study highlights the importance of analysing visual and verbal modes to understand multimodal humour. By moving forward with the application of the GTVH to sitcoms, many scholars for example Paolillo (1998); Koponen (2004); El-Arousy (2007) and Tsakona (2009) applied the theory to comics/cartoons with different interests and questions. The researchers applied a number of the KRs in their studies, resulting in several flaws when they apply them to the multimodal text. That is because KRs are created to be applied to verbal jokes not multimodal ones. However, the shared resources that were investigated in all of the presented studies are script opposition and logical mechanism, which highlights their importance in creating humour, as illustrated later by way of Yus’ incongruity-resolution classification.

Koponen (2004) and Paolillo (1998) did not show the function of modes, image and/or writing, in presenting either LMs or SO. By employing the language as the one responsible for opposition violates the function of multimodal humour as it can occur within the image mode (Tsakona, 2009). Notwithstanding, Tsakona (2009) highlights the supportive image role in creating humour as she modifies the function of the Language Knowledge Resource from just concerns pertaining to the linguistic features, such as literary wording, to be any codification presented in the cartoon either by linguistic or visual means. In fact, she pays more attention to how the image and writing are presented in particular in the cartoon, ignoring a detailed explanation of the contribution of both modes in figuring out each KR. Unlike Tsakona’s (2009) conclusion with respect to the supportive role of the image mode in creating humour, El-Arousy

(2007) reaches a different conclusion by claiming that the image mode plays an essential role in Script Opposition. These claims raise a question as regards the level of the image's contribution to the writing in the multimodal text to create humour. Yus' incongruity-resolution classifications (2016, 2021) contributed to answering these demands by highlighting the importance of the incongruity that is the synonym of the Script opposition in the GTVH study and the resolution which is the synonym of the Logical mechanism- illustrated below.

### **3.1.2.3 Yus' Incongruity-Resolution Classifications**

The concept of incongruity-resolution classifications on verbal humour was introduced by Yus in 2016. Subsequently, it was applied to multimodal discourse (i.e., memes; Yus, 2021). Yus (2016, 2017) includes two different incongruities, specifically frame-based and discourse-based incongruities when he studies verbal jokes. In the verbal artefact (i.e. jokes), the linguistic features, including syntax, semantics and pragmatism, are employed to create jokes in spoken or written patterns. However, he adds a third type, discourse–image incongruity, when he studies the multimodal artefact- memes; an excellent proposal shows the important of opposing the two modes - image and writing- to create humour.

#### **3.1.2.3.1 Incongruity**

The first proposed type, frame-based incongruity, involves creating a contradiction between the two frames; the text prepares/triggers a certain frame opposes the one that the audiences are familiar out of their experiences “to make sense of what is happening in the joke” (Yus, 2016, p.133). In this type of incongruity, the hearer must create "a mental construction of the situation" (Yus, 2017, p.4). This concept has been proposed earlier as a make sense frame (Yus, 2013, 2016) as that when the hearer hears the joke, he relives the given stored information to make sense of the given scenarios of the joke. This pulling of the information from the mind happens unconsciously because the hearer has already stored information due to experience and old knowledge. Notably, the joke lets the hearer build a certain frame when they hear the joke. This sort of given frame contradicts the normal frame that the hearer usually has. In fact, Yus (2017, p.4) suggests that some " jokes base the incongruity on the hearer's construction of an appropriate mental situation.. to make sense of what is happening in the story depicted within the joke, which turns out to be eventually incorrect". The example of this type is presented below in (1)

(1) George sat alone in the hospital room with his dying wife beside him and her family. He was crying while holding her hands, and others in the room were trying to calm him down. After everyone left the room, she said in her weak voice, 'I have to confess about something I did before I go... I... I sold all the properties that your father left for you, and I spent the money traveling with my friends and going shopping.' 'I know,' he replied. 'That's why I poisoned you.'

In this verbal joke, incongruity occurs in the frame as the hearer constructs a frame relating to a caring husband who is concerned about his wife's health. However, the audience discovers at the end of the joke (punchline) that the man is the one who is responsible for his wife's poor health, as he poisoned her. Thus, the incongruity that occurred between the first frame and the second frame emerged in the joke.

Discourse-based incongruity, the second type, refers to the incongruity found in ambiguity of the verbal inputs, which the audience has to assume "to turn it [the joke] into a fully contextualised proposition" (Yus, 2016, p. 133). The inferential process has to be largely applicable to attain a full contextualised proposition (Sperber and Wilson, 1995). The process of contextualisation has to obtain explicatures (explicit interpretations), implicatures (derivation conclusions) and assumptions based on the contextual information. Decoding the semantic utterances is the first process the hearer has that helps identify the inferential presentation, which is the explicit level. It includes inferential words such as (a) reference assignment using the indexical; (b) disambiguation, as the hearer has to choose one of the two meanings that the word has to make sense of the sentence; (c) saturation when the speaker deletes some part of the sentence that makes little sense, or (d) concept adjustment is pragmatically adjusted to be more general or specific in the presentation compared with the ad hoc concept. These explicature meanings match the speakers' intended meaning, and the inferential strategies are clearly presented and solved. However, in other cases, implicature is observed in the given utterances whereby the hearer depends on the explicature to reach the intended meaning (implicature). An example of this form is presented below:

(2) A policeman in Washington D.C. stops a lady and asks for her license. He says "Lady, it says here that you should be wearing glasses". The woman answers "Well, I have contacts". The policeman replies "I don't care who you know! You're getting a ticket!" (Yus, 2016, p.39).

Here, the opposition in this example is shown with the word 'contact' which has two distinct meanings. This caused the misunderstanding between the policeman and the lady, resulting in the policeman's response 'I don't care who you know!'. The word 'contacts' has two meanings (1) one as the colloquial shortening for 'contact lenses (2) a social connection with people in power; a kind of cronyism. Here, the misunderstanding occurs as the lady means 'contacts' in

the first meaning, although the policeman understands it to be the second one. As a result of the misunderstanding, humour occurs.

The third type, discourse–image incongruity, focuses on the opposition between the image and the written text in the artefact. With this type, three sub-categories are portrayed. The first one that is commonly employed, as stated by Yus (2021), is the direct opposition between the given meanings interpreted from the writing and image. The meme in Figure 3.1 is an example of the direct opposition between the writing and image:



Figure 3.1: First type of discourse–image incongruity from [@phddiarymemes](#)

The opposition is presented between the writing above the image and the image itself in two panels; the word 'holiday' is a break people take from work to travel somewhere in order to enjoy their time with family and friends and to de-stress. However, this is not the case as presented in the image, as the man is working on his laptop while parasailing. The resolution of this opposition between the meaning of the word holiday (taking a break from everything) and the one presented in the image (working while performing an activity on holiday), is presented in writing '. Moreover, 'but you are a PhD student' means that the PhD student does not have a life as he is more committed to finishing his thesis.

The other sub-category is not direct like the first type but the hearer understands the "ironic implicated conclusions by contrasting the image and the text" (Yus, 2021, p.9). Here, it depends more on the inferential process as the reader perceives the intended meaning after reading the whole text based on the opposition of the two, the text and the image. An example of this specific type is presented below in Figure 3.2.





Figure 3.2: Second type of discourse–image incongruity from <http://www.quickmeme.com>

In this example, the reader will understand the intended ironic meaning after combining the written text "and then I told him.... we would look into it", and the image of the laughing four men. The meme here makes fun of the target who thinks that the presented project or CV will be looked at by the people in authority, who have given him/her a promise, although they will not actually do so.

The last sub-category related to the discourse–image incongruity is termed second-order incongruity. It refers to the reused clips from a movie, TV programme or series that serve a different purpose than originally proposed. It recontextualises the already given text and the contrast occurs with the writing and the image. The opposition does not occur between the reused image and the written text but with the original appearance of this image and the new function of the reused image. The reused image is a new reaction to the written text, as seen in meme in Figure 3.3.



Figure 3.3: Third type of discourse–image incongruity from <https://covid-19archive.org>

This meme discussing grocery shopping as a risky activity compared to it being a daily activity was published during the pandemic. The image here in this meme is taken from The Hunger Games films and it has been reused to deliver a different meaning. The opposition between the film's original scenario is the young woman saying bye to her family to fight in a game where only one winner survives, contrasts with using the image to say bye to family as she departs to obtain supplies. The old and new use of the image share the same presentation of heading off to an unknown fate.

### 3.1.2.3.2 Resolution

Concerning resolution, Yus (2016, 2021) identifies three different types that the hearer applies to solve an incongruity: frame-based, discourse-based and implication-based resolutions that have been applied to verbal humour (joke) and multimodal artefacts (memes). These three different resolutions occur with the three incongruities and help to solve them. First, a frame-based resolution involves changing the given make-sense frame and replacing it with a different frame that reconciles the incongruity. The frame-based with discourse-based incongruity is less frequent than with frame-based incongruity (Yus, 2016, 2017). The following example (3) illustrates the frame-based resolution that solves the discourse-based incongruity:

(3) Mary Clancey came up to Father O'Grady in tears. "What's bothering you so, dear?" inquired Father O'Grady. "Oh, father, I've got terrible news," replied Mary. "Well what is it, Mary?" "Well, my husband, passed away last night, Father." "Oh, Mary" said the father, "that's terrible. Tell me Mary, did he have any last requests?" "Well, yes he did father," replied Mary. "What did he ask, Mary?" Mary replied, "He said, 'Please, Mary, put down the gun'" (Yus, 2016; p.110).

The incongruity here occurred with the phrase 'last requests' questioned by the father, which has two meanings (1) the will (the person's requests that other individuals have to follow after his death) and (2) asking or demanding. The father is wondering about the husband's last will, but the daughter understands the second meaning of the phrase 'asking', and she responds that he asked her for his life, begging her not to shoot him. Regarding incongruity in the interpretation of the phrase, forming, discourse-based incongruity, the solving of the incongruity is shown through the "re-interpretation of the phrase entails a drastic change of make-sense frame from the initially accessible *grieving woman upon her husband's death* to the more unlikely but eventually correct *grieving woman after killing her husband*" (Yus, 2016, p.110, original emphasis).

The second type of resolution is discourse-based resolution. It means the audience must assume the resolution based on the written text. Here, the inferential meaning of the given written discourse is occasionally required to resolve the incongruity. The intended meaning can be solved due to the given written hints in the punchline that lead the hearers to construct the second meaning, although they started with the first accessible interpretation when the incongruity occurs in the setup position. Moreover, the discourse-based resolution also occurs with frame-based incongruity. Yus maintains that when the frame-based occurs in the setup, it is difficult to comprehend the discourse-based resolution to solve the incongruity, which he had difficulty in finding in the examined corpus during his two studies completed in 2016 and 2017. Yus justified the non-existence of discourse-based resolution when the frame-based incongruity happens in the setup due to the nature of the frame, as the hearers will find it difficult to progress from the flow of constructing the depicted given frame. Two common resolutions generally augment incongruity (frame-based incongruity in the setup); constructing another frame (frame-based resolution) or referring to the premise that is suggested by the given frame, which is what introduces the third resolution type (implication-based incongruity). The second reason discourse-based resolution is not able to solve the incongruity in the frame is due to the perspective of discourse that Yus established to exclude the implicatures as the "implications (implicatures) is indeed part of the interpretation of the text of the joke, but not a development from the text of the joke" (2016, p.104). It needs the hearer to undertake "inferential backtracking and re-interpretation of that initial part of the joke in a different way, so that the joke finally achieves congruence as a whole" (Yus, 2017, p.14).

Conversely, the discourse-based resolution requires the hearer to go back to the joke again and reinterpret certain parts of the joke when the frame-based incongruity occurs at the end, as with the following example (4)

(4) Job Applicant: "I'm looking for a job as a consultant." Employer: "I'm sorry, we already have enough consultants." Applicant: "That's ok, with my experience, I can be an advisor." Employer: "More than we can use already." Applicant (as he is getting desperate): "I'm not proud, I can do paper work, I'll be a clerk, If you have too many, I'll start as a janitor." Employer: "It just doesn't seem that we have any openings for a person with your qualifications." Applicant (as he stands up, angrily yells): "To work for you I'd have to be a low life, belly crawling, double dealing jerk!" Employer: "Well, you didn't say you were an attorney, have a seat, we may have an opening" (Yus, 2016, p.104).

Here, the frame is constructed using the interview theme (applicant and employer). The employer has refused the applicant several positions including consultant, advisor, clerk and janitor. However, the incongruity occurs at the end when the employer accepts the applicant pointing out that he is an attorney. This frame takes the reader back to the joke and enables the reader to reinterpret the statement that the applicant said, meaning the employer assumes that the applicant is an attorney. The audience returns to the statement, "To work for you I'd have to be a low life, belly crawling, double dealing jerk!". The hearer reinterprets it again, forming the discourse-based resolution for the given frame-based incongruity. Here, the hearer generalises the adjectives of being poor, fat and dishonest as the main properties associated with people who work as *lawyers*.

Lastly, an implication-based resolution can be inferred from "outside the text of the joke through the derivation of implicated premises and implicated conclusions" or by looking "for implications that allow the humorous effects to be obtained after a full comprehension of the joke has taken place" (Yus, 2021, p.133). He (2017, p.8.) contends that these implicatures are not explicit, but they are implicit depending mainly on "the hearer's ability to access specific contextual information that allows for their derivation". An example of this type of resolution shown with the frame-based incongruity is presented in the following example (5);

(5) A man was travelling down a country road when he saw a large group of people outside a house. He stopped and asked a person why the large crowd was there. A farmer replied, "Joe's mule kicked his mother-in-law and she died". "Well", replied the man, "she must have had a lot of friends". "Nope", said the farmer, "we all just want to buy his mule" (Yus, 2017, p.12).

Here, the frame-based incongruity is depicted in the huge number of people who are supposed to be attending the funeral of Joe's mother-in-law, but they plan to buy the mule that kicked Joe's mother-in-law to death. The resolution of the frame-based incongruity is based on the conclusion premises that the hearer acquires from the mother-in-law's identity. Mothers-in-law hold a stereotypical presentation which is not friendly and just like Joe, many sons-in-law want to buy the mule to get rid of their mothers-in-law.

In his book, Yus (2016) explains nine patterns related to the incongruity-resolution classifications. Each of the three resolutions occur with the three incongruities which resulted in the different patterns and possibility that the humour is created by mixing the different incongruities in relation to the resolution types.

### 3.2 The Relationship of the Humour Theories with the Scope of the Thesis

Raskin (1985) contends that the combination of the above-mentioned theories (i.e. superiority, release and incongruity theories) will support the researcher to effectively analyse humour from a psychological perspective, seeing as each one employs a different function:

the incongruity-based theories make a statement about the stimulus; the superiority theories characterize the relations or attitudes between the speaker and the hearer; and the release/relief theories comment on the feelings and psychology of the hearer only (Raskin, 1985, pp.40-41).

However, this thesis is more concerned with the production of the humour in the Saudi cartoons and their multimodality affordance that resulted in both modes being adopted and having the resources available to create fun and humour regarding different COVID-19 related issues. Therefore, the investigation of the stimuli is the essence of the study, not the appreciation of the humour, as in the case of superiority theory and release theory. As illustrated in Section 3.1.1.2, four different incongruity theories were proposed including Suls (1972), SSTH (Raskin, 1979, 1985), GTVH (Attardo and Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 1998, 2001) and Yus' incongruity- resolution classification (2016, 2021). Yus' classification is the one applied in the analysis in this thesis.

There are distinct reasons for not incorporating the three previously suggested incongruity-based theories. Specifically, with regards to Suls' incongruity theory, its primary focus lies within the sphere of cognitive principles. Conversely, the remaining linguistic theories, in particular SSTH and GTVH, exhibit a higher degree of relevance when applied to textual content that is verbal in nature. This distinction arises due to observed limitations. Nevertheless, various researchers seek to apply the latter theory, GTVH to the multimodal text, they differ in regard to utilising the KRs in multimodal text; however, the shared ones are SO and LMs. Additionally, their application of the contribution of the image mode was taken from a general perspective. This inadequate presentation of the interactive relationship between both modes, image and writing, is considered a substantial constraint to the application of GTVH in the multimodal artefact. Attardo (2020) asserted something similar, claiming that the

GTVH is suggested with the verbal humour and applying it to the multimodal artefact will result in several limitations, pointing to the different affordance of the two modes<sup>17</sup>.

In contrast, Yus' classification is more concerned with the incongruity, which is the main reason for the humour and is equivalent to SO in the study of GTVH, and that the resolution which has a similar principle to LMs in GTVH is used to resolve such incongruity. Nevertheless, the incongruity and resolution are not exclusively seen from the cognitive and linguistics perspectives as claimed by GTVH, but seen more from the relevant perspective and the multimodality perspective. Therefore, Yus' theory is adopted and adapted for the analysis in this thesis. The adjustments are required to the terminologies of the presented modes to match the multimodality perspective used in this thesis. Changing the terminology is attributable to the different meanings the word 'discourse' holds in linguistics and multimodality. The word 'discourse' refers to written text in Yus' classification, which holds a specific meaning; however, the term 'discourse' is used in a general meaning in multimodality, where many modes can express the discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). Accordingly, 'discourse-based incongruity' becomes 'writing-based incongruity', and the 'discourse-image incongruity' becomes 'writing-image incongruity'. The same applies to the resolution that 'discourse-based resolution' becomes 'writing-based resolution', and 'discourse-image resolution' becomes 'writing-image resolution'. Moreover, a fourth classification was proposed in the presented thesis related solely to the image mode to be image-based incongruity and image-based resolution. This proposal is based on Samson and Huber's (2007) assertion about its essential role in creating humour in cartoons. Hence, there is the potential to have incongruity and its resolution formed in the image mode (illustrated more in the methodology section along with redefining some of incongruities and resolutions classifications).

In addition to using the incongruity-resolution classifications, more examination is required to analyse the techniques and types used by the sign-maker to create humour. A great deal of literature has discussed this point by examining the unique style of cartoonist and joke teller who depend on specific form to create humour in the mono- and multimodal artefacts. The following sub-section introduces this literature under the name of forms of humour that includes humour technique (rhetorical figures) and types of humour.

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<sup>17</sup> He suggests some changes to the KRs for the multimodal artifact. For example, the Language KR could be revised to Semiotic Strategy KR to encompass other types of text, including non-linguistic and multimodal elements.

### 3.3 Forms of Humour

Different taxonomies of humour have been presented in diverse ways by various researchers. As the scope of the study is cartoons, two distinct perspectives in the literature have to be reviewed in this section, including linguistics and multimodality. The linguistics is reviewed as considerable research illustrates their classification of humour creation within the verbal context. The most frequently referenced academic work concerning humour taxonomies in the linguistic studies is the work of Norrick (1993, 1994) and Dynel (2009). The former highlights four of the most used forms of humour: sarcasm, satire, irony and wordplay. More specifically, wordplay includes five different subtypes, including spoonerisms, metaphors, hyperbole, allusions and puns. Dynel (2009) created more detail classification based on Norrick's work comprising ten different types, including canned jokes, witticisms (e.g., stylistic figures, puns, allusion and register clash), retorts, teasing, banter, putdowns, self-denigrating humour, and anecdotes. According to Dynel (2009), the abovementioned four categories – stylistic figures, puns, allusion and register clash are not exclusively discussed under witticisms, but they can also occur with other types, including retorts, teasing, banter, put-downs, self-denigrating humour, and anecdotes. Therefore, these four sub-types are discussed as solo ones that have the potential to be separate as they raised the potentiality to be integrated with other presented types. Dynel (2009, p.1288) maintains that stylistic figures are “structurally and pragmatically less complex than the [other] forms”. Stylistic figures comprise five different types, including simile/comparison, metaphor, hyperbole, paradox and irony. Similar to the stylistic figures, multimodal research about cartoons have discussed some of them to be rhetorical figures presented in the cartoons, Alsadi and Howard (2021) proposed five different rhetorical figures used to create humour in cartoons, including intertextuality (allusion and parody), metaphor, metonymy, juxtaposition and exaggeration. These classifications have similarity with Dynel's in the presentation as simile/comparison has a similarly principle of the proposed juxtaposition, hyperbole is exaggeration in a sense, allusion has been extended to include parody, forming intertextuality, keeping metaphor as a main type of figure, but adding metonymy as a supportive one. Alsadi and Howard's (2021) classifications are examined just from their multimodal function, ignoring the possibility of occurring the same figure in one mode to be verbal or visual as in the case of the metaphor, for example. Therefore, the possibility of the rhetorical figures to be occurred either verbal, visual or multimodal will be considered in this thesis.

Moreover, two classifications in Dynel's (2009) work will not be considered, including paradox and teasing. The former- paradox- is not included in this thesis as it shares the same function as irony - the presented statement has an opposite meaning that aligns with the hidden belief. Using both definitions in her research, Dynel (2009, p.1288) refers to the work of Nilsen and Nilsen (1978), who highlight the internal contradiction that occurs between the belief that a person has and his/her statement, as in the example "I don't believe in astrology. I'm a Sagittarius and I'm sceptical". Irony also refers to the uttering of a sentence that is the opposite of the actual intention, such as 'it's great that you've started growing a moustache' when addressing a girl, referring to how much he is disgusted. Therefore, in this thesis, irony will be discussed more as one of the essential types in humour. Moreover, teasing as a humour form is not discussed in this chapter as being a type of humour despite the fact that Dynel (2009) addressed it in her classifications. However, teasing can be considered as a genre of humour more than it is considered a type, as different forms of humour such as irony for example, could be used to tease someone. Teasing is quite similar to the other presenting types, including putdowns and self-denigrating humour as making fun of the target person. However, the difference is in relation to the content found in the teasing as it can be both positive or negative while the other two tend to be used with a negative connotation (Dynel, 2009). Therefore, teasing is not considered in the explanation below while the two (putdowns and self-denigrating) are combined into one category (putdown) as they share the same purpose. The following section illustrates several common verbal and multimodal forms of humour mentioned above in the work of Dynel (2009) and Alsadi and Howard (2021) respectively. These forms are considered a solid foundation for the analysis of the humour introduced in Chapter 6.

### **3.3.1 Jokes (Canned Jokes)**

Canned jokes are defined as "short fictional narratives and/or dialogues ending in a punchline, which are (re)told for the sake of amusement and do not carry serious meanings" (Dynel, 2018, p.392). For jokes to be termed canned jokes depend on its repetition. Canned jokes are created previously and circulated by many individuals as they "constitute integral parts per se, dissociated from the whole discourse" (Long and Graesser,1988 as cited in Dynel, 2009, p.1287). Most canned jokes become joke cycles, as with the typical 'blonde joke', the main theme of which is stupidity. However, this definition does not apply to all contexts as canned jokes are not always employed to create humour but can also be "deliberately employed to



communicate messages” (Oring, 2003, p.96) and change societies by warning or advising them (Morreall, 2009).

A canned joke includes a setup and a punchline; the punchline is what creates the humour (Attardo, 1994, 2017a; Hockett, 1977; Suls, 1972). Thus, a canned joke is based on incongruity-resolution theory (see Section 3.1.1.2). Many researchers have exploited Suls’ (1972) incongruity-resolution theory to identify canned jokes; the essential part of the joke – the punchline – creates surprise and thus incongruity. However, this claim has been criticised by some researchers (Yus, 2016, 2021; Dynel, 2016), who have argued that the moment of surprise does not always occur with the punchline but can potentially take place during the setup of the joke. Moreover, some jokes lack a punchline, including those that are known as shaggy-dog stories – that is, long stories without punchlines (Chiario, 1992). However, because the humour of shaggy-dog stories and other types of jokes depends on the violation of the audience’s expectations, a joke, in general, can be defined as verbal humour that creates surprise through incongruity, regardless of when or how the moment of surprise occurs.

Dynel (2016) presents another type of joke known as the visual-verbal joke that differs from the canned joke as it is based on both modes as opposed to the dependence in the verbal mode. She discovered that the most widely shared memes among people are the ones that combine both images and text. The difference between a verbal (canned joke) and a multimodal joke (verbal-visual joke) is the position of the setup and the punchline. Dynel (2016) ascertained that the setup and the punchline differ in their spatial position in the memes compared the text as that the punchline and setup are formed not only by the verbal text but also by the image itself. The image acts as an anchor for the setup and punchline of the verbal jokes, suggesting that the image can be the setup or punchline, and the writing is the opposite. However, at times the image does not play a role in the opposition as the verbal is the essence of creating the joke, and therefore, the setup catchphrase could be located above an image, while the punchline could be located below the image. On the other hand, the image can stand alone and create the joke, despite its low frequency in the presented memes as it predominantly used as the butt of the catchphrase opposition (Dynel, 2016).

### **3.3.2 Irony**

Specific researchers argue that irony is not intended to be humorous (Partington, 2006), while others consider it a key concept in the study of humour (Dynel, 2009; Attardo, 2000). In this

study, irony is considered to be humorous depending on the target of humour and how it is received by the audience. Irony depends on the overt opposition between an untrue statement and the speaker's true intention. The speaker does not intend to make an assertion about the uttered statements being true, as they pretend to do so (Williams, 2002; Barker, 2017; Dynel, 2018) by using various strategies, such as questions and exclamations (Dynel 2013a, 2017; Kapogianni, 2016). Irony works only if the audience knows or can remember the true intention of the speaker's untruthful utterances (Kapogianni, 2013). In other words, irony is created by the incongruity between the speaker's intended meaning and the produced utterance (Gibbs, 1994, 2000; Dynel, 2013b, 2016, 2018). Moreover, ironic statements can be presented positively or negatively, according to Attardo (2000). Positive irony is created through a negative statement. For example, two close friends may use the statement 'you look awful today' to indicate that the other looks beautiful. Conversely, negative irony can be created by way of positive sentences. For example, the statement 'you always come earlier than us. We love your discipline' could be used because that person always arrives late to meetings. This incongruity between positive and negative statements and their intended meaning is resolved when the hearer understands the speaker's intended meaning (Gibbs, 1994, 2000; Dynel, 2013b, 2018).

Three classifications of the irony, including verbal, situational and dramatic have been identifies in the literature (Alharthi, 2016). Verbal as discussed above, says the opposite of the intended meaning. Situation irony (Lagerwerf, 2007) shows the opposite to what is logically expected and what happens in the situation. For example, a fire station burning down and the firemen being unable to control the fire. The dramatic irony (Dempster, 1932) demonstrates that the audience appreciate something that the main characters in the artefact do not know. This type of irony is primarily presented in films. For example, the evil character walks behind the hero and the audiences recognise the danger, although the main character, the hero, does not. This type of irony-dramatic irony is not observed in memes (Lestari, 2019; Zuhdah, 2021) and cartoons (Al-Hindawi & Abdulazeez, 2015; Yanti & Fitri, 2018), seeing as it typically occurs in 'a novel or story' (Lestari, 2019, p.120).

### **3.3.3 Puns and Wordplay**

A pun can be defined as "a humorous verbalisation that has (prototypically) two interpretations" (Danel, 2009, p.1289). The example for this kind is the phrase 'denial is not (just) a river in Egypt', in which the punning occurs in the meaning of the word 'denial', as it

can either be the psychological process of neglect and an unwillingness to accept facts or the truth ('denial') or the name of the river in Egypt called Nile ('de-nile'). The proposed definition of a pun aligns with the concept of wordplay, as it refers to the use of structural features in language "to bring about a communicatively significant confrontation of two (or more) linguistic structures with more or less similar forms and more or less different meanings" (Delabastita, 1996, p.128).

Both concepts – wordplay and puns – have been defined as possessing two meanings conveyed by one or more linguistic formations. In both wordplay and a verbal pun, humour is created by the ambiguous presentation of literal and actual meanings (Delabastita, 1996; Ross, 1998; Dynel, 2009). However, ambiguity alone does not create humour; understanding the context in which the words or expressions occur is essential for identifying humour (Delabastita, 1996). Four types of wordplay share similarities with the linguistic concepts of punning: homonymy, homophony, homography and paronymy (ibid). First, homonymy refers to two words with the same sounds and spelling but different meanings; for example, 'a prisoner's favourite punctuation mark is a full stop – it marks the end of his sentence'. Here, the word 'sentence' has the same sound and spelling but differs in meaning. One meaning alludes to a combination of words, while the other meaning relates to the period of time that an individual spends in prison. Second, homophony denotes two words with the same sound but different spellings, as demonstrated in the following example: "A pessimist's blood type is B negative. Here, the same sound is found in the blood type 'B-' and the words 'be negative'; however, the two are spelled differently. Third, homography indicates two words have the exact same spelling but different sounds, as in the word 'bass' in the example 'you can tune a guitar, but you can't tuna fish. Unless you play bass'. Here, when one pronounces 'bass' with the long sound of the letter a /eɪ/, the word means a musical instrument, whereas pronouncing it with a short a /æ/ means a type of fish. Lastly, paronymy signifies two words with slight differences in both spelling and sound. An example can be found in the following statement: 'Come in for a faith lift'. This similarity is found in the close phonological resemblance with the two words faith [feiθ] and face [feɪs]: "The punning here is realised when the collocation face lift is changed to faith lift, playing on [a] religious theme" (Lukeš, 2014, p.18).

Beside the classification of the puns depending on the differences of the semantic meanings, many studies examine puns depending on the modes presented. Various studies established that puns are not exclusively presented in the verbal mode, but also in the visual mode, as in the

work of Kincaid (1982), Hempelmann and Samson (2007) and Willmore and Hocking (2017), which are based principally for their iconic and symbolic qualities (Hempelmann and Samson, 2007). Moreover, the image and writing modes can also be played together to create puns, establishing multimodal puns (Bahtiar, Kadarisman and Basthomi, 2018; Kovalenko & Martynyuk, 2021). The types used in multimodal puns are similar to those used in the verbal and visual puns mentioned above, such as paronymy, homonymy, and homophony (Bahtiar, Kadarisman and Basthomi, 2018); however, these types differ in function as overlapping occurs in the image and writing modes.

### **3.3.4 Retorts**

Retorts are produced in response to another's utterances. In this type of humour, the immediate response by the speaker can be funnier than the other aforementioned types depending on the intonation of the speaker "to amusing the hearer, albeit not always the direct addressee but the third party" (Dyvel, 2009, p. 1291). As stated by Dyvel (2009), misunderstanding pretention by one speaker leads to the activation of another meaning, as found in both of the presented types, namely punning ambiguity or the two-fold pragmatic (illocutionary) force of the preceding statement (prosaic retort).

Dyvel (2009, p.1293) claimed that retorts can be perceived as teasing, as in the case of a misunderstanding. The difference between the two is that in the stylistic and formal structures of a humorous conversation, a retort is the appropriate type to investigate. Conversely, teasing is the best type to use when investigating the pragmatics of humorous exchanges with a focus on the aggressive and nonaggressive functions that they carry. This use of teasing functions along with the other to make fun and not to present facts, as in the following example by Dyvel (2009, p.1293):

Woman: You're a thief and a liar.

Man: I only lied about being a thief, I don't do that anymore. (teasing)

Woman: Steal?

Male: Lie. (teasing)

### 3.3.5 Banter

Banter is an extension of teasing where teasing is not only produced by just one of the speakers, but rather both are actually engaged in teasing in their exchanges. These exchanges are not merely impolite and aggressive, but they can also be collaborative and supportive. Examples of these exchanges were presented on the BBC radio programme titled: 'Playground Insults', which invites two close actors who have worked together on a film and asks them to tease each other. One of many pairs to play the game was Chris Hemsworth and Scarlett Johansson, who started using the following playful banter:

S: Chris you are ugly. Everyone has been talking about it, you are just really ugly.

C: Thanks, um, well they say the beauty is on the inside and inside you are just awful.

S: You have got a growing collection of like, grandma cardigans and I have been meaning to talk to you about it, like it is crazy.

C: It's crazy?

S: Yeah.

C: It is like you are basically a walking Ann Taylor ad.

C: It's crazy?

S: Wow.

C: It is lucky you are beautiful because there is nothing up here. [pointing to his head]

This teasing went on for approximately three minutes, this type in general based on exchanging of the teasing.

### 3.3.6 Putdowns/Self-Denigrating Humour

Putdowns can be defined as abusive remarks that are not appreciated by the addressee (Dyrel, 2009). Moreover, a putdown is not necessarily uttered in front of the targets, but it can be formed to make fun of them. The example demonstrating a putdown in the following third-party sentence is 'I think she exceeded the stupidity; she cannot even understand my simple sentences'. Researchers consider putdowns to be an example of teasing (Terrion and Ashforth, 2002). If the teasing is actually perpetrated by the speaker him/herself toward him/herself, this is called self-denigrating humour. This type is not employed to put oneself down, but it is rather

a form of self-critique employed as a way of admitting mistakes and failure for comedic effect. Here, both types share the negative connotation of the uttered statement to make fun. However, the difference as mentioned above is the target: self-denigrating is targeting oneself while a putdown is targeting the others, nonetheless, they share the same aim, which is attempting to amuse the others (Dynel, 2009). These two forms of humour are mostly presented in comedy shows as that the comedian is talking negatively about himself or the community that he belongs to as in the case with the comedian Amer Zahr who talks about Arab culture in his show and his own story of being an Arab-American comedian.

### **3.3.7 Anecdotes**

Anecdotes are the last type of conversational humour. An anecdote is a humorous narrative of one's own story or one pertaining to other individuals. This use of stories does not merely depend on the use of witty lexemes and phrasemes but also on nonverbal expressions, such as using facial expressions, playing with one's intonation, as well as using different gestures that contribute to the delivery of a humorous story. Recently, I told my friends a funny anecdote concerning a reservation that I had made at a famous restaurant for my birthday. When I reached the restaurant, the receptionist refused to let me in as the restaurant was fully booked and I had apparently not made a prior reservation. I talked to the manager about my prebooking and he argued that my name was not written down. I asked for the list of names and found my name with a slightly different spelling, which resulted in another meaning; instead of 'Ahlam', which means dreams, the one written on the list was 'Alam', which means pains. Missing just one letter created a different meaning, and therefore, a misunderstanding had occurred. This misspelling and misunderstanding made all of us laugh and I was thankful to have my name rather than the one written on the restaurant's list.

### **3.3.8 Register Clash**

Register clash has two subcategories, namely upgrading and downgrading. Upgrading implies using words from a higher register in informal discourse, whereas downgrading signifies employing lower-register items in a formal text, which is also called 'bathos'. The purpose of using a particular register in the opposite context is to convey a funny intention, such as in the following example of using an informal register in a formal context to create humour: "The PM cocks his head like Snow White listening to the animals" (Dynel, 2009, p.1291).

### 3.3.9 Metonymy

Dirven and Pörings (2003), confirmed the importance of the metonymy. Metonymy can be defined as “the trope in which one concept stands for another concept from the same domain” (Forceville, 2016, p.100). This referential function is based on the conceptual concepts in view of culture and experience (Lakoff and Johnson, [1980] 2003). It is grounded in individuals' experiences as it includes a direct association of physical and casual representations, making its identification easier than the conceptual metaphor. The two presented domains – target and vehicle/ source- has a relation depending on the metonymic mapping (Ruiz de Mendoza and Díez, 2002):

1- Source-in- Target: the superordinate domain stands for a subdomain. In this case, the source is a subdomain of the target. This kind of metonymy involves domain expansion.

Example: the guitar will not be with us today as he has some personal issues.

Here, the guitar is the source that is used to refer to the target to be the musician. The guitar is a subdomain of the musician creation the metonymy. Such a presentation manifests the metonymy INSTRUMENT FOR USER.

2- Target-in-Source: a subdomain stands for a matrix domain. Target is a subdomain of the source. This kind of metonymy involves ‘domain reduction’, and can be found, for example, on PRODUCT FOR PRDUCER. Example: Shakespeare is on the shelf (Alousque,2014) as that the name Shakespeare stands for the book that is written by Shakespeare.

Additionally, metonymies are not just employed in the language but also in the image (Genova, 2018; Forceville, 2009, 2016; Alsadi and Howard, 2021), and multimodally (Forceville, 2009; Hidalgo-Downing and Mujic, 2011; Alsadi and Howard, 2021). Visual metonymy presents one of the two domains visually while the other is conceptual. One of the most commonly encountered examples of visual metonymy comprises pictorial runes (Forceville, 2011). There are two specific types, namely direction runes where the lines are used to demonstrate the actions and movements and “emo-runs” that display the emotions and which are typically associated with facial expressions together with serious tones. Motion lines show movement in static artefacts, comics and cartoons (McCloud, [1993] 2006). These pictorial runes are based on the experiences that individuals have. For example, moving can produce air and the motion lines are the visual presentation of such movement. Other researchers point not to the real experience that allows the individual to understand the presented motion rune but being highly exposed to comics (being a comic fan), could result in understanding this sort of rune (Cohn and Maher, 2015). Conversely, other pictorial runes are applied to express emotions as in using spike to “represent metonymic expressions of certain emotions, such as surprise, frustration,

shame, etc” (Tasić and Stamenković, 2017, p.132). The metonymic meaning of different pictorial runes is based on the psychological or physical experience that the creators and the audience experiences (Forceville, 2011; Tasić and Stamenković, 2017), as in the case of droplets that can represent hunger, shame and concerns/doubts.

On the other hand, multimodal metonymy is similar to verbal metonymy, but that one domain is presented in one mode- image, for example, while the other domain is found in another mode, such as writing (e.g., Hidalgo-Downing and Mujic, 2011; Alsadi and Howard, 2021). For example, the metonymy-the institution for people responsible -(WHOLE FOR PART) is presented in the cartoon where the source is visually presented to be a personified university, and the university members as a target is presented in the writing mode (Alsadi and Howard, 2021).

### **3.3.10 Metaphors**

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) initially proposed the conceptual metaphor. They claim that the metaphor is a question of thoughts that have been verbalised or presented using the language. Their primary argument in forming this theory is that a metaphor is created and conceived mentally as many people have experience of them. As a result of their intellectual perception of metaphorical life, they can be produced by many linguistic features or in other words, “[p]rimarily on the basis of linguistic evidence, we have found that most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p.18). Different perceptions of life could be observed and understood metaphorically based on the claim that life is metaphorical in nature. A metaphor can be defined as “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p.21). The target concept is usually presented and understood by the concrete resource. The metaphor’s formula is “A is B” as A is the target and B is the resource. It is worth noting that academics ascertained that conceptual metaphors, can be formed visually to form visual/ pictorial metaphors (e.g., Kaplan, 1992; Carroll, 1994, 1996; Forceville, 1996, 2002; Cupchik, 2003; El Refaie, 2003; Fahlenbrach, 2008; Ortiz, 2011). Moreover, conceptual metaphors can be formed by different presentations of multiple modes, for instance gestures, writing, images and music. Furthermore, these modes can be incorporated to create multimodal metaphors (e.g., Forceville, 1996; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009; Eggertsson and Forceville, 2009; Rohdin, 2009).



The identification of the pictorial metaphors as such is a result of their intentional representation by the producers (Forceville, 2008; Kennedy, 2008) in an image mode. Forceville (2002) states that visual/pictorial metaphors have their target and source domains formed by the given visual information. Many scholars have focused on this type of metaphor in advertisements (Forceville, 1996; Kaplan, 1992; Messaris, 1997; Phillips, 2003) and cartoons (El Refaie, 2003; Yus, 2008). El Refaie (2003) maintains that visual metaphors can reveal a few suggestions and messages in comparison to verbal representations that require the reader to be familiar with the context used for easier translations. The visual metaphors connecting two concrete objects together are identified as the target and resource. Moreover, they include the same CMT principle of combining the abstract entity with the concrete one, presenting the source visually, and symbolise the abstract entities supporting the main principle of CMT, given that humans think metaphorically (Bounegru and Forceville, 2011; Gleason, 2009). Three types of pictorial metaphors are identified by Forceville (2002, pp7-8), including:

- 1- Contextual metaphor: an object is metaphorised owing to the visual context, as one domain is clearly presented in the image while the other domain is inferred from the context.
- 2- Hybrid metaphor: two objects which are physically different from each other are combined to form another object.
- 3- Pictorial simile: using the various techniques which are available, such as form, colour, function, position, lighting, etc., to present two objects to look similar.

Subsequently, Teng and Sun (2002) developed pictorial simile to create *image alignment*, based on Grady's (1997) list of primary metaphors. This strategy can be described as "when pictorial components are approximately aligned with one another with respect to size, orientation, and distance" (Teng, 2009, p.197). This arrangement can be systematically designed to show the similarity of the objects, or it can be disordered to present the action meaning.

Forceville (2008, p.9) provided the fourth type of integrated metaphor which can be defined as "[a] phenomenon experienced as a unified object or gestalt .... in such a manner that it resembles another object or gestalt even without contextual cues". It is unlike the contextual metaphor as the domain is presented visually and not inferred from the context. This is also different from the hybrid metaphor as both objects are not combined to form another object, but that in this type of the presented entity either the target or source has lost its identification and instead, one of the objects is more prominent and becomes the main focus of the

comparison. To sum up, visual metaphors communicate “non-denotative information, and hence they will not be cognitively satisfied at a purely denotative level” (Yus, 2008, p.155).

Moreover, there has been limited focus on multimodal metaphors in comparison to verbal and visual metaphors. Only a few researchers have investigated the multimodality in metaphors, including (e.g., Eggertsson and Forceville, 2009; Rohdin, 2009; Forceville and Urios-Aparisi 2009; Teng, 2009; Alsadi and Howard, 2021). Multimodal metaphors have the two domains - target and source to be “represented or suggested by at least two different sign systems (one of which may be language) or modes of perception” (Forceville, 2008, p.463). Therefore, both domains “are each represented exclusively or predominantly in different modes” (Forceville, 2009, p.24). El Refaie (2008) extended the definition so that both domains might be presented partially. Thus, multimodal metaphors have their targets or sources to be “represented exclusively, predominantly, or partially in different modes” (El Refaie, 2008, p.191).

The variation in metaphors based on the mode of expression is not the only indicator of metaphorical differences. Researchers have also identified a more complicated category of metaphors associated with rhetorical figures, such as metonymy and metaphor, known as Conceptual-Chain Metaphor (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2007; Alousque, 2014). This particular metaphor creates two types, 1) the metonymy-based metaphor denotes that the metaphor is based on the presented metonymy, 2) metaphor-based metaphor suggests that the metaphor is based on the other one as it provides a general perspective of the metaphorical presentations. In this sort of classification, it can be realised that the metonymy comes under the metaphor and not the opposite. This can be explained as the metonymies simplifying the identification of the metaphors as they “are critical links between everyday experience and the coherent metaphorical systems that characterize religions and cultures” (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 56). This type of productive to metaphoric activity is seen in the huge number observed a study of Spanish cartoons (Alousque, 2014). Similarly, the type of metonymy which is incorporated within a metaphor is presented in the image mode, but not that the case with the study of Alsadi and Howard (2021) who found that both visual and multimodal metonymy have a connection with the multimodal metaphor. Moreover, Alousque (2014) show that the metaphor-based metaphors have a connection with the visual and multimodal metaphor in cartoons. This assertion created interest in regard to the metonymy in a cartoon and its contribution to metaphorical creation.

### **3.3.11 Comparison**

A comedic comparison juxtaposes two or more things, people, or situations to create humour. The comparison can occur verbally through specific lexical words, to demonstrate similarity with the deployment of words ‘like’ or ‘as’ (Norrick, 1984; Dynel, 2009) or differences such as using vocabulary, including ‘more/less than’ and ‘different from’ as well as visually to deliver a humorous message, as in the case of advertisements (Catanescu and Tom, 2001). These comparisons do not only aim to present a metaphorical presentation based on an imaginary concept, but they can be from the perspective of fact and reality. According to Tsakona (2009), this strategy is also employed in cartoons by way of utilising analogies. The author underlined that the metaphors in her data were based on comparisons between two analogical concepts. Cartoonists employ comparisons to critique various issues and social groups by drawing attention to their differences or similarities (Schutz, 1977, cited in Meyer 2000; Issa, 2016). Alsadi and Howard (2021, p.128) take the comparison principle to be held with the juxtaposition as two visual objects are placed side by side in a cartoon, guiding “readers to interpret the meaning through activating contrasts”. They found four different types, including juxtaposed metaphors, juxtaposed cultural contexts, juxtaposed behaviours, and juxtaposed situations. With the juxtaposed metaphors, humour is created by evoking opposition between two juxtaposed metaphors that contrast each other in the belief and the visual elements such as size and shape. The juxtaposed cultural contexts highlight the differences in perceiving norms in different cultures, such as Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. Juxtaposed behaviours show a difference or similarity in practising behaviours with different settings or time frames. The last one- juxtaposed situations- “evoke contrasts between situations of people in certain places or under specific circumstances” (Alsadi and Howard, 2021, p.133).

### **3.3.12 Exaggeration**

Exaggeration is defined as ‘[o]verstating and magnifying something out of proportion’ (Catanescu and Tom, 2001, p.92). A fact or idea can be exaggerated to make fun of something, which is what creates hyperbole in the writing mode (Dynel, 2009). In a multimodal artefact- a cartoon, Liu, Chen and Chang (2019) contend that exaggeration is associated with caricatures. When creating a caricature, an artist exaggerates selected features in a typical position (Perkins, 1975; Hughes, 1999), such as the face, to show emotions and intentions (Hyde et al., 2014). Besides depicting the figure’s emotions and intentions, these exaggerated features can define a

cartoonist's signature style; they become known through the techniques they use to draw, such as a large nose, large head, or animal face with a human body (McCloud, 2006). These exaggerated features are on occasion associated with cultures that differ from others (Byatt and Rhodes, 1998; Cohn, 2011; Liu, Chen and Chang, 2019). For example, Japanese cartoonists tend to exaggerate the size of caricatures' eyes compared to American cartoonists (Liu, Chen and Chang, 2019). Exaggeration can also be associated with stereotyping, for instance the use of a large nose in caricatures of Arabs (Shaheen, 2003; Ridouani, 2011). In all cartoons, exaggeration is exhibited in different ways, not just in the image mode with physical and facial expressions but also in the writing through hyperbole. Alsadi and Howard (2021) proposed two types of exaggeration: a) 'visual exaggeration and verbal anchoring', and b) 'verbal exaggeration and complementary visual support'. With the first type, the exaggerating could be presented visually with human anatomy to highlight certain issues such as big ears for overheard, exaggerating certain imagery situations as addicting to mobile that the person has not noticed the fire around him, or exaggerating the cultural norms violating the stereotypical presentation as that the women are unattractive and controller over men (Alsadi and Howard, 2021, p.145). The second type shows the exaggeration in the content of the speech, usually presented in a conversation format, but the image adds to the meaning with the depiction of the character and their facial expression, for example.

### **3.3.13 Intertextuality**

The notion of intertextuality is generally attributed to Kristeva (1980), who explains that intertextuality occurs when "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (p. 66). This definition shows the types of relations constructed between the given text and the source text. Kristeva's (1980) main idea is that intertextual text is permeated by a social ensemble and that the audience constructs the text. From this definition, the perspective shown is that intertextuality is the audience's job. However, Tsakona (2017) points to the importance of not only the readers but also the producers in understanding the intertextual text confirming Bakhtin's (1986) idea about intertextuality as that "both the producer and the recipient of a text make specific assumptions concerning each other's available background knowledge that needs to be activated to process discourse" (p.41). Moreover, Tsakona (2017) states that in a communication exchange both the producers and addressees have the ability to make references from the given text and the pre-existing or upcoming texts. Some researchers have studied intertextuality in humour and jokes

(e.g., Norrick, 1989; Attardo, 2001; Tsakona, 2018a, 2018b; Tuzcu, 2018); sitcoms (e.g., Anton, 2016; Gray, 2006; Mazurek-Przybylska, 2016; Zhang, 2018), memes (e.g., Boxman-Shabtai and Shifman, 2014; Chovanec, 2019; Laineste and Voolaid, 2016; Miltner, 2014; Shifman, 2013), but only a few researchers have examined intertextual humour in cartoons (Werner, 2004; Tsakona, 2009; Pinar, 2020; Alsadi and Howard, 2021).

Norrick (1989) identified two types of intertextuality, including allusion and parody. Allusion refers to humour that depends on the previous existence of two types of texts, that is distortions and quotations. Distortions change the form and meaning of the referent texts, whereas quotations depend on a direct quotation without any intention of changing the meaning or form of the quoted texts. Distortions depend on various pragmatic formulae, such as idioms, clichés or sayings. This changing and innovation of already existing texts results in what is known as antiproverbs (Mieder and Litovkina 1999, 2006; Litovkina, 2015). Distortions are created by way of various strategies that a speaker can follow, such as deletions, substitutions and additions. Deletions are rarely found in a proverb (Litovkina, 2015). A deletion can occur in the last word of a proverb, as in the example of ‘beauty is only skin’, which deletes the word ‘deep’ from the last position in the adage ‘beauty is only skin deep’ (Litovkina, 2015, p.337). Alternatively, a deletion can be presented with a letter as in the saying ‘the best things in life are fee’; the original last word is ‘free’, so the letter /r/ has been deleted to create a different meaning (Litovkina, 2015, p.333). A substitution that can be noticed in the example of the original adage here is, rather ‘to err is human but to insist/persist is diabolical’, given the substituted example ‘to err is human, but to really screw things up you need a computer,’ where the second section is substituted with a computer (Litovkina, 2015, p.328). An addition can occur at the word, phrase or sentence level. An example at the sentence level is found in the common saying: ‘an apple a day keeps the doctor away’. In this case, another sentence was added to form the following humorous antiproverb: “An apple a day keeps the doctor away and an onion a day keeps everyone away” (Litovkina et al., 2021, p.55). The second type of alluded humorous sentence can be noted in the use of direct citations for a popular phrase, chunk, saying or title taken from various texts shown in different genres. These quotations can be taken from different programmes, films, and influencers, for example, to make fun of something. To ensure a humorous function in the quoted text, it must stem “from the language user’s acknowledgement of the pre-existing text and the quote’s relevance to the situation” (Dyner, 2009, p.1290). Using the phrase ‘keep the change, ya filthy animal!’, which appeared in the movie *Home Alone*, is humorous as both speakers have to share the same experience of having

watched that movie and being aware of its occurrence. In the movie, the infamous child steps on the VCR remote control while playing an old-time gangster movie. When he pauses and presses fast forward, the phrase is played, which scares a deliveryman into leaving a pizza at the front door. Furthermore, as Dynel (2009) highlighted, quotations have humorous meanings that are not only performed in the field of entertainment but also taken from the formal context, as employing them in different contexts makes them funny when they are understood and performed. An example is the use of a statement found in the context of a court – namely “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” in a conversation between two partners (Dynel, 2009, p.1291). Allusion has been found in the cartoon as the cartoonists use either one or two modes to make allusion to idiomatic expressions, popular phrases or immediate context inside the cartoon to create humour (Alsadi and Howard, 2021).

Alsadi and Howard (2021) also discuss the role of parody to create humour as the cartoonists based on the shape of the other genre as in the case of news title where “the headline in the cartoon makes intertextual reference to the news genre through parodying the features of writing news headlines, in particular, being concise and informative” (p.61). Many scholars consider parody to be a strategy that shows intertextual relations (Rose,1993; Riffaterre,1990). Dentith (2000) defines parody as “allusive imitation” (p.37), noting that allusion has been accelerated to be imitated in order to be considered parody, and this concept has been supported and identified by other scholars, such as Raskin (1985) and Nash (1985). Raskin (1985) and Nash (1985) claim that parody is an extension of allusion, although Norrick (1989) refutes this idea. According to Norrick, few allusions extend to parody. Parody has “incongruities of form and content and/or style and context; however, it lacks the surprising suddenness necessary to jokes” (p.132). Therefore, the parody is not considered as a humour form in this thesis; instead, it is more treated as a strategy that other above humour types and techniques could apply to create humour. That is also applied to allusions as with the given argument about the antiproverbs (Litovkina, 2015; Litovkina et al., 2021); for example, it can be shown that the reason of such humour is punning as illustrated in Section 3.3.3, metaphor as in Section3.3.9 or even comparison as in Section 3.3.11. Thus, the intertextuality would be considered as an umbrella of the other presented humour forms that they sometimes depend on to create humour.

### **3.4 COVID-19 Cartoons and Humour**

COVID-19 cartoons can be classified as disaster, dark or sick humour. Disaster humour can be defined as a comedic response to events that have resulted in suffering and loss of life (Oring, 1987; Kuipers, 2002; Blank, 2013). This sort of humour appears immediately after news of a disaster has spread (Davies, 2003; Ellis, 2001). Disaster humour is easily mistaken for sick humour and dark humour. Sick humour denotes humour that addresses taboo topics regarding decency and morality (Lockyer and Pickering, 2001; Hoffstadt and Hölting, 2011). However, sick humour typically does not deal with death, which distinguishes it from dark humour. Dark humour is a style of comedy that focuses on serious or depressing topics, for instance violence, death, illness and disability (Bucaria, 2008). Based on these definitions, COVID-19 humour can be classified as either dark or disaster humour. It can be defined as dark humour because it focuses on the number of deaths and the infection rate of individuals with COVID-19. However, due to its global scale, COVID-19 humour can also be classified as disaster humour (Bischetti, Canal and Babin, 2021). Furthermore, to consider this sort of humour as disaster humour, it must have surfaced after this news is processed or have been reported on television (Davies, 1999; Oring, 2008) and different types of media (Chovanec, 2019). In the context of news pertaining to the pandemic, the humour spread after publishing the news in different types of oral and print media. Likewise, COVID-19 humour as claim by Bischetti, Canal and Babin (2021, p.2) can also be classified as disaster rather than dark humour because it does not always focus on depressing topics such as death and illness as dark humour does, but it also addresses different issues of the pandemic, such as activities during the lockdown. As in the previous discussion, COVID-19 humour is best categorised as disaster humour as it does not just include the dark side of the pandemic, for example death, but also other potentially humorous aspects, for example lockdowns. Therefore, this research builds upon the consideration of COVID-19 humour as a type of disaster humour, as COVID-19 is similar to other events covered by disaster humour, including the sinking of the Titanic (Chovanec, 2019) and the World Trade Centre attacks (Ellis, 2001; Kuipers, 2002; Tsakona, 2003; Csaszi, 2003). Thus, the research undertaken in this thesis has focused on disaster humour related to COVID-19 in Saudi cartoons, to analyse such a humour, Yus' incongruity-resolution classifications and forms of humour will be used as illustrated later in the methodology section.

### 3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, humour is discussed as the primary aim of Saudi cartoons. Two theoretical perspectives have been studied, including theories of humour and forms of humour. The former reveals the literature related to the theories that emerge in the analysis of humour from different perspectives, including psychology and linguistics. The former is more concerned with the psychological perspective of the speakers (superiority), speaker and hearer (release) and the stimuli (incongruity). Incongruity theory has been developed and studied from the linguistic perspective forming SSTH (Raskin, 1979, 1985) and GTVH (Attardo and Raskin, 1991). Later, Yus (2016, 2021) proposed incongruity-resolution classification theory to cover the cognitive principle (relevance) and the multimodal function, which is the aim of this particular study in relation to investigating the humour in the cartoon- multimodal artefact. This theory increases its potential to be the theoretical framework of the study as both modes were believed to have contributed to creating the incongruity. Moreover, this theory is also based on the shared principle (frame opposition) of the other incongruity theories that predominantly formed the analysis of the verbal humour.

The review of the theories of humour in the literature introduces the reader to the concept of incongruity as the principal reason for humour. To answer the second question pertaining to the variation in creating humour, further investigation as regards the cartoonists' capacity to create humour enables us to explore an alternative perspective of humour, notably the forms of humour discussed in this chapter. The form of humour that is exhibited in the presented section is the one related to the multimodal artefact in the work of Alsadi and Howard (2021) and the one in the linguistics, as seen in the work of Dynel (2009). The last section in this chapter discusses the genre relating to the COVID-19 cartoons as being an artefact that is formed to discuss painful and tragic events that depending on the argument, it classified as being disaster humour. To analyse this sort of humour, the use of both perspectives will take place, including Yu's incongruity-resolution classification and forms of humour. The utilisation of these perspectives and the clarification of their adaption and way of application are discussed in more detail in the methodology section.



## Chapter Four

### The Corpus and Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches used to source and analyse data. The proposed research questions are reintroduced in Section 4.1. The history of Saudi press is illustrated in detail in Section 4.2. Section 4.3 introduces the online platform from which the data was sourced and addresses the representativeness of the data and the filtering procedures implemented to guarantee data integrity. In Section 4.4, the two-part method pertaining to “humour analysis” and “thematic analysis” designed to answer the research questions is outlined. Section 4.5 provides a comprehensive assessment of the trustworthiness, reliability and validity of both analyses, with a focus on the preparation, organisation and reporting phases. Before the conclusion in Section 4.7, the system of translation in this thesis is introduced in Section 4.6.

#### 4.1 Restating the Research Purpose

The primary goal of this research is to explore the portrayal of the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi cartoons. Moreover, the second main goal is to reveal how humour is presented multimodally in the COVID-19 Saudi cartoons. More specifically, two main research questions drive this study:

- RQ1. How have Saudi cartoons portrayed the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - 1.a What are the main themes and sub-themes presented in the Saudi cartoons relating to the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - 1.b What types of participants related to the pandemic do these cartoons predominantly represent and how is this undertaken multimodally?
- Q2. How do Saudi cartoons produce humour pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - 2.a What roles do image and writing play in producing humour?
  - 2.b How is humour expressed in relation to COVID-19 themes?

Before discussing the data and methods of analysis to answer these research questions, a history of Saudi press is introduced in the following section.

#### 4.2 Saudi Press

When King Abdul Aziz regained control of Riyadh in 1902, media and printing were not yet established in the region as they were in other parts of the world (MoM, 1998, p.16).

Communication during that time relied on sending messengers and delegates to convey written and verbal messages, as well as utilizing imams of mosques to disseminate specific orders or news relevant to the people. However, these methods often took days or even weeks for information to be delivered. Subsequently, printed announcements began to be posted in prominent locations such as mosques. Additionally, cannons were used to announce religious occasions such as the start and end of fasting during Ramadan and the timing of Eid (Alshbyli, 2000).

The press in Saudi Arabia had its beginnings in 1924 with the publication of a newspaper dedicated to disseminating government announcements and developments to the citizens (MoM, 1998). "Um Alqora" was the first newspaper published in Saudi Arabia and is considered the foundation of the Saudi press revolution. This newspaper served as the official publication in Saudi Arabia, publishing official advertisements, royal decrees, and significant local news (Hafth, 1978).

According to Alhazmi (2021), many scholars and historians agree that the Saudi press development can be divided into three phases after Um Alqora's launching, including:

**Phase one:** the era of individual journalism

During the phase between 1928 and 1959, individuals took the initiative to start publishing newspapers in Saudi Arabia. This period marked a time when citizens with sufficient qualifications were granted the right by the government to publish newspapers or magazines. In total, there were 19 newspapers and magazines published within Saudi Arabia during this time, and three others were published outside of Saudi Arabia but founded by Saudis. However, many of these publications had short lifespans, with some lasting only three months while others endured for up to 20 years before ceasing publication.

**Phase two:** the era of newspapers' integration

In 1959, due to the proliferation of newspapers reaching around 40 and the desire of individuals to start their own newspapers, the Saudi Arabian government made a decision to integrate newspapers. This decision aimed to consolidate the media landscape by having each city publish one strong newspaper of high quality (p.26). As a result, some newspapers merged with others, while some stop their publication (Al Habab, 1992). During this period, 11 newspapers integrated with each other, with many of them discontinuing operations when the system of private press institutions was implemented.

### **Phase three:** the era of private press institutions

The system of private press institutions was first launched in 1964 by the Ministry of Media. This system aimed to abolish individual newspaper privileges and regulate journalistic activities through established institutions. Under this system, newspapers had to be published with the approval of one of the nine designated institutions<sup>18</sup>. This system had updated in 2001 to address the challenges and obstacles that arose during the 40 years following the introduction of the initial private press institution system. This updated system likely introduced reforms and improvements to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of media regulation and operations within Saudi Arabia.

Within the system of private press institutions, specifically in 1982, the 'media policy' was launched by the Supreme Media Council, which became the first written policy governing the content of Saudi media (Algrani, 2015, p.20). It includes 30 subjects based on religious, political, and social foundations in Saudi Arabia (Ibid, 2015, p.20). These subjects align with the nine conditions outlined in the print and publication system, as well as the electronic publishing system<sup>19</sup> to publish any content in the Saudi media (Algrani, 2015). They include the following:

1. Compliance with Islamic Sharia provisions.
2. Avoiding anything that may disrupt the country's security, public order, or serve foreign interests conflicting with national interests.
3. Preventing the spread of division among citizens.
4. Ensuring publications do not harm people's dignity, freedoms, or reputations, and refrain from blackmailing or harming trade names.
5. Avoiding content that promotes or encourages criminal activities.
6. Ensuring publications do not harm the country's economic or health situation.
7. Not disclosing investigation or trial facts without permission from the competent authority.
8. Committing to objective and constructive criticism aimed at the public interest, based on loyalty and valid evidence.

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<sup>18</sup> These institutions included: Madina Institution for the Press, Makkah Institution for Print and Media, Islamic Calls Institution for the Press, Al Yamama Institution for Press, Okaz Institution for Press and Publication, Al-Jazeera Institution for Press, Printing and Publication, Al-Bilad Institution for Press and Publication, Dar Al-Youm Institution for Press, Printing and Publication, and Asir for Press and Publication

<sup>19</sup> These two systems govern Saudi media along with the media policy.

9. Avoiding attacks on prominent individuals, members of the Council of Senior Scholars, the Grand Mufti, or statesmen (Algrani, 2015, p.40; Alhazmi, 2021, p.45).

These nine conditions have to be followed by the authors/creators when they publish their work in the Saudi media, which can be either written, visual, or both (Alhazmi, 2021). One of these publications is cartoons, which are published in different formats - printed and electronic - and must adhere to the above nine conditions.

The following section introduces the source of the data for this research and the criteria used for selecting them.

### 4.3 Data Source and Criteria

To examine Saudi cartoons that have covered the pandemic, the cartoons first needed to be obtained from a reliable source. Consequently, three points were taken into consideration: i) **diversity**: the source should draw on a diverse pool of cartoonists to ensure that the cartoons collected were representative of a wide range of views and perspectives within Saudi society; ii) **regularity**: the source should post cartoons on a regular basis with the intention of ensuring that the cartoons collected were current and reflected the latest developments in the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia; and iii) **accessibility**: the source should be open access. This was undertaken to guarantee that all relevant cartoons could be collected and analysed. In this context, Youm7 (<https://www.youm7.com>) is the platform selected to gather the data. Youm7 is an Egyptian website published by the Egyptian Media Group, which is regularly ranked as one of the highest browsed websites in the Arab world. In 2010 and 2011, Forbes Middle East announced that Youm7 was the most powerful news website in the region (Samer, 2011). In 2020, Alexa ranked Youm7 as the third most influential website in the Middle East, garnering 54.1 million visits in one month (Abdel Alhamad, 2021).

The reasons for choosing Youm7 as the source of the Saudi data are because it is the only Arabic news website that regularly republishes the work of Saudi Arabian cartoonists from different newspapers, and its archive is easily accessible. The researcher can access the cartoons by first selecting the "more" option on the main screen and then choosing "cartoons," which then presents all the cartoons with different dates on different pages. During the period

between December 2019 and March 2021 (the period of data collection) <sup>20</sup>, Saudi cartoons were the most frequently presented ones in Youm7, with a frequency of 1061 compared to cartoons from other countries, as shown in Table 4.1.

Although the editorial decisions of Alyoum7 in republishing the cartoons from the Saudi newspapers is not stated on the website, it can be inferred that the chosen newspapers are selected for their popularity. They repost cartoons originally published in the seven most popular national newspapers in Saudi Arabia: *Al Riyadh*, *Al Jazirah*, *Al Madina*, *Makkah*, *Asharq Al Awsat*, *Al Eqtisadiyah* and *Okaz*. Ipsos (2014) noticed that *Okaz* was the most widely read newspaper in Saudi Arabia, followed by *Al Jazirah*, *Al Riyadh* and *Al Madina* (Aljleed, 2014, cited in Alsahli, 2017). In 2012, *Asharq Al Awsat* was ranked fourth, whilst *Al Eqtisadiyah* was ranked eighth (Al Jazirah, 2012). *Makkah*, launched in 2014, was the first daily paper in the Arab world to adopt data journalism, using statistics to provide detailed investigations of news stories (Makkah newspaper, n.d.). Thus, Youm7 publishes cartoons on a regular basis and its archive is easy to access, making it a convenient and comprehensive source from which to gather data.

Country	Posting Frequency on Youm7	Country	Posting Frequency on Youm7
Saudi	1061	Iraq	12
Emirates	787	Russia	8
Kuwait	461	Yemen	8
Jordan	278	Bahrain	7
Egypt	248	Israel	6
Oman	130	Turkey	4
Algeria	41	France	1
Palestine	32	Syria	1
Lebanon	30	Libya	1
Tunisia	25	Morocco	1

Table 4.1: Cartoons taken from Arab national newspapers and re-published on youm7, from December 2019 to March 2021 <sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The range of data collected for the study covers the pandemic period from December 2019, when COVID-19 first emerged, to March 2021, when vaccination efforts began, and people started returning to normal life.

<sup>21</sup> The researcher went back to December 1st, 2019, collecting all cartoons with the given title, the name of the newspaper, and the country of publication, and then classified them in an Excel sheet. The distribution of cartoons by country was then identified by counting the number of published cartoons for each country.

Purposive sampling, where the given "subjects or elements selected for specific characteristics" (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p.91-92), was then considered in selecting and filtering the presented 1061 Saudi cartoons to be based on the following criteria:

- 1- Cartoons must address pandemic-related topics and exclude topics unrelated to COVID-19, for instance other events that occurred during the time, e.g., the civil war in Yemen. This resulted in 253 cartoons related to the pandemic.
- 2- The selected cartoons had to include both image and writing modes. Cartoons that included only images were excluded because this study investigates humour in multimodal texts. This criterion resulted in the exclusion of 27 cartoons.
- 3- Illustrative cartoons<sup>22</sup> (Danesi, 2013) were excluded from the study for the reason that they differ from humorous cartoons in that they lack the caricature feature and are presented more factually. Figure 4.1 describes an example of an illustrative cartoon that was omitted from the sample. This type of cartoon with a realistic drawing style and writing mode, was published in *Okaz*. In this regard, 14 cartoons were excluded from the sample.



Figure 4.1: An example of an illustrative cartoon

Your life is the most valuable (red phrase in the middle)  
Citizen or resident (green phrase on the ampoule)  
We are all responsible (green logo upper left)  
Okaz (name of the newspaper in the middle)

A total of 212 cartoons met all the given criteria. The selected cartoons were then organised by date and the name of the newspaper, together with a short explanation of each cartoon was

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<sup>22</sup> They are used to illustrate important points pertaining to medical topics for educational reasons where no humour is expressed.

added in the notes section. This data set was subsequently thoroughly coded in light of the methods of analysis used, as explained in detail in the following sections.

#### **4.4 Analysis Methods**

This section outlines the approaches used to analyse the data in order to address the research questions presented in Section 4.1. To obtain a complete understanding of COVID-19 cartoons in the context of Saudi Arabia and to answer the first main question and its sub-question, content analysis (Weber, 1984, 1990; Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009) was employed to code the cartoons along with deploying a series of multimodality tools, such as distance and angle (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), personalisation and impersonalisation (van Leeuwen, 1996), besides individualisation and collectivisation (Machin and Mayr, 2012). Content analysis was used to deduce the presented themes about the COVID-19 pandemic in the Saudi cartoons. It should be mentioned that the latter three multimodality tools were used to analyse the represented participants. Therefore, the pandemic portrayal, based on the thematic analysis and the analysis of the represented participants, will be introduced in Chapter 5. Moreover, incongruity-resolution classifications (Yus, 2016, 2021) and humour forms, including humour types (Dyrel, 2009) and rhetorical figures (Alsadi and Howard, 2021) were utilised to answer the second main question concerning the humour presentation in the Saudi cartoons. The analysis related to this will be presented in Chapter 6.

The detail of each analysis type is presented in the following sections.

##### **4.4.1 Thematic Analysis**

This section reviews the methods applied to examine themes and the coding strategy used for the data. It also provides a more specific explanation of how participants were represented in the cartoons and how the cartoonists interact with the readers to achieve certain objectives.

###### **4.4.1.1 Content Analysis**

This section presents a comprehensive overview of content analysis, outlining its types and the analytical techniques utilised. It also delves into the intricacies of the coding process, providing a detailed explanation of its application.

#### 4.4.1.1.1 Review of Content Analysis

The introduction of content analysis dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Scandinavia (Rosengren, 1981). However, this method was first applied in academia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Lasswell (1935) used content analysis to investigate the power of politics in his publication titled: “World Politics and Personal Insecurity”. According to Janowitz (1968, p.646), Lasswell used content analysis for more than a decade to measure the political communication and to make psychoanalytic interviews more objective. Lasswell and his colleagues worked to develop content analysis as a method of analysis pertaining to various topics. One of these was related to numeric quantities during World War II; it was used to count Nazi propaganda signs in North American newspapers, forming the basis of quantitative content analysis as we know it today (Berelson, 1952). The method was later expanded to examine the meaning of text and concepts, and was subsequently termed qualitative content analysis, as “[i]t focuses on the subject and context and emphasizes variation, e.g. similarities within and differences between parts of the text” (Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman, 2017, p.29). The primary aim of content analysis is to provide nuanced understanding of the examined phenomenon (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p.314). Likewise, because it is a flexible method for analysing textual data (Cavanagh, 1997), it is used in different fields, including sociology, mass media and linguistics. In general, content analysis is a useful method “for making inferences from text about sources, content, or receivers of information” (Schamber, 2000, p.735).

Quantitative content analysis can be defined as “a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular art form” (Berger, 1998, p. 23). Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014, p.19), provided a further detailed description and explained this method as

the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption.

Berelson (1952, p.18) also identified three characteristics of this method, explaining how it is related to the “objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication”. Taking these three definitions into consideration, it can be inferred that this



method depends predominantly on quantification, or excerpting certain objective content from text to examine manifest meanings and reveal the most dominant inferences and interpretations.

Beyond the linguistic text, content analysis can be expanded “to comprise visual content” (Parry, 2019, p.355). Bell (2004, p.14) argued that visual content analysis is an objective observation of distinct categories, such as people, events, situations and so on, which takes a more general perspective that “does not analyse individual images or individual ‘visual texts’”. Parry (2019, p.358) also stressed that images are a type of text that can similarly be interpreted using content analysis, as both the linguistic element (the writing mode) and the non-linguistic element (the image mode) carry the same “levels of communication”. Nonetheless, Parry (2019, p.358) emphasised the limitation of quantitative content analysis, often used in the context of analysing images, which is reducing the complexity of information to be treated as numerical properties that introduce little information about the given meaning, and the intention of content. In this regard, researchers encourage the use of qualitative analysis to analyse image data, as it takes into consideration both the design and nature of the content. Weber (1990) also criticised quantitative content methods for not considering the syntactical and semantic information found in the text. However, by using qualitative content analysis, researchers can move from being “objective” (Berelson, 1952) to developing a more “subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1278). This type of content analysis is more systematic as it follows “content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000, p.2).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) identify three types of qualitative analysis based upon the coding strategy used, including: directed, summative and conventional (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The first type, directed content analysis, involves coding data according to previous studies’ theories, frameworks or results, and can thus be considered a deductive approach (Mayring, 2000; Krippendorff, 2013). The researcher attempts to fit their data within a pre-existing coding and classification system, aiming “to validate or extend a conceptual framework or theory” (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p. 309). The drawbacks of this approach are that “the researcher risks formulating categories based exclusively on an established theory and method” (Eriksson and Lindstrom, 1999, as cited in Graneheim, Lindgren and Lundman, 2017, p.30) and the challenge exists of “deciding how to treat left-over data that do not fit the selected theory or explanatory model” (Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman, 2017, p.30). The second type is

summative content analysis, which “starts with identifying and quantifying certain words or content in text with the purpose of understanding the contextual use of the words or content” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1283). This approach does not only focus on counting the words but also interprets content by inferring the latent (hidden) meaning of the content (Holsti, 1969). The primary limitation of this method is the “inattention to the broader meanings present in the data” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1285).

Conventional content analysis, the third type, also known as inductive category development (Mayring, 2000), is based on the data materials collected. Research that applies this approach uncovers common patterns in the data, including similarities and differences, and classifies them according to common themes or categories. The challenge of this approach, according to Graneheim, Lindgren, and Lundman (2017, p.30), “is to avoid surface descriptions and general summaries”. However, this method is essential “when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1279). In relation to the present study, there is a limited repertoire of research addressing the representation of themes in Saudi cartoons, particularly during the COVID-19 period, meaning that conventional content analysis was the most appropriate analytical approach to be applied. The following Section (4.3.1.1.2) outlines the specific coding process utilised for the 212 cartoons in this study using conventional content analysis.

#### **4.4.1.1.2 Coding Scheme Structure**

Researchers have defined conventional content analysis as being “designed to condense raw data into categories or themes based on valid inference and interpretation”, where the researchers examine the data carefully and compare them (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p.309). To have reliable and valid inferences, “systematic and transparent procedures for processing data” has to be conducted (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p.310), which requires the implementation of a coding scheme that is generally shared by coders (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Weber, 1984; Kaid, 1989; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). Accordingly, to analyse the cartoons selected as part of this research study, the coding scheme structure established by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) was adhered to. It includes eight distinctive steps: data preparation, defining the unit of analysis, developing categories and a coding scheme, testing the coding scheme on a sample of text, coding all the text, assessing coding consistency, drawing conclusions from the coded data, and reporting the methods and findings. As stated by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), the process can be more flexible depending on the goal of

the study. In relation to this thesis, although the first six steps remain as they are, the last two steps- drawing conclusions from the coded data and reporting the methods and findings, have been combined into a single category, as they share the same aim of stating the results. The subsections below discuss how these seven revised steps of the coding scheme were utilised to guide the process of identifying themes in Saudi cartoons published during the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **a. Data Preparation**

After selecting the samples as discussed in Section 4.2, data from 212 cartoons was entered into a table that recorded five pieces of key information about each one. The first column gave the identifying number of each cartoon, while an image of the cartoon was included in the next column. This was followed by the cartoonist's name and the publication date. The last column was more open-ended so as to include a written description concerning the interpretation and the intended meaning of the cartoon.

#### **b. Unit of Analysis**

“The basic unit of text to be classified” during content analysis is the most fundamental decision a researcher makes (Weber, 1990, p.22). As a cartoon is a multimodal artefact, two units of analysis were considered - visual and written signs - which are essential to coding the meaning of the cartoons as will be shown in Table 4.2 below. In actual fact, both of these units have the potential to signify important meanings, and the researcher employed them as a basis on which to interpret the main themes portrayed in the different cartoons.

#### **c. Category Development and Coding Scheme**

As there was a dearth of studies from which the researcher could deduce the key themes prevalent in Saudi cartoons relating to COVID-19 (see Section 2.3.3), this step involved taking a preliminary sample and using inductive categorisation to gain an initial understanding of the thematic presentations prevalent in Saudi cartoons. To do so, the researcher first systematically organised the time frame presented for data collection and divided it into four distinct phases that mirror the actual phases traversed by Saudi Arabia. The first phase “ COVID-19 spreading”, spanned from 1 January to 22 March 2020. The second phase, “lockdown”, lasted from 23 March to 30 May 2020. The third phase “ curfew lifting”, ranged from 31 May to 09 November 2020, whilst the fourth phase “vaccination and the return to everyday life”, took

place from 10 November 2020 to 31 March 2021 (see Chapter 6 full for details on each phase). Next, 212 cartoons were divided into these four phases and a random selection of 15 cartoons from each phase was chosen, totalling 60 cartoons. This process “would guarantee a more representative sample” as it depends on the phases that are considered as “smaller homogenous groups” (Riffe et al., 2019, p.81), and therefore, it would give the researcher access to a diverse array of themes presented in the cartoons.

After selecting the 60 cartoons, the researcher investigated the two units of analysis - visual and written signs - in order to develop the themes inductively by “permitting the categories to emerge from the data” (Benoit and McHale, 2003, p.323). At this point, a new table was created to record the two signs (visual and written) for each of the 60 cartoons. The signs were selected depending on their significance in portraying meaning potential about a certain theme. Significantly, visual and written signs were not enough to define the themes, as the researcher found that the same signs could be shared across multiple themes. Therefore, the theme was not attributed on the basis of individual signs only but by deploying tools from multimodality (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006), namely *setting* and *salience*. *Setting* refers to the physical places in the cartoons which convey “discourses and their values, identities and actions” (Machin and Mayer, 2012, p.52). Moreover, *salience* refers to the most prominent feature presented in a cartoon, which carries the most symbolic value which could be presented by the following features: a) cultural symbols: particular elements convey symbols that are attributed specifically to certain cultures; b) size: the most important element is usually the largest, with the less important elements, being smaller in size; c) colour: rich or vibrant colours tend to attract readers’ attention and therefore create more salience compared to using other muted or dull colours; d) tone: a brighter tone makes a specific feature more prominent and significant; e) focus: different levels of focus can be presented in a single frame of a cartoon, each one representing different levels of importance; f) foregrounding: the element presented in front is more likely to be the main core or focus of the cartoon, and j) overlapping: this refers to how the placement of the different elements of the cartoon affects how they relate to one another, with some placed in front, others in the background, and several on the same level. However, these features run under regular assessment when interpreting each cartoon. Thus, for example, if the cartoon is full of giant creatures, but it contains a small creature at its centre, it will be the small creature that will be prominent, against all the giant ones.

Table 4.2 gives an example of when the same shared signs could be used to identify one theme. However, examining the setting and salience resulted in more accurate identification of the themes.



	Cartoon	Visual Signs	Written Signs
1		Travelling suitcase	Flights arriving from China [written as a title in the upper right]
2		Aeroplane + travelling suitcase (with numerous stickers)	Arrival [written on the wall, signage]

Table 4.2: Different themes using similar visual-written signs

Both cartoons in Table 4.2 employ similar visual and written representations of *travelling*<sup>23</sup>; travelling suitcases as a visual sign and arrival ‘flight’ for the written sign. However, these two cartoons cover different themes based on the setting and salience. The theme in the first cartoon is **public protection**, as the overlapping of the elements (the traffic cone and the character) in the cartoons guides the eyes to perceive the man to be trapped between the traffic cones. The man is Chinese as indexed by the facial features in conjunction with the written text. This representation demonstrates that the flights from China were stopped as revealed by the setting. The setting in the cartoon can be assumed to be the runway as signified by the grey, wide background. The decision to stop flights was taken to protect people from the infection as China was the first place that experienced COVID-19. On the other hand, the second cartoon is categorised under the theme **spreading of the virus**. Classifying this cartoon to be so is attributed to the fact that COVID-19 is shown with a large size to signify its salient to be evil character as indexed by facial expression that spreads the illness through travelling. The travelling is signified with the suitcase and setting. The carried suitcase displaying numerous stickers indexes different travelling destinations that have been visited using aeroplane as shown mostly with the presented setting. The setting is the airport as indexed by the arrival sign, including the sign of an aeroplane and the word ‘arrival’.

<sup>23</sup> That the initial coding of the signs would be attributed to the spreading of the virus theme.

Moving to the next step, the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), was used to compare the themes and their signs and to identify similarities and differences, until a finalised list of well-defined, homogenous and distinguished themes was created<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, a final list of eight themes was realised:

- 1) Spreading of the virus: indicates the manner in which COVID-19 initially spread and the progression of concern and escalating infection rates.
- 2) Public protection: portrays the proactive response of individuals who adhere to protective measures and beneficial procedures.
- 3) Lockdown: discusses full or partial lockdowns and the activities carried out during those times.
- 4) The economic impact of COVID-19: presents the economic crisis and its effects.
- 5) The impact of COVID-19 on education and work: portrays the online education and work carried out by citizens during lockdown.
- 6) Rumour and news: covers the most popular rumours that spread rapidly during the pandemic, primarily about the origins of the virus and the effects of the vaccine.
- 7) Vaccine rollout: presents issues related to the vaccine formula and its distribution.
- 8) The fight against COVID-19: considers how the world is battling against COVID-19.

After finalising the first stage of the analysis, a codebook was created documenting the main characteristics of each of these eight themes, including: theme name, definition, visual signs, written signs, setting and salience. The aim was to use the codebook as a blueprint to test the validity of these proposed themes by examining more data to further refine the process, as the following subsection describes.

#### **d. Testing the Coding Scheme on a Sample**

Coding a sample of the data is the most appropriate method for testing the clarity and consistency of the categories used (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). The eight themes in the subsection (c) were then utilised to examine another sample comprising 60 cartoons that were randomly selected from the remaining 152 cartoons. The selection followed the same strata sampling process introduced in sub-section (c), where each of the four phases that Saudi Arabia experienced during the pandemic were regarded as the main strata. This testing process helped to ensure the validity of the initial coding scheme and that the definitions of the themes were solid and consistent. The testing phase revealed three key findings: 1) new themes emerged as more data was analysed, which opened up the possibility of adding more themes to the list; 2)

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<sup>24</sup> For the ease of classification at each stage of the analysis, all cartoons were classified into a single theme, even where it sometimes appeared that they might fit in multiple themes. Choosing one theme over the other was made based on the phase presented and the shared intertextual event and news.

in some cases, when there were many overlapping similarities, it was necessary to integrate two themes into one thematic category; 3) there was a need to further improve the definition of a number of the proposed themes and make them more precise.

Each of these three points are discussed in more detail below.

### 1) The Emergence of New Thematic Categories

As the coding progressed and more cartoons were analysed, two new themes were added: international political discourse, in addition to impact on travel and tourism. This is not surprising as while collecting new data is continuing, “it’s possible (even quite likely) that new themes and concepts will emerge and will need to be added to the coding manual” (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009, p.312). While the 60 cartoons analysed in the first stage of the coding process did not entirely cover political themes, as new cartoons were gradually added, it was observed that many had a political orientation, particularly as regards discussing international affairs. Two sub-themes emerged from this, including: Middle East politics and US political affairs. Moreover, several of the cartoons covered the issue of travel and tourism, from which three sub-themes were found, including: open airline travel, halting airline travel and resuming domestic airline travel. These two additional themes are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Back to cartoons presented in Table 4.2, both are associated with the new theme *travel and tourism*, although they are classified under different subthemes. The first cartoon is categorised under the subtheme of *halting airline travel*, as evidenced by the airport runway setting, the abundance of traffic cones and the trapped Chinese flight illustrated in the centre, signifying the suspension of airline travel. The second cartoon is classified under the subtheme of *open airline travel* due to the prominence of the COVID-19 figure represented and the airport setting, where both depict COVID-19 roaming freely using an aircraft.

Main Theme	Sub-Themes
International Political Discourse	1-Middle East politics: includes the spread of COVID-19 in this region and the precautions these countries took to stop the spread. The Arab revolution was also covered.
	2-US political affairs: depicts the elections in the US and how both candidates took advantage of the pandemic and manipulated events to win the elections. Likewise, different issues related to US politics during the pandemic were discussed.
The Impact on Travel and Tourism	1- Open airline travel: discusses how open and unregulated airline travel paved the way for the global spread of corona.

	2- Halting airline travel: portrays how the aviation sector's decision to ban travel due to COVID-19 was one of the main factors that halted the spread of the pandemic. It also illustrates the consequences of the virus spreading on domestic and international tourism.
	3- Resuming domestic airline travel and its impact on local tourism: covers the reopening of airline travel and the consequences.

Table 4.3: The two new themes in the coding

## 2) Merging Two Themes in one Thematic Category due to Overlap

In the first coding stage, spreading the virus, the fight against COVID-19, and rumour and news were considered to be three main themes. However, as the coding procedure progressed and more data was analysed, the researcher decided to change them into sub-themes. In relation to spreading the virus, it mainly addressed the speed of COVID-19's spread worldwide, although it soon became evident that other cartoons also addressed the issue of spreading, albeit from a different perspective which focused predominantly on death rates and infection cases. Thus, these two different perspectives (speed of the spread and death rates) are an offshoot of the same broader theme, which pertains to virus transmission rate. As such, spreading the virus was renamed high-speed transmission rate, while another classification, infection and death rates, was also established. Both these sub-themes were grouped under the main theme: virus transmission rate. The definition of each of these sub-themes are presented in Table 4.4.

The fight against COVID-19 was the other main theme in the first stage of coding that was later changed into a sub-theme owing to emerging cartoons within the sample depicting the worry and fear that the world encountered during the pandemic. Taken together, the two themes - fight against COVID-19 and worry and fear - were both used to express the different consequences of COVID-19, leading the researcher to propose a main overarching theme for them, which was termed emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 (see Table 4.4).

Moreover, rumour and news as a main theme was identified in a number of cartoons showing the spread of rumours about COVID-19. However, this sort of action is a social behaviour that can be classified as a social activity and thus considered together with other social activities found in the data, including social occasions and events, gender roles and relations, and online connections. Therefore, rumour and news was included as a sub-theme in a broader social relation theme. The definition of each of these sub-themes is presented in Table 4.4.



The Main Themes	Subthemes
Virus Transmission Rate	<p>1-High-speed transmission rate: depicts the rapid spread of COVID-19.</p> <p>2- Infection and death rates: represents high infection rates and cases of deaths from the virus globally and in Saudi Arabia.</p>
Emotional and Physical Consequences of COVID-19	<p>1-Worry and fear: depicts the spread of negative feelings such as worry and fear.</p> <p>2- The fight against COVID-19: depicts the fighting phase that the world experienced in its battle against COVID-19. It also presents the power of COVID-19 in relation to the world.</p>
Social Relations	<p>1- Social occasions and events: portrays how different social occasions were affected by the pandemic making them more isolated and less social or gathered.</p> <p>2- Gender roles and relations: depicts the roles of Saudi women and men and their relationships, particularly as a couple, and how these relationships have traditional or new accommodated roles that have been adopted due to the lockdown.</p> <p>3-Rumour and news: reveals how rumours and news, as social norms, affect people negatively, and how cartoonists seek to warn people about such a norm.</p> <p>4- Online connection: depicts how the connection between people moving from being in person to online.</p>

Table 4.4: The integrated sub-themes of the virus transmission rate

### 3) The Need to Improve the Definitions of Some of the Themes

Five of the proposed themes remained the same, although the definitions were modified to be more precise and sub-themes were included. These themes were the impact of COVID-19 on education and work, public protection, the economic impact of COVID-19, the lockdown, together with vaccine rollout. The sub-themes were proposed based on the shared visual and writing signs, setting and salience. Table 4.5 presents the revised themes and the proposed sub-themes.

The Revised Themes	Introduced subthemes
	1- (un)disciplined students: represents the behaviour of students during online education.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Work	2- Parents' role in online schooling: depicts the role of parents in monitoring daily study and exams.
	3- The challenges of online education and working from home: depicts the difficulties of online schooling and work for both the students and the parents.
Lockdown	1- Full lockdown: portrays the meaning of full lockdown and people's reactions and behaviours during this period.
	2- Partial lockdown: reveals the period when public travelling and business hours were partially relaxed. It also depicts people's behaviour during the period when travelling was allowed, which was often perceived to be negative.
	3- Lifting of the curfew: depicts the third stage of the lockdown imposed by the Saudi government, where public caution and adapting life to the new reality are described as the main factors to overcome it.
	4- Activities during lockdown: depicts the different activities that Saudi citizens undertook during lockdown.
Public Protection	1- Health awareness: illustrates how health awareness positively affected citizens.
	2- Compliance with safety guidelines: describes how people followed health guidelines to protect themselves from catching the virus.
	3- Disobedience towards safety guidelines: discusses how some individuals do not follow the safety guidelines published by the government and how this has a negative consequence on their own health and those around them.
	4- Public health advice: depicts a direct advice to those individuals who failed to follow the safety guidelines published by the government and how this had a negative impact on their own health and those around them.
The Economic Impact of COVID-19	1- Chinese economy: reveals COVID-19's economic devastation on China.
	2- Saudi economy: portrays how the Saudi economy was affected by the pandemic, especially by means of the inflated prices and unemployment.
	3- Global economy: discusses how the global economy was negatively affected by the pandemic.
The Vaccine Rollout	1- Slow vaccine production: depicts the period before the vaccine and how the vaccine production process was slow compared to the rapid spread of COVID-19.
	2- Using the vaccination as a weapon to fight back against COVID-19: shows how the vaccine was considered to be a robust defence and protector against COVID-19.
	3- Vaccine distribution: describes the unfair and unequal distribution of the vaccine and the main factors that the distribution is based on money and capitalism.
	4- Vaccination criticism: discusses the vaccine's questionable formula and its effectiveness. The vaccine's testing protocol was also criticised.

Table 4.5: The new themes and their sub-themes

Table 4.3, Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 present the completed list of themes and their sub-themes. These finalised themes were then transcribed into the codebook. The codebook used in this thesis was adapted from the version developed by MacQueen et al. (1998), which includes: the code (theme), a brief definition, a full definition, when to use it (inclusions), when not to use it (exclusion), together with examples. The researcher included four other categories – visual signs, written signs, setting and salience, which helped to uniquely identify each theme and sub-theme. Moreover, in contrast to MacQueen et al. (1998), one column was utilised for the definition of the themes instead of two (brief and full), as both ultimately had the same function (see Appendix 4.1).

#### e. Coding All the Cartoons

After testing this coding scheme on the initial sample, it was subsequently applied to the remaining 92 cartoons, and once again to the first sample of 60 due to the changes highlighted in the above-mentioned section (d). The coding depends on the given coding scheme that includes the ten main themes.

#### f. Assessment of Coding Consistency

After coding the remaining cartoons, the consistency of the coding was then assessed using the intra-coder agreement. The researcher had re-coded a sample of roughly 15% of the total cartoons that were taken randomly from each phase resulting in a total of 32 cartoons. The re-coding took place over time, after three months of the initial final coding. The agreement between the two coding occasions was 31. Only one disagreement was observed between both instances of coding. The level of agreement was measured using Cohen's kappa as presented below in Figure 4.2.

$$\kappa = \frac{P_o - P_e}{1 - P_e} = \frac{\frac{31}{32} - \left( \left( \frac{31}{32} \right) \times \left( \frac{30}{32} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{32} \times \frac{1}{32} \right) \right)}{1 - \left( \frac{31}{32} \times \left( \frac{30}{32} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{32} \times \frac{1}{32} \right) \right)}$$

Figure 4.2: Cohen's Kappa test

The Cohen's kappa value calculated was 0.94, indicating a substantial level of agreement between both instances of coding. Despite there being one disagreement, the high result

highlights the coder's consistent reliability and stability throughout the coding process. This consistency in applying coding criteria reinforces the robustness of the study's findings.

### **g. Drawing Conclusions from the Coded Data and Reporting the Findings**

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) identified two crucial steps that help to finalise the coding process: drawing conclusions from the coded data and reporting the methods and findings. The first step involves making inferences in relation to the “properties and dimensions of the categories, identifying relationships between categories, uncovering patterns, and testing categories against the full range of data ” (Bradley, 1993 as quoted in Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p.312), and that was presented in this chapter. However, a more detailed presentation of the results of the coding will be provided in Chapter 6. Evidently, the findings of each theme and sub-theme have been supported with explanation and graphical presentations that draw on both quantitative and qualitative findings. As stated by Smith (1975, p.218) regarding the function of each: “qualitative analysis deals with the forms and antecedent-consequent patterns of form, while quantitative analysis deals with duration and frequency of form”. While the analysis in this research is driven predominantly by the qualitative approach, quantitative findings also offer significant supporting perspectives, by providing the frequencies of the cartoons in each provided theme and sub-themes.

In the thematic analysis chapter, the participants representation has been analysed, as discussed in detail in the following subsection:

#### **4.4.1.2 Main Participants Representation in Saudi Cartoons**

The purpose of examining participants representation in COVID-19 cartoons is to identify the main characters and how they are represented based on shared ideologies, as well as to understand how the depicted characters have been represented in relation to the viewer. To achieve this purpose, the multimodal analysis was conducted. In this case, the researcher used the same principle of content analysis to determine the main characters represented in the cartoons referring to the available written and visual signs provided in the cartoons along with three multimodal essential tools:

1. ‘Personalisation and impersonalisation’ was used to show how certain characters were portrayed and the underlined meaning of using such a representation. The difference between

them is that “*personalise* social actors, represent them as human beings” (van Leeuwen, 1996, p.59, original emphasis). In contrast, impersonalised social actors are not presented as ‘human’. That can be shown in both the writing and image modes; the metaphorical representation of the presented characteristic plays an essential role in how the cartoonist's identify this type of character in the cartoons. The transmorphic representations were studied to understand these representations in cartoons that include anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and transformational aspects (Carbajal-Carrera, 2015). Anthropomorphism where animals or objects are imbued with the physical or mental attributes or abilities of humans is also known as personification. Zoomorphism is the practice of imbuing human or inanimate entities with animal traits or characteristics. For example, it is commonly used in cartoons to illustrate and humiliate political figures. Lastly, transformation indicates the combination of human entities with magical or mythological figures (Carbajal-Carrera, 2015).

2. ‘Specification and generalisation’ was initially proposed in the work of van Leeuwen (1996). Subsequently, Machin and Mayr (2012) explored these points in detail and termed them individualisation and collectivisation. Specification “can be represented as classes or as specific, identifiable individuals” (van Leeuwen, 1996, p.46). Alternatively, generalisation is generally applied in relation to stereotyped groups in order to distinguish them from others. Specification includes two sub-types of individualisation and assimilation. Individualisation is when “[s]ocial actors can be referred to as individuals” (van Leeuwen, 1996, p.48). Alternatively, assimilation is when social actors can be referred to as groups that can be presented either as aggregation or collectivisation as that “[t]he former quantifies groups of participants, treating them as ‘statistics’, the latter does not” (van Leeuwen, 1996, p.49). In the image mode, a similar representation is also shown in the research conducted by Machin and Mayr (2012, p.101) who primarily identified the social actors within the individualisation and collectivisation classification to include: i) individuals and groups: social actors in this category are depicted either in the individual capacity as distinguished from others, or part of a homogenised group where it is difficult to differentiate between the individuals; ii) specific and generic depictions: stereotyped presentations are often used here when the sign maker needs to make reference to a specific group of people “through stereotypical representations of dress, hairstyle and grooming, and/or selected (and often exaggerated) physical features” (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p.101) that the reader can recognise and use to instantly distinguish a certain group from another. Generic, on the other hand, does not show a difference between the presentation of people; iii) exclusion: “[c]ertain categories of people are not represented in

pictures of settings where they are in fact present, or in events in which they participate” (ibid, p.102).

3. Distance and angle, as presented in the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006), are shown to examine the social relationship between the depicted characters in the cartoons and the readers. Distance comprises three main shots: i) long shots, which depict the characters from a distance, showing the dimensions of the given place and location. They encourage readers to be observers who are invited to judge the depicted message objectively; ii) medium shots, which show the characters from their knees to the top of their head. Such presentation asks for engagement from the readers and includes their point of view; iii) close-up shots, which are presented with more focus on certain parts, providing more details than the other shots. These close-up shots create a sense of intimacy between actors and readers, making the interaction more personal. Moreover, the angle determines the degree of engagement, with two forms generally employed: i) frontal, which is presented when characters face the readers, and their gazes face them. This angle strongly indicates engagement as it frequently demands something from the readers; ii) oblique, where the gazes of the presented characters are not facing the readers directly to primarily detach them. The presentation of the two - angle and distance - is shown in the following Figure 4.3.

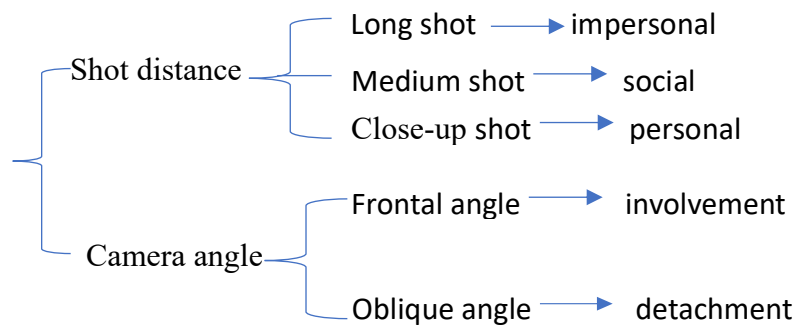


Figure 4.3: The distance and angle based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

The next section covers the second type of analysis used in this thesis which is the analysis of humour.

#### **4.4.2 Humour Analysis**

In this section, humour analysis is introduced as the principal method of analysis. First, the sample used for humour analysis is identified. Subsequently, the two main theoretical paradigms that were applied as a guide informing the analysis of humour in the cartoons, including Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution and humour forms (Alsadi and Howard, 2021; Dynel, 2009), are discussed.

##### **4.4.2.1 The Sample**

Examining the entire dataset is exceptionally challenging and time-consuming (Adami, 2016). Similarly, as stated by Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p.88), measuring a large population could “effect measurement quality”. Therefore, to ensure reliability, a sample of the cartoons was selected to enable a deep and thorough analysis of humour presentation in Saudi cartoons.

The 212 cartoons were filtered using proportionate stratified sampling in order to generate a manageable and representative sample of the cartoons. Proportionate stratified sampling ensures that “a sample is drawn from a homogeneous subset of the population—that is, from a population that has similar characteristics”, resulting in a reduction of the sampling error (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p.96). The main strata applied to select the humour analysis sample was themes, whereas the sub-strata comprised cartoonists. The work of each cartoonist was categorised based on the ten themes. Afterward, one cartoon was selected from each theme they covered. The aim of this sampling technique was to ensure a balanced dataset that covered as many cartoonists and themes as possible. This style of sampling allowed a more comprehensive and representative analysis of the different ideological stances related to the pandemic that were covered by the different cartoonists and themes.

Table 4.6 illustrates the number of cartoons used for humour analysis based on the main strata (themes) on the horizontal axis and the sub-strata (cartoonists) on the vertical axis.

Cartoonists	International political discourse	The impact of COVID-19 on education and work	Public protection	The economic impact of COVID-19	Social relations	Emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	Virus transmission rate	Travel and tourism	Lockdown	The vaccine rollout	Total number of the theme
Abdullah Almrzoque	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	3
Abdullah Jabber	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
Abdelaziz Rabea	1	4	4	8	8	4	2	2	4	1	10
Abdulsalam Halul	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Abdulrahman Hajad	1	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	4
Ali Algamdi	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	6	0	6
Amjad Rasmi	14	2	0	8	7	2	4	0	3	12	8
Fahad Alkamasy	0	0	2	5	1	0	2	2	4	2	7
Mafrah Alzady	2	0	13	0	3	0	2	1	7	3	7
Saud Almathy	1	0	12	1	1	0	0	2	3	0	6
Yasar Ahmad	5	3	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	4
Total number of cartoonists	6	5	6	7	7	4	5	6	9	6	61

Table 4.6: Number of cartoons in relation to cartoonists and themes

Table 4.6 shows that only one cartoonist depicted all the themes – Rabea. However, certain cartoonists covered most of the themes presented: Ramsi covers eight themes, whilst Alkamasy and Alzaydy cover seven themes out of ten. On the other hand, one cartoonist- Halul -dealt with only one theme. This variation confirms that the cartoonists have different interests when discussing the pandemic and its related issues. A random selection of cartoons from each theme by each cartoonist resulted in a total of 61 cartoons. These cartoons were input into a separate table using the name of the cartoonist, along with the theme to analyse the humour. Each cartoon was analysed in relation to two theoretical approaches: Yus’ (2016 and 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications and humour forms (Alsadi and Howard, 2021; Dynel, 2009).

#### 4.4.2.2 Yus’ Incongruity-Resolution Classifications

Yus’ (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications which is centred on three types of incongruity and their three resolutions, is one of the most prominent theories on humour (see Section 3.2.3). While analysing the cartoons in light of Yus’ incongruity-resolution classification, a number of issues emerged that raised important questions as regards these categories and how they can be reworked to complement the unique properties of this project’s dataset in this research. More specifically, four points emerged from the analysis: a) the differences between the writing-based and writing-image incongruities; b) the possibility of adding a fourth classification for both the incongruity and resolution categories; c) the likelihood of having more than one incongruity in a cartoon, and d) the kind of incongruity used in relation to personification and whether this is a frame-based or image-based incongruity. Each one of these four points are discussed in detail below.



## A) Writing-Based vs. Writing-Image Incongruities

Regarding the writing-based incongruity,<sup>25</sup> Yus (2021) identified the image mode to have either no role, an essential role, or a supportive role (explained in more detail in Section 3.2.3). Yus (2021) argued that although visual rhetorical presentations add a sense of humour to the writing, this is typically secondary or supportive to the text, meaning the incongruity is still considered to be writing-based. However, this is not always the case as visual rhetorical presentations can, in many instances, function as the main factor in creating the incongruity, thus establishing a joint writing-image incongruity. The difference between these two cases of visual rhetorical presentations is demonstrated by two examples below. Figure 4.4 illustrates how visual rhetorical presentations can often repeat the same sentiment portrayed in the writing, thus meaning the image supports the writing, creating writing-based incongruity.



Figure 4.4: Exchange greetings by sight

According to Yus' (2021) perspective on the role of image in supporting the incongruity, the cartoon in Figure 4.4 is essentially composed of a writing-based incongruity. Here, the image repeats the same phrase metaphorically – EXCHANGE GREETINGS BY SIGHT. The primary incongruity is between the phrases 'exchange greetings' and 'by sight'. The former carries the meaning potential that the normal greeting between people in the Saudi context involves shaking hands, kissing cheeks, or nose touching amongst men. The latter – 'by sight' – adds a new form of greeting. In this regard, the metaphorical presentation in the image mode repeats the same meaning presented in the writing mode. Thus, it is not the main mode that creates humour but it is a supportive add-on. More specifically, the image mode confirms the comic

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<sup>25</sup> In this section, I refer to the revised terminologies discussing the original work of Yus in order to avoid disrupting the natural flow of the paper and the application of these categories to the cartoons in this thesis. The term discourse has been renamed as writing, seeing as the discourse has different meanings in multimodality; it refers to a general aspect (Kress, 2010). Therefore, writing is used in this thesis, indicating that the discourse-based and discourse-image categories are writing-based and writing-image, respectively.

element already established by the writing by personifying the eyes and giving them arms through which they can metaphorically greet one another by “shaking hands”. Thus, the main incongruity in this cartoon is writing-based, confirming the classifications established by Yus (2021).

Figure 4.5 illustrates a different example of the interplay between the writing and image incongruities.



Figure 4.5: He who is afraid remains safe.

In this cartoon, the visual rhetorical presentation (exaggeration) is fundamental to creating the opposition, and thus, it is more adequate for a writing-image incongruity to be applied here, and not just a writing-based incongruity. The caption ‘he who is afraid remains safe’ is not sufficient to create incongruity as it just encourages practising safe behaviour. However, the image extends the idea of this cautious behaviour and exaggerates it through the visual depiction of a man wearing a plastic bag over his head. Wearing a plastic bag over the head can lead to suffocation, thus contradicting the written proverb and illustrating that too much ‘safety’ can, in fact, kill. The visual presentation of the plastic bag exaggerates the intended meaning, and consequently opposes the given meaning of the written proverb. Thus, the incongruity in this cartoon can be classified as writing-image and not writing-based incongruity, as the image strongly adds to the overall meaning.

Therefore, the role of the image in the writing-based incongruity, as outlined in Yus’ original incongruity classifications, has been revised within the context of this study. If the image conveys the same intended meaning presented in the writing mode, it is considered a writing-based incongruity. Conversely, if the rhetorical presentation in the image mode adds another

layer of meaning above what is presented in the writing mode, it is classified as writing-image incongruity.

### **B) Adding a Fourth Classification to Each of the Incongruity and Resolution Categories**

The second issue related to the classification presented by Yus (2021), is that some of the humour presented did not fit into the three incongruity and resolution categories identified by this classification scheme, particularly where the incongruity and resolution occur solely in the image mode. This suggests that a fourth category should be included for both the incongruities and resolutions, specifically image-based incongruity and image-based resolution. This proposal is based on the assertion made by Samson and Huber (2007) related to image playing an essential role in creating humour in cartoons. Hence, the possibility exists of incongruity and resolution being formed in the image mode. An example of this is given below by means of two different cartoons. The first cartoon in Figure 4.6 suggests the image-based incongruity, while the second (Figure 4.7) presents the image-based resolution.



Figure 4.6: With so much COVID-19 news...

Figure 4.6 illustrates the incongruity in the image mode through the portrayal of the Saudi man as indicated by the traditional clothes he wears. The three main pieces of clothing – thob, shimāq and ‘qāl – are three key signifiers that help to identify the meaning potential of being Saudi. The central focus of this cartoon is on the shadow of this man, presented in the shape of a COVID-19 germ. The opposition between the two visual representations in the cartoon – the actual man and his shadow – is solved in the writing mode via the caption: 'with so much COVID-19 news...'. This statement refers to the high input of news received by this Saudi citizen concerning COVID-19, implying that his thoughts are so inundated with news pertaining to the pandemic that he starts seeing the virus in his own shadow. The next cartoon, Figure 4.7, presents an image-based resolution.



Figure 4.7: Come I will teach you (the mother, the character on the right)  
Teach me 'an bu 'd<sup>26</sup> (the son, the character on the left)

In Figure 4.7, the incongruity is presented in the writing mode in the boy's words 'teach me 'an bu 'd, which is a response to his mum's command 'come, I will teach you'. The word 'an bu 'd is a pun that carries the incongruity. This word is homophonic in that it has the same sound and spelling but different meanings in two different contexts. The two meanings associated with it are 'online' and 'at a distance'. This word is commonly used to convey the meaning 'online', which became particularly popular during lockdown when online schooling was imposed in response to COVID-19. The second, more literal, meaning is 'at a distance'. The incongruity is solved in the image mode forming image-based resolution as the cartoonist depicts the boy maintaining a distance from his mother as he is afraid of her punishment as signified by the slipper behind her back<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, the corrected meaning meant by the boy is the later one 'at a distance'.

After identifying two new categories - image-based incongruity and image-based resolution - a more precise definition for both was required, as an overlap can occur in identifying the literal or imaginative/metaphoric presentation of the characters in the cartoons, as shown in (D) below.

<sup>26</sup> Transliteration is used here with the final word to avoid confusing the readers, as it is a pun that carries two different meanings.

<sup>27</sup> This is a gesture that Middle Eastern readers identify with as it is common to discipline children by threatening to hit them with footwear.

### **C) The Number of Incongruities Identified in Each Cartoon**

Previous research shows that many incongruities can occur in one text. Rothbart and Pien (1977) illustrated this through this particular joke:

(1) Why did the cookie cry? Because its mother had been a wafer so long.

This joke has three incongruities: a)- a cookie is crying, as in, it has been personified, b)- the cookie has a mother, which supports the argument that it has living qualities, and lastly c)- the surprising answer where the pronunciation of "a wafer" can be interpreted as "a wafer", "away for".

Here, the two incongruities identified by Rothbart and Pien (1977) based on personification (a and b) have also been analysed by Carbajal-Carrera and Sanchez-Castro (2020) in their discussion on cartoons. They demonstrated that the caricatures presented in cartoons can frequently carry a secondary incongruity as the readers might not find the main incongruity humorous but may engage more with the way caricatures exaggerate aspects for comic effect. Importantly, appreciation of humour varies between people (Bell, 2007, 2015). Therefore, all the presented incongruities in a multimodal cartoon have to be considered, as one person might laugh at one incongruity while another might find a different incongruity to be humorous. Furthermore, the interpretation of incongruities differs from person to person in relation to the knowledge necessary to make sense of a given text to include a) restrictive or culture-bound knowledge, b) linguistic knowledge, c) individual knowledge referring to opinions and attitudes, and d) general or universal knowledge (Attardo, 1994). As a member of the Saudi Arabian community where the data for this thesis was generated, a native speaker of Arabic which the cartoon used as the target language and as a Saudi woman who is integrated within a large social network in Saudi, experienced the pandemic and is exposed to these cartoons on a regular basis, the researcher is in a strong position to be able to understand the cultural, linguistic, universal and contextual cues presented in these cartoons, and consequently to identify and recognise the possible incongruities.

In line with Rothbart and Pien's (1977) perspective, the analysis in this study is open to considering as many incongruities as possible in each cartoon. In examining humour in general and incongruities more specifically, the researcher is looking for the semiotic resources exhibited. However, these resources differ in their potential to be used in a particular way

(Kress, 2010). Essentially, the incongruity presented in a cartoon can potentially be constructed in the image or writing mode alone, or a combination of the two. The following cartoon in Figure 4.8 presents an example of a cartoon presenting multiple incongruities.



Figure 4.8: UK

The cartoon in Figure 4.8 portrays two incongruities, which have been solved by way of two different resolutions. These are:

#### **IR1)- Frame-Based Incongruity and Image-Based Resolution**

The first incongruity occurs with respect to the identity of the UK presented in the cartoon opposing the one presented already in the mind of the readers is what creates frame-based incongruity. The cartoon presents the frame ‘The UK is a baseball player’, via both the writing and image modes. Here, the "baseball player" is presented in the image mode by way of the main prop, a baseball bat and the positioning of the main character’s body. Moreover, the “UK” is identified through the used label on the character’s hat, to stand for United Kingdom. This presented frame opposes the one already recognised by many people as the UK is a country. The resolution of this metaphorical presentation is explained through the image that shows the inability of the figure (UK) to control the situation, as portrayed through the unequal ratio between the multiple virus germs metaphorically presented as baseballs, indicating the huge number of balls, besides the one player.

#### **IR2)- Image-Based Incongruity and Frame-Based Resolution**

The image of one player signified by him holding a baseball bat opposes the vast number of virus germs that are metaphorically presented as baseball balls. The unreasonable visual

presentation of both creates the image-based incongruity. This image-based incongruity is solved through a frame-based resolution as there is a general indication from the visual and written signs presented that the two – the UK and COVID-19 - are incompatible in strength, suggesting that the UK is being overwhelmed and helpless. These representations lead the viewer to conclude from the whole frame that the player is unlikely to be successful in defeating the virus.

This example presents an explanation of the possibility to get more than one incongruity in a single cartoon. It has been ascertained that the incongruities identified in the 61 cartoons<sup>28</sup> differ in terms of their distribution, as the analysis has revealed that from 1 to 5 incongruities can potentially be presented in a single cartoon. The total number of incongruities discovered in the 61 cartoons is 128. These will be discussed in more detail later (see Section 6.2). These incongruities will present different patterns (Section 6.3) examined in relation to the humour forms (Section 6.5), to exhibit their potential to generate humour.

#### **D) Frame-Based and Image-Based Incongruities Used in Relation to Transmorphic Identifications**

Incongruity was also employed when Saudi cartoonists present certain imaginative or metaphorical identities that contradict their presentation in real life. Two possible incongruity classifications can possibly be exploited in this case, either frame-based or image-based. The former is more likely to be used if a change in appearance is portrayed; the cartoonist exaggerated different features in the appearance of the given individual. In contrast, image-based incongruity is exploited more in cartoons where comparing two entities using the image mode is taking place. An example of these differences in classification is illustrated in Figure 4.9.

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<sup>28</sup> The total number that are used to analyse humour as explained above in section 4.3.2.1



Figure 4.9: Challenge!!

In this cartoon, the two classifications of the incongruity occur. Frame-based incongruity is presented with the metaphorical presentation of Earth and COVID-19 as arm wrestlers- COVID-19 AND THE EARTH ARE ARM WRESTLERS. This unrealistic presentation creates a new frame regarding these two entities being rivals/opponents and using physical strength to beat each other. This new frame opposes the existing frame in the mind of the readers, emphasising that the Earth is a planet and COVID-19 is a virus, and in fact, that neither can actually arm wrestle. However, the image-based incongruity occurs as a result of comparing both characters (COVID-19 and the Earth) and evaluating their strength by stressing the different sizes; the Earth is depicted as being larger than COVID-19. The size difference can be also attributed to the age of existence; the Earth existed prior to COVID-19, which is considered a new disease. Here, it can be shown that frame-based incongruity is based on the opposition between the metaphorical identities and the real identities that are shown. However, if the comparison is the primary cause of the disagreement between two visual identities, it is then considered to be image-based incongruity.

The above discussion has outlined how the cartoons selected for this study often do not fit neatly into Yus' (2016 and 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications, and, most importantly, how this has been addressed and adapted by the researcher, also pointing to the potential to show many incongruities in a single cartoon. The same cartoons were also examined by looking at the presented humour forms, including humour types (Dyrel, 2009) and rhetorical figures<sup>29</sup> (Alsadi and Howards, 2021). This is discussed in more detail in the following sub-section.

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<sup>29</sup> In this thesis, this is termed humour techniques.



#### 4.4.2.3 Humour Forms

As discussed in detail in section 2.5.2 in the Literature Review, the humour forms used in this study were derived from the work of Alsadi and Howard (2021), and Dynel (2009). Although all the humour forms identified in the literature were examined in the Saudi cartoons in this study, only eight forms were actually located throughout the analysed data, as discussed in detail later in Chapter 6. When analysing the humour forms in relation to the 61 cartoons, three main rules are adhered to:

- 1- Humour forms are assigned based on the two modes of analysis - writing and image—resulting in three main categories: visual, verbal and multimodal in most of the humour forms. For example, the main classifications of pun are visual, verbal and multimodal (see Section 6.1.3).
- 2- The humour form counting in relation to the three independent variables, specifically cartoonists, themes and incongruities differ in principle. When examining the relationship between the humour forms, together with themes and cartoonists, the presented humour form is counted as one in number. However, when examining the relationship between humour forms and incongruities, each humour form is counted for each associated incongruity. For example, in Figure 4.8, the multimodal metaphor "UK IS A BASEBALL PLAYER" is one of the humour forms applied in the cartoon. This metaphor would be counted once in the analysis examining the relationship between humour forms, theme (virus transmission rate) and cartoonist (Ramsi). However, it would be counted two times in the analysis of the relationship between humour forms and incongruities, as this metaphor is essential to understand the two incongruities in the cartoon presented above in sub-section (c).
- 3- Many humour forms can be assigned to one cartoon. In Figure 4.8, for example, three humour forms have been identified, including exaggeration (the physical features, caricature and number), metaphor (CORONA IS BASEBALL, UK IS A BASEBALL PLAYER and UK FACING CORONA IS A BASEBALL GAME), and metonymy (PERSON FOR COUNTRY, PICTORIAL RUNES FOR DIRECTION and INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION). Although the three humour forms are counted once in general counting, they are counted differently when discussed as a separate section. For example, metonymy is counted separately in the general counting, but when discussing metonymy specifically, it is counted as three depending on the types of metonymy.

The outcomes of the analysis of the humour forms are presented both qualitatively and quantitatively, in Chapter 6. Moreover, the relationship between each humour form and the three different independent variables (themes, cartoonists and incongruity) were also examined.

The following section explores the degree to which the methodological approach employed in this study, combining methods and tools to analyse presentations pertaining to themes, participants and humour, maintains its trustworthiness, reliability and validity.

#### **4.5 Trustworthiness, Reliability and Validity**

In line with the recommendation made by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the trustworthiness of the content analysis was examined and extended to cover the humour analysis, including reliability and validity. According to Elo et al. (2014), this should be conducted using the following three phases: preparation, organisation and reporting.

##### **a. Preparation**

Choosing a representative sample that addresses the main research questions helps maintain a high degree of trustworthiness by ensuring the credibility of the content (thematic) analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) and humour analysis. Two sample groups were generated for the analysis, both of which followed different criteria for sampling. In relation to thematic analysis, the cartoons were selected from the Youm7 website (Section 4.3). The selected cartoons were chosen depending on specific criteria to ensure covering COVID-19 – the main focus of this study, the time range from December 2019 to March 2021 and multimodality function and excluding the illustrative cartoon from the data. A total of 212 cartoons were included in the main sample, and as discussed in Section (4.3), the researcher took measures to ensure that the sample was as representative as possible of the different themes and publications common in Saudi at the time of this study.

In relation to humour analysis, 61 cartoons were selected for analysis out of the main sample of 212, as discussed in Section 4.4.2.1. The cartoons were selected based on two strata (themes and cartoonists) to guarantee that a variation in style and purpose was covered, as these possibly have a strong bearing on the creation of humour in the cartoons. Specifically, covering a range

of cartoonists and themes helped to ensure that there was no bias in the sample that may affect the credibility of the findings. The works of 11 cartoonists were selected covering the 10 discussed themes. Basing the analysis on 61 cartoons out of 212 was sufficient, as it allowed a comprehensive analysis of the humour forms used, in relation to both Yus' (2016, 2021) classification and humour forms (Alsadi and Howard,2021; Dynel, 2009).

### **b. Organisation Phase**

During this phase, two essential elements were examined for their trustworthiness, including the unit of analysis (to confirm the validity of the methods) and consistency in the analysis (to ensure reliability).

The unit of analysis for both the thematic and humour analysis was selected logically depending on the purpose of the analysis. Choosing the units of analysis “is also important for ensuring the credibility of content analysis” (Elo et al., 2014, p.2). The reason for conducting the content analysis was to examine the presented themes in the cartoons. Hence, the two essential units that supported identifying the cartoon's themes were the visual and written signs. These are the fundamental building blocks of the cartoons along with examining the whole presentation which also refers to the setting and salience (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006). Moreover, the written and visual signs help to distinguish the humour representations in the cartoons based on two key theoretical perspectives that were applied to enhance the objectivity of the methodological approach, including Yus' incongruity-resolution classification and humour forms (Alsadi and Howard, 2021; Dynel, 2009).

The researcher had several measures in place to maintain the consistency in the analysis, in relation to both thematic and humour analysis, particularly during the coding phase. First, consistency was maintained in the thematic analysis by using a coding scheme. The creation of a detailed codebook helped assess the worthiness of this stage. A good coding scheme is the core element of trustworthiness (Folger, Hewes & Poole, 1984). It should be mentioned that one of the issues that many researchers face is the amount of overall data in relation to the number of coding categories identified. In general, the work is more trustworthy if the number of categories is lower than the number of examined data points. In relation to this study, ten themes were found in 212 cartoons. This ratio ensures the credibility of the organising phase, as “a large number of concepts usually indicates that the researcher has been unable to group the data, that is, the abstraction process is incomplete, and categories may also overlap”

(Kyngäs et al., 2011 cited in Elo et al., 2014, p.5). The consistency of coding was also tested using intra-coder reliability (Cohen's Kappa test), which exhibited a high level of agreement.

The consistency of the humour analysis was ensured by following established theoretical frameworks, based primarily on incongruity (Yus, 2016, 2021) and the integrated humour forms (Alsadi and Howard, 2021; Dynel, 2009) that analyse how cartoonists use humour. Several adjustments have been proposed to these approaches (see Sections 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.2.3), so that they better conform to the unique features of the multimodal cartoons included in this dataset. During the analysis phase, the cartoons were examined first using Yus' incongruity-resolution classifications and then later examined the humour form employed. The relationship between the two is also investigated later by means of a thorough examination along with the cartoonists and themes.

### **c. Reporting**

Trustworthiness is achieved once a complete outline of the analysis is conducted and the application of concepts is provided. A detailed description of the analysis allows "readers to draw their own conclusions regarding the trustworthiness of the results" (Elo et al., 2014, p.7). This chapter has presented all the steps utilised in the coding process and the details of how they were managed at each step. The sampling procedures, units of the analysis, cases of doubt and the initial outcomes of the themes, have been provided in detail in this methodology chapter. Conversely, the final results of the thematic analysis based on the content analysis and specific methodological tools from multimodality along with the humour analysis based on Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications and humour forms (Alsadi and Howard, 2021; Dynel, 2009), are presented in two separate analysis chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6). Each is supported by tables, illustrations, figures, examples and the findings obtained by previous research.

The analysis of Saudi cartoons presented in these two chapters follow certain system of translation to English, as presented in the following section.

## **4.6 Translation and Transliterations in the Thesis**

The cartoons in this thesis are translated into English. However, transliteration is used when the puns are presented in the cartoons to avoid confusion between literal and figurative

meanings. On the other hand, the names of apps used during the pandemic are retained as they appear in the applications by the founders, such as Sehety and Tawakkalna to help readers identifying them. Moreover, campaign names during the lockdown in Saudi Arabia and idioms are preserved in their original Arabic form<sup>30</sup> as well as they are translated to English.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach used in this thesis, introduced the corpus for the study and provided detail about the sample, which includes 212 Saudi cartoons covering COVID-19. The chapter has also shown how the Saudi cartoons were obtained from a reputable, well-established Egyptian website. At the time of this research, this website predominantly published cartoons from Saudi Arabia, with a focus on the seven most popular newspapers in the country. Purposive sampling was used to extract a total of 212 multimodal cartoons from the website that covered COVID-19.

The following section subsequently introduced the analysis process followed in this thesis, specifically thematic analysis and humour analysis. Then a detailed explanation of each analysis introduced thematic analysis which focused on determining the main themes found in the 212 cartoons. In Section (4.4.1.1.2), the coding steps were also introduced, as well as a detailed outline of how ten main themes were identified throughout the cartoons. Next, the multimodal tools used to analyse the represented characters were introduced, answering the related research questions.

The second stage of the analysis involved taking a more focused sampling approach to conduct a more comprehensive investigation of the humour. As such, 61 cartoons were extracted from the main sample, whilst two strata were used as the basis for the selection process, namely cartoonists and themes. This smaller sample of cartoons was investigated in relation to two perspectives: Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications and humour forms (Alsadi and Howard, 2021; Dynel, 2009). This was explained in Sections 4.4.2.2 and 4.4.2.3,

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<sup>30</sup> without amending any grammatical corrections as in the case of 'كلنا مسؤول'.

where these theoretical perspectives and how the researcher made various changes concerning these perspectives to be a good fit for the data, were also discussed in detail. In relation to Yus' incongruity-resolution classification, the researcher suggested a new category (image-based). This was particularly important as this research represents the first study that has applied Yus' theory to the multimodal genre as it was initially used for jokes (Yus, 2016), and afterwards in memes (Yus, 2021). Additionally, two classifications were redefined to clarify the distinction between writing-based and writing-image incongruities. Furthermore, it explains the number of possible incongruities. Next, the section addressed how metaphorical representations generate incongruities and how these are considered in the light of frame-based and image-based incongruities. Thus, after revising Yus' (2016, 2021) classification system in light of the dataset in this study, the researcher finally settled on four incongruities (writing-based, image-based, writing-image and frame-based) and four resolution types (image-based, writing-based, implication-based and frame-based).

Humour forms in which more than one humour form could be identified in a single cartoon were also presented, as they often work in conjunction to create humour. Two different scenarios dictated the way in which the frequency of the humour forms across the cartoons were considered: it was counted as one when it was present in relation to a theme or the cartoonists. However, when examining the humour forms in relation to the incongruity classifications, each occurrence had to be taken into consideration separately depending on its role in the interpretation of the incongruities. In Section 4.5, the trustworthiness and reliability of the methods were investigated in light of the three phases that the thesis experienced, including: preparation, organisation and reporting.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Thematic Distribution in Saudi Cartoons: Content Analysis and Multimodal Analysis**

Using content analysis and tools from multimodality, this chapter undergoes a thorough investigation of the main themes that dominated 212 cartoons that were published in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first section of this chapter offers a general overview of the ten main themes that have been extracted, and using content analysis, examines how their representation in the cartoons oscillates in relation to the four phases that Saudi Arabia experienced during the pandemic. Through Multimodality analysis, the second section of this chapter provides a detailed explanation of each theme in relation to the representation of participants. The conclusion then summarizes all the main points mentioned in the chapter.

#### **5.1 How the Themes Presented in Saudi Cartoons Changed Across the Four Different Phases of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Ten different themes have been extracted from the 212 cartoons analysed, which include: the virus transmission rate; the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19; the impact on education and work; vaccine rollout; lockdown; international political discourse; public protection; the change in social relations; the impact on travel and tourism; and the economic impact of COVID-19. The deduced ten themes in this study show its similarity with Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman 's (2021) work, as it is the first in the Arab world to explore the thematic classifications of COVID-19 cartoons. Seven shared themes across both studies were found: quarantine and the lockdown; economic devastation; political discourse; social relationship discourse; travel and tourism; work and education; and health awareness. However, there are differences within the subthemes, which can be attributed to the different contexts of the studies: Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman's (2021) work examines Jordanian cartoons, while this thesis examines Saudi cartoons. More specifically, Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman's (2021) study identified six main themes - lockdown, economy, political discourse, travel and tourism, and work and education- without identifying any sub-themes – and whilst the present study share these themes, it shows more variations in presenting the sub-themes, as will be discussed below.

Importantly, health awareness has been treated a subtheme of the main theme public protection, along with three other subthemes: compliance with safety guidelines, disobedience

towards safety guidelines, and public health advice. Moreover, three main themes are proposed in this thesis that are not part of Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman's (2021) work, including the virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, and vaccine rollout. Furthermore, owing to the differing social and cultural characteristics between the communities examined in this thesis (Saudi) and Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman's (2021) study (Jordan), the author unearthed different sub-themes in relation to the social relations theme in the Saudi context.

The ten themes differ in terms of the frequency of their occurrence in the selected cartoons, as presented in Table 5.1.

Themes	Frequency of occurrence	Percentage
Public protection	42	20%
The change in social relations	28	13%
Lockdown	28	13%
The economic impact of COVID-19	25	12%
The virus transmission rate	24	12%
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	15	7%
International political discourse	15	7%
The impact on education and work	13	6%
Vaccine rollout	13	6%
The impact on travel and tourism	9	5%
Total	212	100%

Table 5.1: The ten themes' number of occurrence and their percentage.

Table 5.1 illustrates the frequency of each theme's occurrence across the 212 Saudi cartoons. Notably, the theme public protection occurs most frequently within the cartoons, with a percentage of 20%, positioning it as the first-ranked theme, while the theme that occurs least is the impact on travel and tourism, with a percentage of 5%. The variations in frequency of occurrence between the ten themes can be attributed to the nature of the four phases that Saudi Arabia went through during the pandemic, specifically between January 2020 and March 2021. Also, such differences correlate with events that have taken place in each phase. The phases will be introduced first, followed by a more thorough examination of these correlations.

The first phase, the spread of COVID-19, lasted for almost three months, from 1 January to 22 March 2020. The start date marks the beginning of the pandemic spreading across the globe, while the latter date marks the point just before the government assigned Saudi Arabia to a full lockdown. The second phase, the lockdown, lasted nearly three months, from 23 March to 30 May 2020, with the latter date marking one day before the curfew was lifted. The third phase, lifting of the curfew, lasted for five months, starting on 31 May and lasting to 09 November



2020. The former date was selected as the actual start of the curfew being lifted, while the end date was chosen to mark the historic event when Pfizer announced the possibility of a vaccine being manufactured and distributed. The fourth phase, vaccine rollout and return back to everyday life, ran from 10 November 2020 until March 2021, lasting approximately five months. This start date coincides with the widely circulating “rumour” of a possible vaccination being officially announced in the media, with specific details of the vaccination process and distribution being outlined. The end date represents the end of the second stage of the vaccination process as put in place by the Saudi Ministry of Health (MoH). As a consequence of the vaccination, many social activities resumed and public places reopened, allowing those who had been vaccinated to come out of social isolation and to start mixing with others in public settings such as malls. The summary of these phases is presented in Table 5.2

The phase	The start date	The end date
The spread of COVID-19	1 January 2020	22 March 2020
The lockdown	23 March 2020	30 May 2020
Lifting of the curfew	31 May 2020	09 November 2020
Vaccine rollout and return back to everyday life	10 November 2020	31 March 2021

Table 5.2: The four phases that Saudi Arabia went through during the pandemic.

Using content analysis, a significant correlation has been identified between the four phases of the pandemic that took place in Saudi Arabia, and the ten themes deduced from the cartoons, as presented in Figure 5.1.

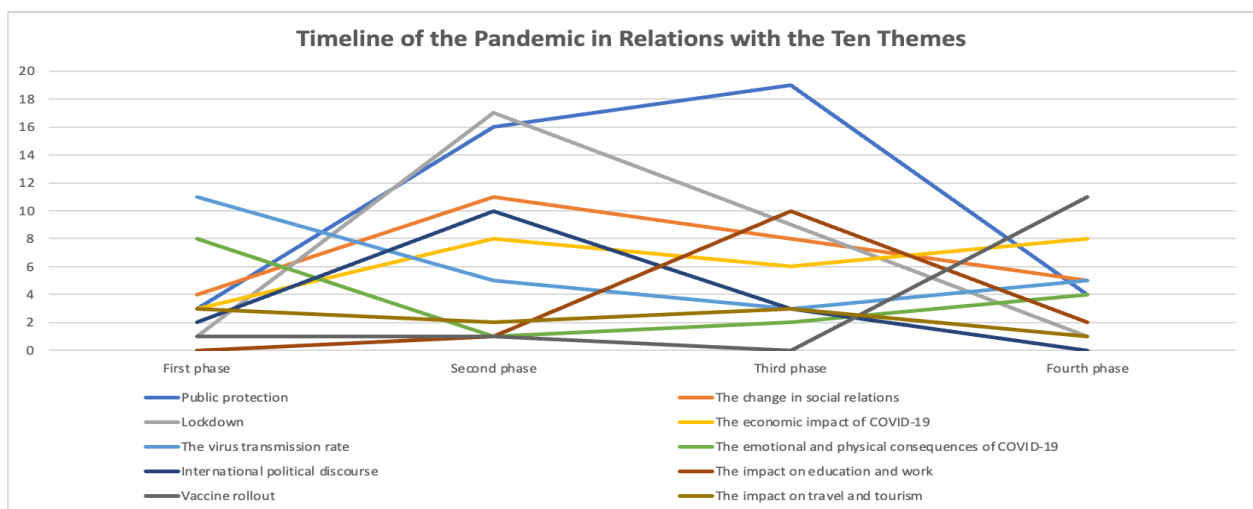


Figure 5.1: The correlation between the four phases of the pandemic and themes identified in the published Saudi cartoons

As mentioned previously, the theme with the highest occurrence in the cartoons is public protection, with a percentage of 20%. This theme, as shown in Figure 5.1, is one of the most frequent themes across all phases. However, it reached its peak in two phases - lockdown and lifting of the curfew - as Saudi cartoonists played an essential role in educating the public about the importance of protection during these two phases. Moreover, cartoonists were instrumental in making the public aware of the dangers of COVID-19 so that they would appreciate the significance of carefully following precautionary measures outlined by the government in order to protect themselves and others. The change in social relations and lockdown are the second most frequent themes, occurring across all four phases, with a percentage of 13% for each. The change in social relations theme reached its peak in the second phase - lockdown- where many social events and occasions were cancelled due to the lockdown, forcing Saudi citizens to celebrate virtually. Cartoonists, during this phase, were very adept at visually representing this transformation from a norm of physical proximity and reciprocity, to a very different reality where social interactions were conducted remotely through screens. Moreover, lockdown theme makes an appearance mainly in the second phase- lockdown- and third phase- lifting of the curfew. Again, Saudi cartoonists heavily represented this theme in their cartoons, using their work to educate readers about the essence of lockdown, its procedures, and how it would gradually be lifted. The theme of lockdown is presented much less frequently in the first and fourth phases, as in the former, the issue of self-quarantining dominated public discourse, while in the fourth phase, the looming threat of returning to lockdown was a more prominent concern.

The economic impact of COVID-19 and the virus transmission rate, as the third themes with a percentage of 12% for each, occur across all four phases. The existence of the economic impact of COVID-19 theme fluctuates, although it experiences a peak in the second and fourth phases as the Saudi cartoonists with the former phase show the devastation of the economy due to the lockdown while the latter compared to the other phases, focus on the contribution of the vaccine and Group of Twenty (G20) in enhancing economic growth. Moreover, the virus transmission rate, occurring mostly in the first phase, the spread of COVID-19. Although it is the most highly recurring theme in the first phase, it then drops to sixth place in the second and third phases, rising again to third place in the fourth phase: vaccine rollout and return back to everyday life. This fluctuation is due to the fact that the transmission rate was at its highest in the first phase when COVID-19 outbreaks from China initially reached Saudi Arabia. In relation to the fourth phase, the discussion on transmission rate was strongly associated with the emergence of the second wave of the pandemic.

The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 and international political discourse are jointly ranked fourth, both with a score of 7%. The former - the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19- is seen mainly in the first and fourth phases, with very little occurrence in the second and third phases. Saudi cartoonists skilfully relayed the panic the global public exhibited as it faced COVID-19 and the sense of helplessness and defencelessness we all felt as the virus rampaged throughout the world during the first phase. Using this theme frequently in the fourth phase correlates strongly with the second wave of COVID-19 as the cartoonists convey the panic feeling that people felt due to that. The latter- international political discourse- has made an appearance in just the first three phases, peaking particularly in the second phase as it correlated with political issues circulating at the time, related mainly to the American elections. The impact on education and work and the vaccine rollout, are two themes that jointly come in at fifth place, both scoring 6%. The former is featured rarely in the first, second and fourth phases. However, it occurs mostly in the third phase, specifically in August and September 2020, which can be attributed to the start of online education in Saudi Arabia across all educational levels, beginning on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2020. The latter- vaccine rollout- has been presented with less frequency in the first and second phases, due to the fact that the vaccination was still in the very early stages of inception during these periods. It increases sharply in the fourth phase, as Saudi cartoonists focus on the issue of medical innovation, encouraging readers to take the vaccine. The last theme- the impact on travel and tourism- has a frequency score of 5%, and is presented equally across the first three phases. During this time, the cartoonists accurately portrayed the changes that took place to the aviation sector, and the impact this had on domestic travel in Saudi Arabia.

The previous discussion provided an overview of the ten themes in relation to their frequency of occurrence across the four phases of the pandemic in Saudi Arabia, the following section dissects all ten themes in much more detail, while exploring relevant sub-themes portrayed in Saudi cartoons related to COVID-19.

## **5.2 A Closer Look at the Themes and Subthemes Presented in Saudi Cartoons During the Pandemic**

Using content analysis, ten themes have been extracted from the 212 cartoons analysed. Each theme is separately discussed with examples of published cartoons.

### 5.2.1 Public Protection

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak around the world, different safety procedures were announced by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in Saudi Arabia to fight the virus and stop its rapid spread. These procedures included washing hands, using sanitizer, wearing a mask, sneezing etiquette, and social distancing. MoH used its official accounts on different social media platforms to publish different health educational topics related to COVID-19, including “how it is transmitted, how to prevent getting it, and where it originated” (Hassounah, Raheel & Alhefzi, 2020, p.7). One of the most important measures members of the public were encouraged to take was social distancing, as it greatly reduced the probability of infections (Wilder-smith & Freedman, 2020). Therefore, the MoH focused on imposing a lockdown and limiting social gatherings to a maximum of five individuals (Khalid, 2020a). The limiting of mass gatherings in Saudi Arabia helped to ensure that unfortunate scenarios of soaring infection rates were avoided, including the Iranian pilgrims (Yezli & Khan, 2020); the Dimond princess ship (Rocklöv, Sjödin & Wilder-Smith, 2020); and the Latina American caravel (Rodriguez-Morales et al., 2020).

The Ministry of Health’s efforts in educating the Saudi population were doubled during the lifting of the curfew phase. A day before the curfew lifting, an official announcement on national TV stated that there is a possibility of imposing a full lockdown once again if people neglect the compliance with safety measures (Khalid, 2020b). Ministry of Interior (MoI) also imposed a fine on those who do not follow the precautionary measures (Khalid, 2020a). The citizens of Saudi Arabia found that following the precautionary measure was a challenge and that “they would never commit to observing precautionary instructions after the curfew lifting” (Albeyahi, 2022, p. vii).

Therefore, Saudi cartoonists took the social responsibility to encourage people to be more cautious and not to let their guard down by showing the importance of following the health guidance, while criticising those who broke the rules for being reckless and neglectful of safety procedures, thus putting themselves and others at risk.

Public protection, as a main theme, has occurred frequently in the analysis with 42 cartoons. Within this main theme, four sub-themes have emerged from the cartoons of Saudi cartoonists,

including: health awareness; compliance with safety guidelines; disobedience towards safety guidelines; and public health advice.

### 5.2.1.1 Health Awareness

This sub-theme has been presented with six cartoons. In general, health awareness in relation to COVID-19 was the most essential factor in limiting the spread of the disease (Alahdal, Basingab & Alotaibi, 2020). Different awareness programs were launched by the MoH to instruct the public about the virus (Hassounah, Raheel & Alhefzi, 2020). Moreover, many government campaigns participated in spreading awareness, including *كلنا مسؤول* 'We Are All Responsible', *خليك بالبيت* 'Stay at Home', *نعود بحذر* 'We are Back with Caution' and *السلام نظر* 'Exchange Greetings by Sight'.

The first two campaigns were launched during the first two phases – the spread of COVID-19 and lockdown. *We are All Responsible* campaign was launched by the MoH after king Salman's speech addressing the Saudi nation when the pandemic started. As he said: "we rely on the resolve of our citizens and residents, their determination, and sense of responsibility to fight coronavirus" (Arab News, 2020b). This campaign was shared by many citizens and posted on their social media accounts, as proof of their contribution to the fight against COVID-19.

The second campaign, *Stay at Home*, was launched during lockdown to encourage individuals to stay at home. The last two campaigns, *We are Back with Caution and Exchange Greetings by Sight*, were launched in the third phase – lifting of the curfew - to encourage individuals to be more cautious with their actions, and to remain wise when interacting publicly in order to avoid being infected with COVID-19. The campaign- *We are Back with Caution* - encouraged individuals to remain cautious and to keep adhering to safety procedures despite a transformation back to "normal" life. Moreover, *Exchange Greetings by Sights* means that the individuals should change their greeting style so that instead of kissing, hugging or shaking hands, they greet each other from a distance by raising the eyebrows.

While all four campaigns were used to make people aware about necessary protection measures, The first three campaigns were strongly related to a specific phase of the lockdown. Despite last campaign- *Exchange Greetings by Sight* -, launched during the curfew lifting, it was more used to encourage social distancing as one of the precautionary measures, and thus

strongly aligns with the sub-theme health awareness. Th example of this campaign is presented with the following Figure 5.2.



Figure 5.2: Exchange greetings by sight

In this cartoon, the two eyes have been personified as EYES ARE PEOPLE who shake the hands as a kind of greeting. This visual depiction of the greeting is presented in the campaign logo 'السلام نظر' 'Exchange Greetings by Sight,' written in the upper centre of the cartoon. The overall presentation of the cartoon encourages social distancing by promoting the use of eyebrow raises instead of the traditional handshake.

As findings of the content analysis demonstrate, Saudi cartoonists have used their illustrations to present the positive effects of health awareness on limiting the spread of COVID-19. The following cartoon in Figure 5.3 is an example of such a presentation:



Figure 5.3: Awareness

Health awareness in this cartoon is personified as a human - indexed by the hand, forming the metaphor HEALTH AWARENESS IS A HUMAN that forcefully uproots the personified corona, presenting COVID-19 IS A TREE, forming the metaphor HEALTH AWARENESS ROOTING

OUT COVID-19. The action of pulling the tree out of the ground along with painful facial expression of COVID-19, showing the superiority of the awareness and its power over COVID-19. Such a depiction shows the importance of health awareness in eradicating corona, thus encouraging people to adhere to health guidance in order to rapidly diminish the virus.

Saudi cartoonists within this sub-theme use a specific identification of health awareness in the writing mode; it has been labeled explicitly in two cartoons with red ink to index its importance in fighting COVID-19, as shown for example in the above Figure 5.3. Moreover, COVID-19 is mostly portrayed by Saudi cartoonists as a weak and terrified creature that is controlled by health awareness, as shown with five cartoons. In some of the cartoons, COVID-19 is depicted from a profile angle as presented with three cartoons to engage readers with the feeling of triumph they experience when they see it controlled and beaten by health awareness. In other illustrations, the cartoonists portray the superior relationship between health awareness and COVID-19 with a long-shot distance, shown with three cartoons, to allow readers witness the strong impact of health awareness over COVID-19. Three other medium-shot cartoons are presented to engage readers and make them experience the same power practiced by the health awareness, as shown in Figure 5.3, for example. This positive depiction of the power encourages readers to strive for health awareness. In general, Saudi cartoonists transmit a strong message to the readers that health awareness is the only solution to overcome the pandemic.

Health awareness has a positive impact on limiting the spread of COVID-19 and is a main factor in citizens adhering to precautionary safety measures. The next sub-section discusses this compliant behavior as a sub-theme of public protection.

### **5.2.1.2 Compliance with Safety Guidelines**

This sub-theme is shown with ten cartoons. It represents how people follow health guidelines to protect themselves from catching the virus. These health guidelines involve wearing a mask and gloves, keeping a distance from others, and not touching surfaces in public places. Most cartoons show these precautionary measures to be taken individually by Saudi men or women, and these individuals are usually depicted as intelligent and selfless people, as shown, for example, in the following cartoon in Figure 5.4.

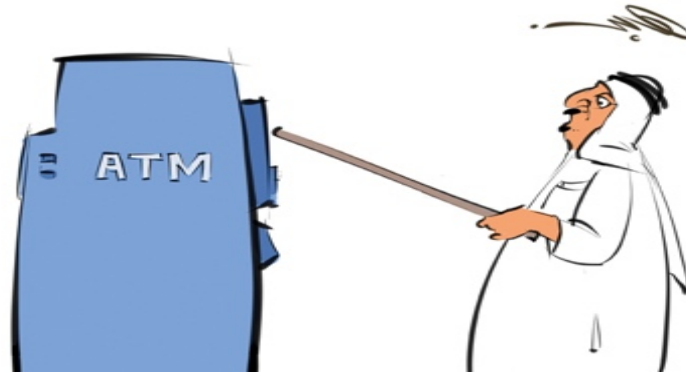


Figure 5.4: ATM

In this cartoon, the old man, signified with the facial features and the stick, does not press the ATM buttons with his hands, instead using his walking stick. Such intelligent behavior can help prevent the virus spreading, so that it is not transferred from the ATM surface to his hands. The cartoonist here shows the man's creative actions, which play an important role in helping to contain the virus.

It can be noticed that intelligent and selfless representation are shown in this sub-theme as a strategy to influence readers' behavior to be like the presented characters- cautious and diligently follow the precautionary measures. The creativity in protecting self, reflecting the level of the smartness and such inelegancy is raised from the social responsibility to contain the danger, and that signifies the selfless identity, shown in Figure 5.4, for example. The depiction of such positive behaviour, followed two patterns of the framing. The first one, with the three cartoons, is presented with a medium shot to engage the readers more with such behaviours as being one who also follows the same action. That means some Saudi people also have the same smart influence to be intelligent and saved from the infections. On the other hand, long-shot distance is the second framing strategy used in this sub-theme with seven cartoons. Five of them is presented from oblique angle to detach the readers and positions them as observers of such praise-worthy and cautious behaviour that positively impacts the health of self and others. On the other hand, two cartoons are presented from frontal angle to engage the readers with such positive feelings and representations, and being more personally engaged. In general, these two presentations encourage readers to follow safety measures intended for public protection.

Saudi cartoonists do not only portray positive behaviours by Saudis towards precautionary measures, but they also illuminate the negative and selfish actions of Saudis in their cartoons.



The following sub-theme presents disobedient behavior that does not adhere to the safety guidelines.

### 5.2.1.3 Disobedience Towards Safety Guidelines

This sub-theme is presented with 21 cartoons. It points to how some Saudi individuals do not follow the published safety rules, which has harmful consequences on the health of citizens. One of many cartoons presenting such violations, is shown below with Figure 5.5:



Figure 5.5: leave a safety gap of 2m (the statement in the upper right)  
Good job (in the balloon)

In this cartoon, the above statement on the upper right- “leave a safety gap of 2m” –carries a direct demand for social distancing. This demand is violated with the present Saudi crowd- six males and three females - as indexed by their traditional clothing (men wear the thawb, and women wear the ‘bāyh). Such a violation has taken place in a public space as portrayed by the characters’ outdoor clothes. The violation action is encouraged by the personified virus, COVID-19 IS A MONSTER, that is telling them to continue with their transgressive behaviour, demonstrated in the speech bubble with the phrase ‘good job’. In general, this cartoon demonstrates that the violation of the precautionary measures can result in being infected with COVID-19.

The cartoonists in this sub-theme present two different representations of those who violate precautionary measures: collective and individual. The collective representation of the violators is presented through the image and writing modes when social distancing is the main violated behaviour. In the image mode, the cartoonists often depict groups of people violating social distancing rules, such as crowding together in public places, shown above in Figure 5.5, for example. In the writing mode, the cartoonists use the quantitative presentation such as ‘20

workers' and 'gatherings.' This collective representation with the social distancing is evident in eight cartoons in the analysed data. On the other hand, the individual representation of the violator is used in relation to behaviours carried out by one person, such as not wearing a mask. Thirteen cartoons have presented this representation of violators as being done individually. Therefore, the differences in depicting these representations within the cartoons is attributed to the type of the violated precautionary measures presented. Moreover, Saudi cartoonists use negative referential characteristics including stubbornness, recklessness and ignorance to address those who violate precautionary measures. These negative characteristics have been portrayed in five cartoons in the analysed data. On the other hand, other Saudi cartoonists use positive objective referential choices, such as hero and cute, but they use them ironically as they carry negative meaning referring to them to be foolish, and that has been presented in two cartoons. Most of the cartoons within this sub-theme are drawn from a long-shot distance (16 out of 21) where 13 are depicted with oblique angle to avoid accusing the readers of being one of those who risk the health of self and others, instead positioning them as observers who have a right to criticise such selfish behaviors that increase the risk of COVID-19 infections. However, three cartoons are drawn from a frontal angle in order to encourage emotional engagement, as these cartoons mostly portray the negative consequences of the violation of safety rules- being infected by COVID-19. The medium shot also is presented in two cartoons, forming the social distance measure. Moreover, Saudi cartoonists tend to use a close-up shot with three cartoons, portraying hand-shakes between people; they focus closely on the hands to index that this intimate greeting can cause infections to spike by transmitting the virus from one person to another. Therefore, Saudi cartoonists use framing techniques and participants' representations differentially depending on the violated behavior.

All the above cartoons related to all above mentioned sub-themes can be considered as a form of indirect advice – in the shape of persuasive or critical cartoons- that are published to help raise awareness and thus eliminate the spread of the virus. However, the following sub-theme involves a more direct form of advice that is portrayed through the words exchanged between characters in the cartoon.

#### **5.2.1.4 Public Health Advice**

This sub-theme includes five cartoons that portray advice that is directly circulated in Saudi society on an informal level. This advice is usually in a conversational format and refers to precautionary measures. The advice in all the cartoons is usually uttered by personified

animals, the personified corona virus, or is exchanged between citizens. The following cartoon in Figure 5.6 is an example of this sub-theme.



Figure 5.6: Wear the mask and gloves ignorant !!!

In this cartoon, the camel is personified as THE CAMEL IS A HUMAN<sup>31</sup> as it is given speaking abilities, indexed by the speech bubble. It advises the shepherd to ‘wear the mask and gloves,’ calling him ‘ignorant’ in reference to his irresponsible behavior. The cartoonist portrays how the camel is the one who follows the precautionary measures by wearing the mask, while the human does not, thus advising the readers indirectly through such a light and humorous frame.

It has been noticed that Saudi cartoonists in this sub-theme offer advice through two different formats depending on the represented participants. The first type is presented through the individual representation, showing a character who follows the rules, then advising others who do not appear to be following the safety measures, as presented in three cartoons, one of them is Figure 5.6. The second format is presented through two cautious participants, as those people are seen to follow the precautionary measures, while offering general advice about safety rules and offering their opinions on the general attitude of Saudi people towards public safety guidelines. This format is less common compared to the first one, as it is presented with two cartoons.

In this theme, public protection, Saudi cartoonists take a social responsibility role to make readers aware of the importance of following health guidance by demonstrating the power of health awareness, praising people who follow precautionary measures, and criticising those

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<sup>31</sup> Being personified here in this metaphor depends on the definition in Oxford Language as that “the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form”. Here, the ability to talk is one of the human characteristics, therefore, identifying the camel to be a person depends mainly on the given definition.

who violate them. These precautionary measures are not just presented in Saudi cartoons, but also in other international cartoons, as these are universal measures taken by most countries to overcome the pandemic and its spread. Three sub-themes are presented in other international cartoons, including: compliance with the safety guidelines, found in Jordanian cartoons (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021) and Canadian cartoons (Labbé et al., 2022); disobedience towards the safety guidelines as presented in Nigerian cartoons (Asiru & Bello, 2020), Canadian cartoons (Labbé et al., 2022), and Pakistani cartoons (Sattar et al., 2020); and public health advice as found again in Jordanian cartoons (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). In general, the purpose of presenting this theme is to encourage readers to follow precautionary measures in order to overcome the pandemic without huge losses in life (Al Khresheh, 2020; Sattar et al., 2020).

The represented participants in this theme are shown mainly as male characters, as they are the ones who are considered to mostly violate health guidance. This supports findings by Allington et al. (2021), who conducted a survey and found that Saudi women are "significantly more likely to engage in all health- protective behaviours than men," (p.3) and that men are more likely to violate health measures. Saudi male characters in the cartoons who do not follow the rules are presented as reckless, stubborn and ignorant. These mirror similar individuals' presentations seen in Canadian cartoons, where such characters are usually portrayed as "immoral," "self-centred," "silly," and "stupid" (Labbé et al., 2022). They are called "covidiot" – an English term referring to individuals who do not follow precautionary measures against COVID-19. This terminology is a combination of the two words- "coronavirus" and "idiot". On the other hand, Saudi cartoonists tend to present people who follow precautionary measures as intelligent and selfless, which aligns with Labbé et al.'s (2022) identification of these people as "convenient"- an English term that combines "coronavirus" and "obedient".

### **5.2.2 Lockdown**

Lockdown is one of the most frequently occurring themes with 28 cartoons, as shown in Table 5.1. This theme correlates with the precautionary measures announced by Saudi authorities to contain the spread of the virus “[d]ue to the low likelihood of obtaining a vaccine in the near future” (Hassounah, Raheel & Alhefzi, 2020, p.1). The first case in Saudi Arabia was found in Qatif City on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2020, and as a result, the Saudi Government “announced a temporary but strict city-wide quarantine” (SPA, 2020, para 2). Many restrictions then were gradually applied to religious places, sports, entertainment and social events, and domestic and

international travelling. Despite attempts by the government to limit social interaction, it was impossible to completely control the situation, which led Saudi authorities to impose a partial curfew on the 23rd of March 2020 (Yezli & Khan, 2020). This partial curfew lasted from 7 pm to 6 am, which is the time that most Saudis, especially the younger generation, are likely to mingle and be most socially active. The Saudi government then switched interchangeably between full and partial lockdown, depending on two main factors. The first factor was the confirmed number of cases, as some cities had a higher infection rate compared to others, thus warranting a full lockdown. On the other hand, cities with low infection rates were able to keep the virus under control with a partial lockdown. For example, two cities - Mecca and Medina - were under partial lockdown between 3 pm to 6 am on the 25th of March 2020, although once infection rates and deaths began to rise, a full lockdown was imposed onto these cities on 2nd of April 2020.

The second factor that determined the nature of the lockdown in Saudi, was religious events. Specifically, there are three main religious events that Saudis and Muslims observe - the Holy month of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha – which are usually celebrated through family get-togethers and wider social gatherings. Anticipating the potential risk this could cause in light of the rapidly spreading virus, Saudi Authorities changed the curfew time to prevent mass gatherings. During Ramadan, Saudi citizens were permitted to leave their homes between 9am and 5pm, as people were fasting during the day and could use this time to carry out essential duties. The lockdown was applied around three hours before sunset<sup>32</sup>, making it difficult for citizens to spend the few hours before breaking their fasts carrying out social visits, as is usually the tradition. In doing this, the authorities aimed to limit typical Ramadan gatherings that could dramatically drive up infection rates.

In relation to Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, the full lockdown was imposed for five days in a row to avoid gatherings that might result in the virus spreading uncontrollably amongst the population. Indeed, imposing a lockdown no doubt had a positive impact on reducing the number of infection and death cases. Nevertheless, the lockdown resulted in a huge economic devastation as many small businesses and large companies announced their bankruptcy. Due to these unprecedented economic challenges that faced Saudi Arabia, the government gradually lifted the curfew at the end of May (Shimu et al., 2021). Saudi cartoonists played an

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<sup>32</sup> The time of breaking the fast

instrumental role in depicting the three phases of the lockdown in their cartoons, including full and partial lockdowns, as well as the eventual lifting of the curfew. They also portrayed the unique occurrences and events that characterised each of the three phases. According to the content analysis, four important sub-themes have emerged from the main lockdown theme, and each one will be discussed below.

### 5.2.2.1 Full Lockdown

This sub-theme is found within eight cartoons. It reveals the positive attitude of Saudi cartoonists toward this more extreme safety measure. They are generally supportive of the government taking action and imposing the lockdown to protect citizens. Indeed, Saudi cartoonists encourage readers to abide by the lockdown by indoctrinating them about its importance, while criticizing those who break the rules. The importance of the full lockdown as a form of public protection is portrayed by the cartoonists demonstrating its positive consequences. This is illustrated below, where the first cartoon in Figure 5.7 depicts a personified COVID-19 germ that is weak and helpless, whereas in the second cartoon in Figure 5.8, the threatening virus is represented as being trapped outside the safe environment of the house.



Figure 5.7: House closed



Figure 5.8: Stay at home

The two cartoons portray the full lockdown by presenting the same visual signifier: a closed door. However, the verbal signifiers differ between them depending on the main message presented by the cartoonists. Cartoon one in Figure 5.7 presents the written signifier “closed” written on the door of the house, which is indicative of a full lockdown status. The closed house is metaphorically represented as CLOSED HOUSE IS NONRUNNING IV that is attached to the personified COVID-19 germ, suggested that COVID-19 here is portrayed as A PATIENT that is in a state of weakness and vulnerability. This is made obvious through the distressed

facial expression and the surrounding pictorial rune-tingle lines along with sweat droplets. Such a presentation indexes that the patient-COVID-19- is not treated as that the IV is no running, conveying a message about the effectiveness of the full lockdown, which resulted in weakening COVID-19.

On the other hand, the second written signifier in the second cartoon - stay at home - is representative of the government campaign 'خليك بالبيت' launched by Saudi Authorities in March 2020 encouraging individuals in the country to observe the lockdown and stay at home. It is implied that most citizens indeed follow this precautionary measure, as signified by the eyes peering from underneath the door. This metonymy stands for people- BODY PART FOR A PERSON FOR PEOPLE. In light of the lockdown, COVID-19 has come to be represented here as A MONSTER; a very angry one as indexed by the red eyes and threatening hand gestures. This cartoon warns readers of the possible dangers should they leave their homes and not adhere to the lockdown. This type of cartoon instills fear among those who ignore lockdown instructions (Aazam et al., 2020). In this respect, the two cartoons strongly support Saudi authorities' decision to impose a full lockdown.

During the lockdown, different Saudi apps were developed to ease travel while ensuring social distancing, and these include: *Asefni* - to provide permits during the curfew for essential medical consultations; and *Tanagul* - providing permits for domestic land travel (Hassounah, Raheel & Alhefzi, 2020). Both apps were eventually integrated into the main Saudi application *Twakkalna* when it was launched on 1st April 2020. These permits had to be accepted by the Ministry of Public Security to allow the individuals to leave their homes for essential journeys e.g. food shopping, within a pre-arranged time-frame time (two hours maximum). The following cartoon in Figure 5.9 reflects the illustrator's opinions about the permit.



Figure 5.9: The good thing about the permit is that the two hours travel trip became 10 minutes road trip.

In this cartoon, the man on the right states that the need for a permit eases mobility so that driving to a certain place becomes a five-minute road trip instead of taking two hours. This makes a reference to large cities, such as Jeddah and Riyadh, where overcrowding usually results in short journeys taking a considerable amount of time. However, due to the lockdown and the need to issue a permit before any type of travel, public crowding has obviously diminished. Indeed, roaming permits are only issued to a limited number of people at any one time in order to guarantee social distancing and to avoid over-crowding. This cartoon seems to be fully supportive of such government measures to maintain public safety procedures during full lockdown.

As demonstrated by the cartoons presented above, Saudi cartoonists are taking the opportunity to sensitize readers about the importance of a full lockdown, and the significant role that innovative electronic apps developed by Saudi authorities play in easing the lives of Saudi citizens during this tough uncertain time, as well as ensuring their safety and protection. Moreover, Saudi cartoonists seem to be passing implicit judgements about the actions of some individuals who break lockdown rules, presenting them as reckless and selfish. This is shown in the following Figure 5.10.



Figure 5.10: Full lockdown (the writing in the red balloon on the right)  
Reckless (label on the man)  
Okay (the writing in the blue balloon on the left)

In this cartoon, the Saudi man breaks the full lockdown, and is consequently scolded by official authorities, demonstrated by the red speech bubble coming from the speaker and saying: “full lockdown”. The man is represented as a reckless individual through the written signifier as the man is actually labelled by the cartoonist as “reckless” as can be seen on his jacket. Moreover, the red colour of the speech bubble signifies a warning, which could be related to the fact that Saudi authorities have imposed a fine of 10,000SR or a prison sentence of five years (MoI,



2020) for those who break lockdown rules. Thus, in essence, this cartoon is critical towards Saudi citizens who do not follow the rules and take the pandemic seriously.

In light of the above discussion, in relation to the sub-theme full lockdown, Saudi cartoonists mostly depict COVID-19 as an evil, non-human creature that threatens the lives of others, while being transformed into a weak and defenceless creature only when people observe lockdown rules. Those who follow lockdown measures are represented as selfless and admirable individuals. On the other hand, those who do not adhere to lockdown rules have been depicted as reckless, although they are usually represented as individual people indicating that only a few Saudi citizens engage in this negative behaviour. For those who follow such behaviour, the referential choice is presented in the writing mode in some of the cartoons, as the cartoonists label them directly as reckless as shown in Figure 5.10.

Importantly, despite a general consensus about the importance of the lockdown, Saudi cartoonists differ in their presentation of this sub-theme (full lockdown), as both medium-shot and long-shot are presented. The long-shot is used in five cartoons that discuss the nature of the lockdown and its wider procedures as in the case of Figure 5.9, for example. In this case, the cartoonists can be more likely to be called "awareness cultivators" as they impart knowledge to readers about the general nature of the lockdown. On the other hand, the medium-shot, as shown in three cartoons, is mostly used in relation to cartoons that transmit an opinion either through positive representations or negative criticism. The positive outcomes of the lockdown are usually presented through a medium-shot to imbue a feeling of relief among citizens, and that through carefully imposed government measures, they have been saved from the potential dangers of COVID-19 infections, as shown in Figure 5.8. Also, the medium-shot portrays rule-breaking behaviour to make readers aware of the consequences of non-conformity, which is strongly punished by the authorities, as shown in cartoon in Figure 5.10.

As discussed above, the full lockdown was imposed when infection cases were high, or during religious occasions. However, most of the time, a partial lockdown was enforced as not to negatively affect citizens' mental health, and to permit them to go about their necessary daily affairs with more ease. The following section will discuss the partial lockdown, as the next sub-theme, and the ways in which Saudi cartoonists represent it in their images.

### 5.2.2.2 Partial Lockdown

This sub-theme is represented in eight cartoons using techniques similar to those adopted in relation to the full lockdown. This involves raising public awareness about lockdown restrictions, and criticising those who break lockdown rules and engage in unnecessary activities during the permitted roaming period, thus putting others at risk. More specifically, Saudi cartoonists spread awareness about the partial lockdown rules, including: the permitted roaming hours; the businesses open during this time; and routes that are closed thus halting domestic travelling between cities. Figure 5.11 presents an example of such cartoon:



Figure 5.11: ‘For your safety’ and ‘stay at home’ (the words written on the cones)

Travelling between regions (the blue sign)

In this cartoon, the cartoonist presents the highway street with numerous cones positioned on it, indicating the road is closed. This is also supported by the words written on the cones - “for your safety” and “stay at home.” These visual and written depictions correlate with the blue road sign, which states “travelling between regions.” The cartoon in general aims to illustrate that driving between cities in Saudi Arabia is banned, and that citizens should stay at home in order to adhere to the partial lockdown rules.

In addition, Saudi cartoonists frequently criticise non-compliant citizens’ “selfish” actions during the part-time lockdown. For instance, cartoonists have used their cartoons to call out those individuals who do not follow government instructions during the partial lockdown, or those who take advantage of the permitted roaming period by carrying out unnecessary activities that might have negative consequences on the health of themselves and those around them. An example of such a cartoon is presented in the following example- Figure 5.12.



Figure 5.12: I went out for fresh air and came back..

In this cartoon, the man on the right responds to the woman's confused facial expression and body posture by saying: "I went out for fresh air and came back..". However, having a leisurely walk during the permitted roaming period, considered by many to be an unnecessary and even dangerous activity that, indeed, resulted in this man being infected with the virus. This is portrayed by the fact that his face has transformed into a COVID-19 virus germ. Such a representation is a warning for people to be cautious during the roaming period by limiting their activities outside the home to ones that are only absolutely essential, whilst always adhering to safety procedures, such as wearing masks, using sanitizer, and maintaining a 2m distance from others.

Within the sub-theme of partial lockdown, most cartoons are drawn with a long-shot distance and oblique angle; however, they differ with the purpose. Some of the cartoons are used to enlighten the readers about the partial lockdown rules and people's actions during the roaming period, while other cartoons are used to criticise the "selfish" citizens' non-compliant behavior. However, with the later, the represented participant is often an individual Saudi who is usually a young male, implicitly suggesting that males are the ones who tend to be rule-breakers. The depiction of this violation from such a distance and angle has two functions: (1) transforming the readers into observers who also have the right to criticise this behaviour, and (2) not offending the readers by implying that they belong to this group.

The above sub-themes have illustrated the different lockdown phases – both full and partial - that Saudi Arabia moved between during the pandemic. The purpose of the lockdown was to reduce the number of infectious cases, and thus to contain the pandemic by halting the spread of the virus. However, due to the economic devastation in Saudi Arabia, the lifting of the curfew eventually took place in May 2020 (Shimu et al., 2021). Saudi cartoonists present this new

phase in their cartoons, portraying the positive effect it had on enhancing economic growth in the country. However, they also alert the readers and encourage them to remain vigilant during this phase, and not to stop taking precautionary measures. Lifting of the curfew forms the third sub-theme, which will be discussed in the next sub-section.

### **5.2.2.3 Lifting of the Curfew**

This sub-theme is presented with four cartoons. It shows the third phase that the Saudi government imposed, following the full and partial lockdowns, with an ultimate aim to end the lockdowns and return life back to normal. This was based on the Ministry of Health's (MoH) ongoing assessment of the number of infections cases in Saudi Arabia, and once the Ministry felt that the situation was safe enough, they announced three stages of the curfew lifting. The first stage of curfew lifting started on the 28th of May 2020, with a partial lockdown in which roaming between cities was allowed between 6 am and 3 pm. Moreover, some activities and places also reopened at these times, while protocols and preventative measures were announced for individuals, and public and private institutions to adhere to. For those who violated the precautionary guidelines, fines were imposed (Khalid, 2020a). The second stage started on the 31st of May 2020, and was characterised by more leniency as there was more flexibility in the activities and places that were allowed to reopen, including mosques, domestic transport, restaurants and cafés. The last stage of the curfew lifting took place on the 21st of June 2020 with a complete lifting that removed time restrictions, although preventative measures still had to be followed.

Saudi cartoonists during this phase portray the ways in which the world started to adapt to this new stage of the pandemic, and how citizens have a huge responsibility to be cautious in order to avoid being infected by the virus. The following cartoon in Figure 5.13 illustrates this cartoonist's contribution to the Saudi government's campaign – 'Back with Caution' - نعود بحذر - launched during this curfew lifting phase to encourage individuals to continue adhering to precautionary measures while going about their normal activities in public.



Figure 5.13: #Back- with caution

This cartoon presents the phase of curfew lifting through the portrayal of people outdoors – specifically two females and two males. The floor is filled with mines that represent COVID-19. This visual representation conveys a similar message as the hashtag ‘#back- with caution,’ presented in the upper right on the cartoon which alerts readers against the dangers of COVID-19, warning them that it is still very much present and active, despite the lifting of the curfew.

In all cartoons with this sub-theme, Saudi cartoonists represent those who violate the precautionary measures, such as not maintaining social distancing and not wearing a mask, in the form of group, as in Figure 5.13. Moreover, those who are prudent and cautious in their social interactions, are presented as individuals, as seen in the man who wears a mask. They are different from the members of the violated group. Saudi cartoonists illustrate these differences in the number of adherers to and violators of the precautionary measures to share with readers the reality in Saudi Arabia; the ones who violate the measures are more than those who follow them. Moreover, the two represented participants (conformists and violators) are depicted through a long-shot distance to position the readers as observers of these two distinct attitudes, and thus to develop their own critical views about which is the right one to be followed. The Saudi cartoonists also draw readers' attention to the coping phase that many nations worldwide have adopted by lifting curfews and allowing people to return to their daily lives. This is presented with the personification of Earth, representing individual representation to signify the national solidarity.

During the three identified phases - full lockdown, partial lockdown and curfew lifting - Saudi people have engaged in a range of different activities. The following sub-section discusses these activities as a fourth sub-theme.

#### 5.2.2.4 Activities during Lockdown

Saudi citizens have performed different activities during the lockdown and curfew lifting phases, including dieting, driving, shopping, using social media, and playing video games. Some Saudi cartoonists have used their work to criticise people's way of spending their free time, suggesting that they make better use of the time they now have. Moreover, some Saudi cartoonists present certain activities in their cartoons as either forgotten or ignored due to the long lockdown. This sub-theme has been presented with eight cartoons. The following cartoon in Figure 5.14 is an example of this.



Figure 5.14: How about reading a useful book while you are staying at home!

In this cartoon, the Saudi citizen is encouraged to find another activity other than browsing social media. The personified book- BOOK IS A HUMAN- asks the man who is using YouTube on his phone, identified by the YouTube icon, to read a book while he is in lockdown. This cartoon invites individuals to spend their time in productive activities instead of constantly using social media.

In this sub-theme, different activities are mostly presented by Saudi cartoonists as being carried out by individuals in very gender-specific ways. A stereotypical presentation involves Saudi women being presented as excessive shoppers, following fad diets, and being unprofessional drivers, and that has been presented with four cartoons. On the other hand, Saudi men are portrayed more in relation to activities such as football, social media, video gaming, and watching TV, as shown with four cartoons. Most of the activities mentioned above are presented through a long shot distance and oblique angle, to show that the readers are not the target of these critical views, but instead, are asked to participate in the criticism and to provide their point of view objectively.

The main theme discussed in this section -lockdown- has been presented by Saudi cartoonists, portraying the three phases that the country went through, as well as the activities practiced by citizens during these phases. The two phases of the lockdown –full and partial- have been portrayed in the cartoons through two perspectives: persuasive and critical. Saudi cartoonists have encouraged readers to follow the lockdown as one of the measures announced by the Saudi authorities to save lives. One of the measures used during the lockdown was a roaming permit, which was depicted by a Saudi cartoonist as a way to ease travel and promote safe public mobility. The same measure was applied in Jordan, although the Jordanian cartoonists criticised citizens’ usage of the permit, as they used it to conduct unnecessary activities or non-urgent travel (Hussein & Aljamili, 2020). In a similar vein, other Saudi cartoonists also portray and criticise the inappropriate behaviour of some Saudi people during the allowed roaming period. As such, cartoonists in both Jordan and Saudi play a role in using their cartoons to criticise the behaviour and conduct of some citizens, demanding readers to be more aware of the dangerous situation that everyone is forced to navigate, and the role of permits in facilitating only the most necessary and urgent activities.

In addition, Saudi cartoonists represent the lockdown violators as reckless which aligns with the participants’ representation in Canadian cartoons as being depicted to be “self-centred” and lacking the “solidarity and concern of others” (Labbé et al., 2022, p.7). This same representation is also found in Nigerian cartoons depicting those people as foolish (Asiru & Bello, 2020). The violators are also mostly represented as male characters, supporting Allington et al.’s (2021) findings that males are the ones most likely to violate precautionary safety measures. As the curfew was lifting, Saudi cartoonists depicted the two expected behaviours of people to be either following the precautionary measures, or violating them. Those who violate the safety measures were perceived to be high in number compared to the ones who adhere to them. Unlike the Saudi cartoons that are utilised to educate the readers to follow the precautionary measures during the curfew lifting, the Jordanian cartoons are used to present the nature of life returning to normal, and how the public continue to feel insecure in outdoor spaces (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). Moreover, the nature of activities performed during lockdown is portrayed in the Saudi cartoons that some of them overlapped with those included in Jordanian cartoons, including sleeping, eating and playing.

### **5.2.3 The Change in Social Relations**

On the 14th of March 2020, Saudi authorities suspended and banned many social events, including weddings and funerals (Yezli & Khan, 2020), before applying the partial lockdown on the 23rd of March. When the lockdown was imposed, gatherings were limited to around five individuals from the same family (Albeyahi, 2022). Such restrictions were mainly concerned with banning social and religious events that might result in mass gatherings, such as Eid celebrations (Yezli & Khan, 2020). Importantly, however, restricting the number of people who could mingle and banning all social events, severely affected people's social relations. Saudi cartoonists used their work to show how social relationships transformed during the pandemic. The content analysis has revealed four sub-themes related to social relations presented in 28 cartoons, including: social occasions and events; gender roles and relations; rumours and news; and online connection.

#### **5.2.3.1 Social Occasions and Events**

This sub-theme, presented in 11 cartoons, includes different social events and occasions covered by Saudi cartoonists, including social events such as weddings, Islamic occasions such as Ramadan and Eid, national occasion such as Independence Day, and global occasions such as Mother's Day and Labor Day. One of many presented social relations portrayed by Saudi cartoonists is Islamic occasions, particularly the ways in which such occasions have been depicted from a social perspective, and how the celebration of these occasions has differed from pre-pandemic to pandemic times. For example, Ramadan is a holy month in Islam that many Muslims around the world diligently observe, engaging in religious practices such as Tarawih (night) prayers, and organizing meals for fasting people either in mosques or in their own houses. Due to lockdown and the high transmission rate of COVID-19 during Ramadan 2020, the General Secretariat of the Council of Senior Scholars of Saudi Arabia encouraged Muslims to carry out these religious practices in their homes in order to avoid any gatherings (Yezli & Khan, 2020).

At the end of the holy month of Ramadan, Eid is celebrated for three days and usually involves social gatherings with family members and relatives. However, in Eid 2020, Saudi authorities applied a full lockdown restriction for five days (Yosri, 2020) to avoid any mass gathering that might result in an increase in infection rates. Such a decision was also encouraged by Mufti



Sheikh Abdelaziz Al-Sheikh<sup>33</sup> who stated that Eid al-Fitr prayer, which would normally take place in an open field and prayed with congregation, is permitted to be performed at home because of the unique and exceptional circumstance of the pandemic (Abueish, 2020). As such, Muslims were encouraged to celebrate Eid from home, and virtually with relatives and friends. This has been discussed by many cartoonists; one example of which is presented below- Figure 5.15:



Figure 5.15: Eid activities..

In this cartoon, five people are sitting in front of a giant mobile phone looking at the screen, which signifies their interaction with the apps. This is further indicated by the statement on the upper left- 'Eid activities'; meaning that people now celebrate Eid with others virtually instead of being in person, as tradition dictates. As such, this cartoon depicts how the way of celebrating Eid in Saudi has transformed in wake of the pandemic.

The analysed cartoons in this sub-theme reveal that Saudi cartoonists blame COVID-19 for the cancellation of celebrations and the move towards this new form of virtual festivity, as evidenced by the visual depiction of sadness and loneliness, such as in Figure 5.15, for example. Different framing techniques are used to present different occasions. For example, Eid, Mother's Day and Labor Day are all portrayed through a medium shot in the four cartoons to engage readers with the experience of social isolation, and the reality that key events are now being celebrated alone or with others virtually. The individual representation of the participants is mainly used in image mode to exemplify the loneliness now experienced during celebrations. Three cartoons show individual representation of the participants in the image

<sup>33</sup> He is the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia. He has worked in the important position in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in the Islamic world; He is the head of the Council of Senior Religious Scholars and its sub-committee, and the Permanent Committee for Islamic Research and Issuing Fatwas.

mode by depicting a person celebrating alone in their home. Unlike these three cartoons that show clearly the individual representation, one cartoon shows individuality by presenting a group of people in the Figure 5.15. Despite sharing the same pattern of the clothes and being in the same place, people in the cartoon represented individually as they are not engaged together in conversation, but they are each interacting with the big phone screen, suggesting that they are connected online individually and feeling lonely.

Weddings, Independence Day, and Ramadan are presented through a long shot distance in seven cartoons. The reason for detaching readers in relation to the presentation of these three occasions, might be attributed to the fact that weddings and Independence Day are celebrated by certain people only, such as Americans for the latter, or couples and invited guests being the main ones to celebrate wedding parties. In other words, Saudi people in general do not necessarily share in the celebration of these two presented occasions. Moreover, a long-shot distance in Ramadan cartoons is used to detach the readers from any depicted negative practices such as extensive eating, sleeping all day, and spending time watching TV, which are commonly observed during this month. This shot distance prevents readers from feeling targeted by these negative sentiments or that they are in any way to blame for what is happening. In general, Saudi cartoonists show in their cartoons that the cancelations of traditional celebrations, or changes to the ways in which these celebrations are usually carried out to be virtual celebrated. Also, they carry the critical role too in judging some negative social practices that some Saudi people do during the pandemic.

Despite the fact that Saudi cartoonists discuss social relations from a broad perspective that is inclusive of a variety of public occasions, they also deal with and portray more intimate and context-specific social relations that have transformed due to the pandemic, namely gender roles, as discussed in the following sub-theme.

### **5.2.3.2 Gender Roles and Relations**

This sub-theme is shown with four cartoons. It presents the changing nature of Saudi couples' relations during the pandemic, and portrays their performance of different traditional gender roles related to cooking, and personal practices such as shaving. As Figure 5.16 illustrates, lockdown preserved and maintained some key gender roles. At the same time, however, some conventional gendered behaviour has transformed or become much more fluid in wake of the pandemic, as presented in Figure 5.17.



Figure 5.16: The lion spends most of its time lying in the shadow .. while the lioness chases the pray and catches it... (in the balloon)  
# stay at home (the phrase on the upper right)  
National Geographic program (on TV)



Figure 5.17: During the lockdown, my husband taught me the art of shaving the beard!! (woman on the right)  
And I taught him the cooking art!! (woman on the left)

In Figure 5.16, the cartoonist presents the traditional role that each gender performs during lockdown. For instance, the woman carries the food and serves it to her husband, which on TV, this has been compared to a lioness that catches the prey for her mate indexed by the image and writing modes. The comparison between an animal and human is based on traditional gender roles that cut across different species: the female is the one who is responsible for feeding the male, while he remains relaxed. This cartoon criticizes the male role in the family despite of being a family provider, he is relaxed opposing the Saudi woman here who is presented as the primary caregiver and being responsible for her family's welfare, correlates with Sakuragi et al.'s (2022) conclusion that women had the primary responsibility of housework during the pandemic, compared to men. Moreover, Wolfson et al. (2021) have stated that worldwide, women cooked more frequently than men prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is evidence to suggest that such a gender-specific activity might have changed during the pandemic, as shown through the cartoon published in the curfew lifting phase (the cartoon presented in Figure 5.17). In this cartoon, the woman on the left states that she taught her husband how to cook during the lockdown. Such a statement is in response to the woman on the right who started the conversation by stating that she learnt how to shave her husband's beard during lockdown, as he taught her. The lockdown is the main reason for acquiring new skills that were previously gender specific as learning how to shave is a result of closing the barbershops whilst learning how to cook is a result of having more time at home and fewer food delivery options. Therefore, the pandemic may have provided the opportunity for a reversal of traditional roles. As such, Saudi cartoonists portray and criticise stereotypical gendered activities, and hint at the possibility of change, across both genders.

Within this sub-theme, Saudi cartoonists portray individual representations in the two modes- image and writing. These representations are Saudi husband and wife as indexed by their traditional clothes and the referential choices in the writing mode, for example, “my husband”. Moreover, the cartoonists depict gender relationships in the long-shot distance in all four cartoons, positioning the readers as observers who notice the nuances of this relationship, and thus are invited to form their own opinions about whether the portrayed roles are specific to a certain gender, or can be acquired and learnt by the other. As the cartoonists provide two distinct examples of gender roles in Saudi Arabia – ones that are solid and fixed, but also ones that have become fluid and interchangeable- the presentation is taken from an oblique angle<sup>34</sup> to detach the readers from any emotional engagement, as they are not the target of these observations. However, one cartoon that portrays the equal role that the husband and wife should play in managing their children’s education, uses a frontal angle, which could show that the cartoonist wants to deliver the message that both genders should be equal and cooperative partners in overseeing their children’s education, and that readers have to be too (see the following Figure 5.18, as a reference).



Figure 5.18: Education

In this cartoon both genders ,who is a parent, are shown to have an equal role and responsibility in educating their child during the COVID-19 pandemic, when education has been forced to be online (see Section 5.2.8 ). This is represented by the fact that both parents are carrying the word "education", which is a metaphor for the burden of online learning. The burden is

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<sup>34</sup> The oblique angle is a common choice in cartoons where two characters are having a conversation. This angle helps to create a sense of detachment for the viewer, as they are not directly involved in the conversation. However, if the cartoonist wants to get the reader involved, they can use creative techniques, such as using referential choices in the writing or making one of the characters face the reader while the other character faces the other character.

presented to be heavy, as indicated by the size of the word and its weight. The struggle of carrying this burden is shown through the body postures of the parents, who are hunched over and have string lines around them, and their facial expressions, which show that they are suffering. The frontal angle of the cartoon engages the viewer by allowing them to see the parents' expressions and body language clearly. The lack of eye contact between the viewer and the parents does not make the cartoon less engaging, as the viewer can still feel the parents' stress through their facial expressions and body language. This allows the viewer to feel as though they are experiencing the parents' struggle alongside them.

Rumours and news about COVID-19 that have circulated rapidly through personal contact and via social media platforms, have become a regular part of people's conversations and social exchanges. This is discussed below as the third sub-theme.

### **5.2.3.3 Rumour and News**

This sub-theme is presented with ten cartoons. It covers popular rumours about COVID-19 which were rife during the pandemic and caused panic amongst people. Different types of rumours were spread in Saudi Arabia, although the two most widely circulating ones were: conspiracy theories about COVID-19, and the negative impact of the vaccine. In the first three phases, conspiracy rumours were rife about corona being a social and political construct. This rumour reached many different populations around the world (Allington & Dhavan, 2020), and was considered one of the reasons why a significant number of people refused to follow precautionary measures (Allington et al., 2021; Kitta & Brodie, 2020). There were a number of different popular conspiracy theories which are unfounded or un-evidenced ones, such as the virus being created in a laboratory; 5G mobile network radiation causing COVID-19; and international government agencies planning and executing the COVID-19 crisis. The wide and rapid spread of such rumours led the WHO to respond to all misinformation or rumours about COVID-19 on their official platforms (Zarocostas, 2020).

In the fourth phase, the spread of rumours during that time was related more to the vaccine as being dangerous, with many different scenarios being publicly circulated as losing mind, converting to monkey and being control by a third agency. Such rumours about the vaccine had a negative effect on its uptake (Islam et al., 2021) leading the Assistant Minister of Health and MoH spokesman, Dr. Muhammad Al-Abdulaali to state that:

“We understand that community members have some concerns and questions about the effectiveness and safety of vaccines, but at the same time we remind everyone that the official authorities, including their official platforms and accounts, prioritize everyone’s health and will immediately refute any misconceptions or rumours” (MoH, 2020a, Para3)

Such an official statement shows that the health of Saudi citizens is a priority that the authorities would not promote the vaccine if it was harmful. Moreover, this statement shows the powerful voice of authorities and their role in correcting the misinformation about the vaccine and stopping the spreading of the rumours, which might result in spreading panic among the citizens and, therefore, not taking the vaccine. In addition, to stop the false rumours and prove the safety of the vaccine, Health Minister Tawfiq Al-Rabiah was one of the first people to receive the vaccination on 16<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 (Reuters, 2020). This was done to reassure Saudi citizens and to encourage them to ignore rumours and to take the vaccine. Similar encouraging action was also carried out by Saudi Arabia’s crown prince who received his first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on 25<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 (Arab News, 2020). Different media channels covered such events on their platforms, which had the desired result of increasing vaccine uptake by five times, as stated on Dr. Tawfiq’s official Twitter account (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2020). In addition to renowned figures in positions of power and authority, Saudi cartoonists also took a role in fighting against the rumours, as presented in the below cartoon in Figure 5.19:



Figure 5.19: Do not believe.

In this cartoon, the man on the right followed the safety guide by wearing a mask to avoid being infected by the virus, as indicated by the stop sign that he refers to. The man on the left is responding to the man's cautious behavior and worry about COVID-19 by stating "do not believe," which means that he does not believe that the virus exists. This is a reference to the main conspiracy theory that spread around during the first stage of the COVID-19 outbreak,

which claimed that the virus was not real and that it was a hoax. The cartoonist depicts the conspiracy theorist (the left man) with an “empty head” that has a fly coming out of it, to signify that he is foolish and brainless. As such, the cartoonist here stereotypes such believers of conspiracy theories to be not knowing things.

Within this sub-theme, Saudi cartoonists present their illustrations mostly from a long-shot distance (nine out of ten cartoons) to position the readers as observers of these rumours and the sad reality of those who believe in them, usually portrayed in the individual representation as being foolish, irrational and ill-advised. The cartoonists dealing with this sub-theme have detached the readers in most of their cartoons by presenting individual representation in both modes -writing (by using a single form as shown in four cartoons) and image mode (by drawing one character as a rumour spreader as shown in six cartoons). Moreover, the role of Saudi authorities in stopping the rumours from spreading is shown in two cartoons where authorities are presented as a big hand that catches the rumourmonger (see the below Figure 5.20). The visual presentation portrays two presented participants – the authority as a hand, forming a metaphor-AUTHORITY IS A PERSON that is based on the phraseology of “يد القانون” (the hand of the law), and COVID-19 rumour spreader as signified by the written label. The two presented participants differ in the size as that the authority is bigger than the COVID-19 rumour spreader, such size difference signifies the power of authorities over rumourmongers. This presentation coincided with the Saudi Public Prosecutor’s serious action against any person who posts or publishes rumours about COVID-19 on their social media accounts. It is considered to be an electronic crime that carries a prison sentence of five years or a fine of three million Saudi Riyals (AlHkamasani, 2020).



Figure 5.20: Corona rumour spreader



The fourth sub-theme discussed under the main theme - social relations - is online connection, as discussed below.

#### 5.2.3.4 Online Connection

It is fair to assume that the amount of daily time people spend using the social media increased significantly during the lockdown period, as people were trapped indoors with little opportunity for social interaction. According to a GlobalWebIndex survey, social media use in Saudi Arabia increased from 2.38 in 2017 to be 3.11 in 2020. Moreover, the Middle East and Africa represented two regions that had the highest social media use during the pandemic (GlobalWebIndex, 2020). Saudi cartoonists have portrayed how the internet became the new form of communication between people during the pandemic, as shown with three cartoons, the following Figure 5.21 is an example of this sub-theme:



Figure 5.21: Corona: home secrets

Snapchat usage during the pandemic is presented in this cartoon as indexed by the Snapchat icons that are attached to a virus germ, representing corona. The usage of Snapchat is extensive as indexed by the number of snapchat icons presented. Using Snapchat during the pandemic, according to the above cartoon, resulted in people exposing their private family issues and matters to others, as signified by the written statement in the center: 'corona: home secrets'. In general, this cartoon shows Snapchat's negative consequence on family and household privacy. Such a presentation correlates with Alghamdi's (2021) study that Snapchat is the most widely used app in Saudi Arabia, and that youth are its most active users, particularly during the events of 2020.



Cartoonists in this sub-theme present the issue of online connection in the two cartoons using a long-shot distance and oblique angle to position readers as voyeurs observing the change in the use of the internet and social media, and the ways in which it affects the social life of many people. On the other hand, a criticism to the negative usage of the social media is presented in one cartoon (Figure 5.21), by presenting involvement with the readers by depiction the cartoon with the frontal angle. The represented participants in this sub-theme are not exclusive Saudis, but many different participants are presented as indexed by their clothes. Such use of multiple representation of different participants with this sub-theme means that this issue is not presented only in a Saudi context, but is relevant to the whole world. Indeed, online communication became the new method of connection that was used globally during the pandemic which in large part replaced direct face-to-face contact with people.

In this main theme - social relations - Saudi cartoonists present four different sub-themes, including: social occasions and events, gender roles and relations, rumour and news, and online connection. As discussed above, many occasions and social events are presented in the cartoons as being cancelled, celebrated alone at home, or virtually celebrated with relatives and friends. A similar depiction of occasions that have been celebrated in social isolation as a result of the pandemic, is also found in Jordanian cartoons, referring to the lockdown as the main cause behind families being unable to socially interact (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). Moreover, wedding parties are also presented in Saudi cartoons as being celebrated virtually and with caution. Interestingly, marriage is discussed from a financial perspective, as it is believed that the pandemic is a good time to hold a wedding as many expenses that were once obligatory have now been removed due to weddings being streamlined (Al-Ghamdi and Albwardi, 2020). There have also been requests for the mahr<sup>35</sup> to be reduced as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). In general, Jordanian cartoonists align with Saudi cartoonists about the need to raise public awareness regarding the necessity of cancelling any social gatherings, even during key social and religious occasions, and following safety guidelines imposed by authorities.

In addition, gender roles during lockdown were also presented in many Saudi cartoons. Indeed, cartoonists used their cartoons to enlighten the readers of the nature of gender roles during

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<sup>35</sup> Mahr is money or possessions paid by Muslim man to his bride. It is an obligation to hold the Islamic marriage.

lockdown; particularly how some stereotypical roles were maintained and how other more flexible and interchangeable behaviours became the norm in wake of the pandemic. In Jordanian cartoons, traditional gender roles were heavily presented during the pandemic, with the most common theme being that Jordanian women were solely burdened with the responsibility of house chores (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). This is in contrast to the more nuanced representations in Saudi cartoons that have depicted the transformation that has taken place in relation to cultural expectations of typical gender interactions. Overall, however, the shared message presented in both Saudi and Jordanian cartoons, is one that encourages cooperation between partners in relation to daily chores.

The spread of rumours and news, as another sub-theme, is presented by Saudi cartoonists, who stereotype rumourmongers as male individuals. This is a reference to many published news reports about men being arrested for spreading false news during the COVID-19 pandemic (Al Sherbini, 2020). Those rumourmongers are portrayed to be foolish, unintelligent and selfish, as identified in the writing and image modes. By depicting them in such a negative light, the cartoonists aim to warn readers against believing these “false” rumours. As shown in Jordanian cartoons, rumours are the reason for widespread public panic (Hussein and Aljamili, 2020), and the main reason for the rapid spread of COVID-19 in Pakistan (Sattar et al., 2020) and Nigeria (Asiru and Bello, 2020) as rumours may result in the public not believing in the existence of COVID-19, and thus refusing to follow precautionary measures. Both Pakistani and Nigerian cartoons attributed the cause of the rumours to the authorities who did not take the responsibility to educate and correct this misinformation. However, this message is not implied in Saudi cartoons as Saudi authorities played an important role in fighting false rumours and that what cartoonists refer to in their cartoons. Indeed, they refer to the work of Ministry of Health (MoH) in correcting misleading information, and to the effort of Saudi Public Prosecution in monitoring the social media in order to protect public from the panic and the misleading information. Not just Saudi cartoonists, but also other cartoonists around the globe took on an important social responsibility role and used their unique platform and skill to encourage citizens to ignore rumours and avoid spreading them further.

#### **5.2.4 Virus Transmission Rate**

The outbreak of COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia started on the 2nd of March 2020 (MoH, 2020b), as the first case came from Iran through Bahrain (Yezil & Khan, 2020). Whereas globally, China (Labbé et al., 2022) is seen to be the main culprit behind the spread of the virus, in Saudi

Arabia, blame is mainly attributed to Iran. The transmission rate of the virus in Saudi displayed great variability between March 2020 and December 2021. Between March to May 2020, there was a massive fluctuation where the virus rate was consistently increasing and decreasing, coming to a peak between June to July 2020. However, this didn't last long as a fast decline then took place between July and September 2020, with the number of infectious cases stabilising between September 2020 and April 2021. The second wave then began, with cases steadily increasing between April and September 2021. Finally, the Saudi government was able to manage the situation and control the number of new cases, from October 2021 onwards (Abdul Salam, Al-Khraif and Elsegaey, 2022). However, as the virus was still active, Saudi authorities were undergoing a constant assessment of the situation, ready to impose a partial lockdown, full lockdown or lifting of the curfew, as necessary (Albeyahi, 2022).

The virus transmission rate has been one of the main themes represented in 24 Saudi cartoons, although its portrayal has varied across the four phases of the pandemic. It is particularly in the first phase of COVID-19 spreading, that this theme has been presented in a high frequency. Indeed, such cartoons warn citizens about the speed with which COVID is spreading, causing high infection and death rates. However, during the latter three phases - the second, third and fourth - fewer published cartoons dealt with the theme of the virus transmission rate. It could be argued that the second phase- lockdown- made the Saudi cartoonists focused more on the importance of the lockdown as an essential protection measure whilst the third phase – lifting of the curfew - made Saudi cartoonists more concerned with advising the public about the need to follow health and safety measures as a result of increased social interaction in wake of lockdown easing. Moreover, in the fourth phase – vaccine rollout and the return to everyday life - Saudi cartoonists became more focused on presenting the effectiveness of the vaccine and encouraging members of the public to take it. In general, across all four phases, the two sub-themes of high-speed transmission rate, and infection and death rate, were present.

#### **5.2.4.1 High-Speed Transmission Rate**

This sub-theme includes 11 cartoons that depict the high spreading rate of COVID-19. This is represented metaphorically through the idea of motion or size. The following cartoon in Figure 5.22 is an example of this sub-theme:

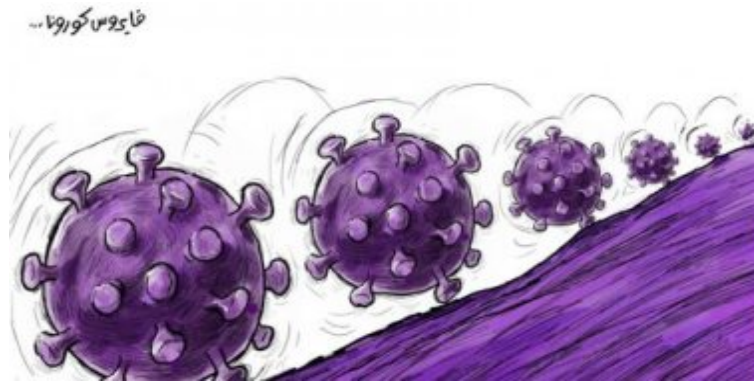


Figure 5.22: Corona virus.....

In this cartoon, the virus is metaphorically depicted as rolling objects- CORONA IS ROLLING OBJECTS- that are rolling down from the top of a hill. These rolling objects have motion lines around them indexing the continuity in rolling, and when they gradually getting bigger. Indeed, the cartoon illustrates that the rate of spreading is both rapid in speed (as signified with the motion lines) and high in number (as presented with the number of the rolling objects and their sizes). The whole visual presentation signifies the high number of COVID-19 cases due to the high spread of the virus and its continuity in spreading.

Based on the analysed cartoons in this sub-theme, Saudi cartoonists mostly address the high virus transmission rate from a general perspective, rather than a context-specific one. They portray the fact that the spread of the virus is a global phenomenon by personifying Earth to represent all nations. This individual representation shows the solidarity of nations in having a similar fate (COVID-19 spreading). Saudi cartoonists also refer to China as the main perpetrator behind the rapid global spread of the virus<sup>36</sup>, identified by its famous Great Wall (image mode) or by using the label 'China' (writing mode). Saudi cartoonists mostly present this sub-theme through long shots (seven out of ten) to inform the readers with such a situation without spreading the panic feeling. The aim is to highlight that the virus is spreading rapidly and that readers must be cautious. Corona as a main character within this sub-theme has been presented specifically through the writing mode to make the visual metaphorical representations clear to the readers. This is due to the fact that within the timeline of the pandemic, it was in these very early stages (high transmission rate) that corona as a subject matter of these cartoons was being introduced to the Saudi public. In later stages of the

<sup>36</sup> The Saudi cartoonists identify that China is the main reason for COVID-19 spreading in the world, but in the Saudi context, Irian is the main reason for the spread in Saudi Arabia.

pandemic, as readers became more accustomed to the theme of COVID-19 and its representation in cartoons, there was no need to either label or specify it.

COVID-19's high transmission rate has influenced the number of infection and death cases both around the world and in Saudi Arabia, which is discussed in the following sub-theme: infection and death rates.

#### 5.2.4.2 Infection and Death Rates

The infection and death rates differ between people depending on their age. It has been discovered that adults who are 65 years and older have the highest hospitalization rate as a result of their vulnerability and other comorbidities (Garg et al., 2020). Moreover, younger adults are represented as the age group most likely to disobey the safety guidelines in different cultures, such as in Italy (Barari et al., 2020), and Saudi (Albeyahi, 2022), thus putting them at a higher risk of being infected with the virus. Saudi cartoonists dealing with this sub-theme portray the high infection and death rates as being a global pattern generally, and a Saudi one, more specifically, in a total of 13 cartoons. An example of a global pattern is presented in the following cartoon, Figure 5.23.



Figure 5.23: The Earth with Corona

In this cartoon, the Earth here is metonymically stands for countries- EARTH FOR COUNTRIES which has been personified as a patient – EARTH IS A PATIENT. Here, personifying countries as individual entity to be patient signifies the truth that all nations experience the same situation of the pandemic, in terms of infection and death cases. The infection cases in the countries are signified by the presentation of the fever. The high fever is indexed by the thermometer, pad on the head and the steam (three lines above the head). On

the other hand, the death cases in the world is presented with the three lines of bloody cuts in the side of the earth as the red blood signifies death. The psychological status of the Earth is presented with its facial expression, which shows tears and an upside-down mouth that indicate pain. All nations suffer from the pain of losses and infections. In general, this visual presentation illustrates the given title “Earth with corona”, more by showing widespread COVID-19 infection and mortality.

Moreover, the following cartoon in Figure 5.24 shows an example of this sub-theme addressing the infection rates in Saudi Arabia.

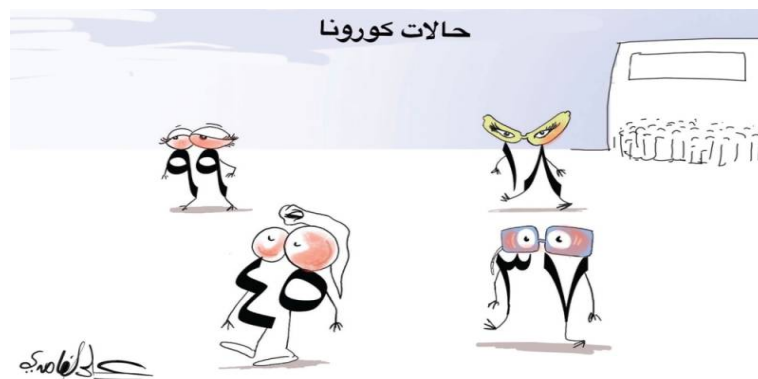


Figure 5.24: Corona cases – 45 (in the front left);37 (in the front right); 99 (in the back left) and 18 (in the back right)

In this cartoon, the main theme is being infected with COVID-19 in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi context is portrayed by the shimāq, a white scarf, worn by one of the figures (number 45, in the front left) as this piece of clothing is typically worn by Saudi men. The written statement in the upper center of the cartoon - ‘corona cases’ - is visually depicted through four personified numbers. These numbers are presented with red eyes to signify the infection. The presented numbers, from top to bottom, left to right, are 99, 18, 45, and 37. The variety of the numbers signifies the fluctuating infection rate, as sometimes there is an increase as in the case with the two numbers 99 and 45 and other times a decrease is shown as in the case with the two numbers 37 and 18. Moreover, the given number is associated with the two genders: male and female. The male numbers are signified with the worn shimāq and the square glasses, presented the total number of 82. On the other hand, the female numbers are signified with the lashes and the trendy glasses with the cat cut, presented with the total of 117. Comparing the two, the infection cases sometimes is presented with the highness number with the males if we take the right side alone (18 for female and 37 for male) or being female dominant if we take the left side (99 for female and 45 for male). Another reading following the Kress and van Leeuwen ([1996] 2006)

is that the right side presents the old readings of the cases in Saudi Arabia (in total 55) that increased highly and presented as a new reading with 144. This cartoon in general shows unstable infection cases in Saudi Arabia.

According to the analysed cartoons in this sub-theme, Saudi cartoonists tend to draw their illustrations mainly using a long-shot distance (nine out of thirteen) to position the readers as observers who are also able to notice the acceleration and deceleration of COVID-19 transmission rates in Saudi Arabia and the world. Furthermore, the presentation of infection and death rates in cartoons depends on the context. If the context is the world, the Earth is personified as a patient, signifying an individual participant. Moreover, if the rate of infections is discussed for a particular country, a metaphorical representation of this country is shown in the image, and mostly labeled with the writing mode, such as China, USA, and UK. In a similar vein, Saudi representation is depicted as either an individual representation or being part of a collective representations – as shown in Figure 5.23- depending on the message of the cartoon. Regardless which of these two representations is portrayed – collective or individual - the Saudi character is signified through traditional clothing, or is represented by the Saudi Ministry of Health (MoH).

The two sub-themes of virus transmission rate have been presented by Saudi cartoonists in a similar way, mostly using long-shot distances to take an informative stance and make readers aware of the rapid spread of COVID-19 and its fluctuating nature. This variation in the nature of the virus was particularly high during the first phase in Saudi Arabia, which has also been a theme presented in Pakistani cartoons showing the possibility of the second wave due to non-compliance with precautionary measures (Sattar et al., 2020). The most outstanding representation that is shown in most of the Saudi cartoons is the Earth; it has been depicted as an individual participant, to uphold a common idea that the pandemic is a global tragedy that all nations of the world are jointly experiencing.

### **5.2.5 The Economic Impact of COVID-19**

Another sector that has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the economy. Due to the outbreak of the virus, many countries experienced an economic recession in the early months of 2020 as a result of labor shortages, the suspension of transportation, shutting down workplaces, restrictions on trade and travel, and closing land borders (Shang, Li and Zhang,

2021). Many companies and workplaces fired their employees during the pandemic in a bid to deal with the financial crisis they found themselves in, which resulted in a loss of income for many people, which plunged them further into economic hardship (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2021). At the end of 2020, the economy started to slowly recover, which was attributed to: a loosening of lockdown restrictions; populations experiencing greater trust towards authority (Petrunenko et al., 2021); lifting travel restrictions and resuming touristic activity (Fernández, Martínez and Martín, 2022); international cooperation; and adaptation of tax rules and financial support systems (OECD, 2021). Saudi cartoonists have portrayed the economic changes that have occurred across the globe, as shown in 25 cartoons. The presentation of economic issues differed depending on when it occurred during the four phases, forming three sub-themes: Chinese economy, Global economy and Saudi economy.

#### 5.2.5.1 Chinese Economy

In the first phase, the spread of COVID-19, the Chinese economy was the most widely covered topic, with two cartoons portraying how the pandemic affected one of the world's strongest economies. A common sign running throughout cartoons dealing with this topic, is an arrow that is being badly damaged by COVID-19, metaphorically representing China and the destruction it is facing due to the virus. An example of such a presentation can be seen in the Figure 5.25 below:

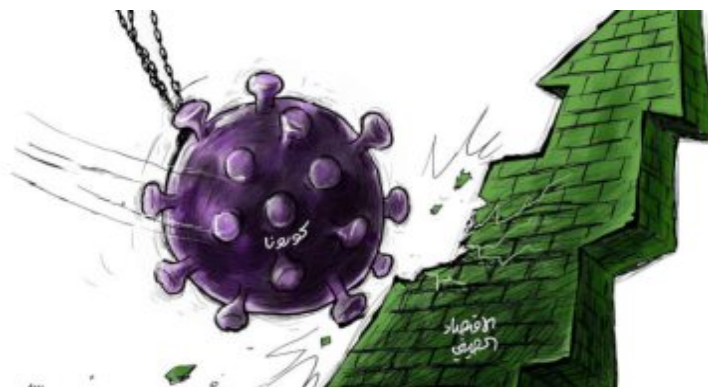


Figure 5.25: Chinese economy (the arrow on the right)  
Corona (the ball on the left)

In this cartoon, COVID-19 is metaphorically represented as an iron ball-COVID-19 IS IRON BALL- that is hitting the Chinese economy, which is metaphorically depicted as a solid green brick arrow- CHINESE ECONOMY IS GREEN BRICK ARROW. The hitting, as indexed by the movement lines, results in breaking part of the arrow, as shown through small pieces of brick flying from the impact. Such a metaphorical presentation transmits the message that the



growth of the Chinese economy- as indexed by the green color of the arrow- will soon halt or decline as a result of the strong hit it has taken due to the pandemic. This presentation involves a reference to news reports about the decline of the Chinese economy as many factories have been forced to shut, while many of the country's service sectors have been suspended (Inman, 2020).

In the published two cartoons related to this phase, it has been noticed that two characters are primarily presented: COVID-19 and the Chinese economy. The Chinese economy is generally presented as a weak arrow that is strongly dominated by COVID-19, which is presented as having a strong and domineering presentation. Both represented participants are labelled in the writing mode to help readers make sense of the intended meaning of the cartoonists' presentation, especially in relation to COVID-19, which was a new entity that readers were unfamiliar with, and thus needed more guidance to grasp the metaphorical presentations. Moreover, one of the cartoon-Figure 5.25- makes the reader involve with such economic devastation as it is presented with the medium shot; it raised the possibility of being affected by such devastation. The other cartoon unlike the example above in Figure 5.25 is presented through a long-shot distance, positioning the readers as voyeurs who are observing the damage occurring to the Chinese economy. These two different framings position the Saudi readers as either observers of an "outsider business" that they might be affected by (medium shot) or as someone who is not at all involved (long shot).

#### **5.2.5.2 Global Economy**

The analysed data has discussed the global economy, with 21 cartoons presenting the most during the two phases- the lockdown, and vaccination and back to everyday life -with eight cartoons each. On the other hand, the remaining five cartoons were published during the curfew lifting phase. Moreover, two different depictions of the global economy are presented in the Saudi cartoons depending on the three phases. With the two phases-lockdown and the curfew lifting - the global economy has been presented as being sharply declining, and that has been presented using different scenarios, one of which is shown in Figure 5.26 as an example.



Figure 5.26: Corona crisis (the bump); Global economy (the bus)

In this cartoon, the global economy is depicted as a bus-GLOBAL ECONOMY IS A BUS-that is stuck on a high bump, labelled as “corona crisis” - CORONA CRISIS IS BUMP IN THE ROAD. Despite the presence of movement lines around the bus, which index its attempt to move forward, the bus is not able to move, which reflects the stagnation and lack of growth facing the global economy.

In the final phase- vaccine rollout and return back to everyday life - the majority of the cartoons depict the potential promise of global economic recovery and growth due to G20 and the vaccination. An example of a cartoon depicting the effect of the vaccine on the global economy, is presented below- Figure 5.27.



Figure 5.27: The global economy (zig zag line); COVID-19 vaccine (the vaccine)

In this cartoon, the global economy is represented by a red coloured zig zag line, such as the stock index graph line, indicating an unstable economy that is consistently oscillating. The decline leads to it being hospitalized, as signified by the bed and medical equipment, which form the metaphor GLOBAL ECONOMY IS A PATIENT. The global economy is treated by the doctor who holds a needle labeled as a COVID-19 vaccine. Such a presentation indexes that the vaccination rollout will help in “treating” the economy, thus enhancing economic

growth and stability. This presentation makes a reference to key reports by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at that time, which positively associated economic recovery with the vaccination rate. It was believed that countries with a higher vaccination rate would have a faster economic recovery (UNDP, 2021).

The analysis in this sub-theme has revealed that Saudi cartoonists are mostly concerned with presenting the global economy from a long-shot distance, presented with 18 cartoons out of 21, to position the readers as observers of such a decline (Figure 5.26 is an example), and the possibility of flourishing (Figure 5.27 is an example). However, other Saudi cartoonists illustrate the global economy with medium shot (two cartoons) and close-up shot (one cartoon) to engage the readers with the decline of the global economy. These two presentations differ in the degree of engagement that they offer to the readers: the close-up shot is more personal, suggesting that the devastation could affect the reader directly, while the medium shot, on the other hand, is less personal, suggesting that the devastation could affect Saudi society in general. Moreover, within this sub-theme, the global economy is most often presented as an individual entity in the image mode, with 20 out of 21 cartoons, these individual representations have been labeled, using the writing mode, specifically the term "global economy" in 13 cartoons. Such presentation indicates that all the nations in the world share the same suffer and devastation of the economy due to the pandemic; therefore, it is a unified concern.

### 5.2.5.3 Saudi Economy

Two cartoons in the analysed data discuss Saudi economic issues, including the crisis of unemployment, and traders' manipulation of masks prices in Saudi Arabia. The following cartoon in Figure 5.28 illustrates the first issue.



Figure 5.28: The companies deal with their employees in the economic crisis (the title in the up middle); Company S (the boat on the back); Company S (the boat on the front)

In this cartoon, the cartoonist portrays four different situations that the Saudi companies dealt with their employees during the pandemic. The CEO, represented by the figure wearing a white basht, stands metonymically for the company, which is metaphorically depicted as a boat. COMPANIES ARE BOATS. The first CEO, on the boat that identified as 'Company S', is depicted to throw an employee overboard, alluding to the act of firing, represented metaphorically as THROWING SOMEONE INTO THE SEA IS FIRING. The second CEO, located on the right boat, is shown to be relaxed, resting on several life jackets, ignoring the situation of people around him who are shown to be drowning as indexed with parts of their body (hand or feet) to be over the sea while the rest is under it, forming the metaphor IGNORING THE SITUATION IS SLEEPING ON A LIFE JACKET. The third CEO, positioned at the back, is seen actively trying to save his employees by pulling them with a lifebuoy. The last scenario depicts both the CEO and employees sinking in the sea, represented by the sunken boat, with the CEO's hand (with a gold line on the sleeve) and the employees' body parts (hands and legs) emerging from the water. These representations reflect the diverse responses of companies in Saudi Arabia during the pandemic. While some companies succumbed to corruption, others resorted to wage cuts while maintaining employment, and still others opted for layoffs. However, it is worth noting that the Saudi government provided support to companies to prevent their collapse by providing tax exemptions, paying 60% of employees' salaries, offering financial assistance of 3,000 Saudi riyals to delivery personnel, and deferring monthly installments for six months (Monsha'at, 2021).

Both cartoons within this sub-theme are presented from a long-shot distance with the intention of informing readers about developments associated with the Saudi economy. The collective representation is presented in the writing mode in the two cartoons, with specific reference being made to traders and companies, so that readers do not feel that they are targeted or being included in the criticism.

This theme - the economic impact of COVID-19- has dealt with three different types of economies, including the Chinese economy, the global economy and the Saudi economy. The global economy is the most presented type in Saudi cartoons, followed by the Chinese and Saudi economies. In general, the economy theme has been discussed in many cartoons worldwide, including Pakistan (Sattar et al., 2020); the Philippines (Imperial, 2020); Jordan (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021; Hussein and Aljamili, 2020); and Nigeria (Asiru and Bello, 2020). The difference between them and the Saudi cartoons is that they are either more

generally concerned with the presentation of the global economy, or the economy of their countries. This is in contrast to Saudi cartoons that have tended to focus too on the Chinese economy's devastation as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. The most presented economic issues in international cartoons have been poverty and unemployment. Unemployment is a common theme that runs across both international and Saudi cartoons, with reference being made to the lockdown as the main cause for suspending many sectors and businesses. Thus, Saudi cartoonists aim to play the role of educators, consistently updating the public about the status of the economy- starting from the COVID-19 outbreak up until the vaccine rollout.

### **5.2.6 Emotional and Physical Consequences of COVID-19**

COVID-19 has resulted in many psychological impacts on citizens across the globe. As people became more worried about the virus and its impact on their lives, this caused a sharp rise in mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression globally (Alyami et al., 2021). One of the reasons was the very intense infodemic<sup>37</sup>, which resulted in “creating a sense of anxiety, panic and fear among many people” (Zarocostas, 2020, p. 676). WHO and all the main authorities worldwide, took action to stop the spreading of the virus, putting in place a number of severe precautionary measures to control the pandemic and reduce the number of casualties and deaths. While these measures may have been successful in curbing the death rates, they induced even more social isolation and loneliness amongst citizens, thereby increasing their mental health challenges.

Similarly, Saudi authorities applied different procedures to fight the virus and stop its rapid spread, starting with suspending mass gatherings, closing schools and workplaces, stopping domestic and international travel, and imposing lockdowns (MoH, 2020d). Fighting the pandemic did not stop as the curfew lifted, but transformed, with the emphasis now being on Saudi citizens adapting their lives to cope with the pandemic, which became part of their “new normal”. The fight against the pandemic culminated in the development of the vaccine at the end of 2020. Saudi cartoonists have discussed two consequences of the rapid spread of COVID-19 in 15 cartoons: worry and fear, and fighting the COVID-19 virus. These two consequences are discussed in detail below.

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<sup>37</sup> Information about the pandemic

### 5.2.6.1 Worry and Fear

This sub-theme is shown with five cartoons. It portrays the virus's negative psychological impact on people worldwide, particularly, panic, which was prominent during the early days of the pandemic (Zarocostas, 2020). This panic resulted from a knowledge gap about the new virus and its unknown potential consequences (Alahdal, Basingab, and Alotaibi, 2020). Furthermore, lockdown has raised anxiety among people (Yoosefi Lebni et al., 2021) as they were suddenly forced to spend all their time at home, while being out in public or in a social setting would induce panic due to fear of catching the virus. A Saudi study found that Saudi individuals had a higher risk of developing depression and anxiety during the pandemic (Alyami et al., 2021), and that social isolation is one of the reasons (Yezli & Khan, 2020). The second wave and the emergence of the new variants also raised panic and worry among people to a higher degree. In this respect, Saudi cartoonists have dealt with panic and worry in their illustrations in relation to three phases: (1) when the virus first emerged (the spread of COVID-19 phase); (2) during lockdown (lockdown phase); and (3) when the second wave emerged (lifting of the curfew phase). An example of such psychological consequences is presented in the following cartoon in Figure 5.29:



Figure 5.29: Made in China

This cartoon portrays the panic that the globe (indexed by the personified Earth), representative of all the world's populations, is experiencing – EARTH/GLOBE FOR POPULATIONS. The globe is chased by four personified COVID-19 virus germs, almost with an alien-like appearance -COVID-19 IS A HARMFUL CREATURE. The layout of the cartoon and the caricatures incorporated are an intertextual reference to the famous pac man game, in which the main character, in this case, Earth – can only win by gobbling up the creatures. However, in most cases, the main character is eventually chased down and eaten in the end. It seems, therefore, that the cartoonist is predicting that the Earth will soon be hunted down by the virus and suffer the consequences.

Dealing with this sub-theme in some cartoons, Saudi cartoonists portray how panic is experienced by all people across the globe by showing a collective representation of them in the image mode (presented in two cartoons) or by using an individual representation of the Earth sign or the term “globe” in the writing mode that refer to all people who are experiencing worry and panic- EARTH/GLOBE FOR PEOPLE, presenting in three cartoons. Moreover, Saudi cartoonists detach the readers from these feelings of panic, positioning them instead as remote observers through the use of a long-shot distance- as shown in the above Figure 5.29, for example.

Despite COVID-19’s effect on inducing worry and fear among both Saudi and global populations, the world does not surrender to the pandemic, but continues to fight for its survival. The following sub-theme presents this issue: the fight against COVID-19.

### 5.2.6.2 The Fight Against COVID-19

This sub-theme is presented with ten cartoons. It deals with the phases that the world, in general, and Saudi Arabia, in specific, went through while facing and fighting the virus. Saudi cartoonists have depicted the “fight” differently depending on the four phases. In the first phase (the spread of COVID-19), the world generally has been personified as a weak creature, while the virus has been depicted as a stronger, more dominating creature, and that has been presented with four cartoons. One of these cartoons is portrayed in the following Figure 5.30:



Figure 5.30: My turn guys (the writing in the balloon)  
 SARS - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (caricature on the left)  
 Swine influenza (caricature on the right)  
 Corona (caricature on the middle)

In this cartoon, COVID-19 – positioned in the middle - has been metaphorically represented as a fierce and aggressive monster - CORONA IS A MONSTER- physically attacking the



personified Earth- EARTH IS A PERSON. This is portrayed by the COVID-19 creature's fist being in a punch position, in addition to the movement lines and the Earth's injured face. The presence of the other two monsters – severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (on the left), and swine influenza (on the right) – is in reference to their past “fight” with the Earth as being taken their part of fighting before the COVID-19 break. However, swine influenza asks to take another turn at fighting Earth, which makes the two- SARS and corona –surprised as signified with their facial expression and body positions. In general, this cartoon shows the reality of the first phase, as COVID-19 had the upper hand, with the Earth being powerless in the face of the pandemic's rapid spread. At the time of the cartoon's publication, COVID-19 had spread to 25 countries, causing many infectious cases, as well as mortalities (WHO, 2020a).

In this phase, Saudi cartoonists typically depict the "fight" against COVID-19 from a long-shot distance, positioning readers as observers who witness Earth's defenseless state. The fight is typically shown in Saudi cartoons as taking place between COVID-19 and Earth. However, COVID-19 is portrayed as being stronger than Earth in this phase, due to its power and ability to cause death and destruction. Both participants – Earth and COVID-19 – are represented in both the image and writing modes. Additionally, the contribution of the World Health Organization (WHO) to the fight is also referenced in Saudi cartoons. Overall, COVID-19 is shown to have ultimate power over Earth in this phase.

In the second phase, during the lockdown, a Saudi cartoonist represented the two - Earth and COVID-19 - more equally and at a similar level of challenge, as shown in following cartoon in Figure 5.31.



Figure 5.31 : Challenge!!

This cartoon presents the fighting status between the Earth and COVID-19 during the lockdown. The two characters here have been personified as wrestlers- EARTH AND COVID-19 ARE WRESTLERS. They wrestle each other by hand, presenting a metaphorical challenge



between the two characters- THE CHALLENGE IS ARM WESTLING. The cartoonist presents the two characters with equal power and determination as indexed by their hand posture and facial expressions. However, the cartoonist raised hope for the Earth winning the fight, as it is drawn twice the size of COVID-19. Raising such a hope is attributed to the lockdown that was imposed in that time<sup>38</sup> as a measure to “challenge” the power of COVID-19. Moreover, we can assume that the ability to win or lose this challenge depends on global citizens adhering to lockdown rules. Indeed, such a presentation here encourages readers to comply with lockdown regulations in order to win the battle. Saudi cartoonists, in this phase, present the Earth as an individual participant which raised the solidarity sense among people and made them more determined to defeat COVID-19. The cartoon in the above example adopts a long-shot distance to make readers more objective and logical in their assessment of the winner of the challenge, which is highly dependent on citizens’ discipline in following lockdown rules.

In the third phase (lifting of the curfew), Pfizer reported that the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine had passed the second round of trials (Pfizer, 2020). Therefore, Saudi cartoonist used his illustrations to spread the news to readers about the probability of the vaccine's successful innovation, and the consequences this would have on curbing the spread of the pandemic. They depicted this news by presenting an almost-winning fight against COVID-19. The following cartoon in Figure 5.32 is the only example of the way the fight is presented in this phase.



Figure 5.32: Now your end is approaching!!

This cartoon presents the “fight” status in the third phase by portraying how it is now possible for humans to win over COVID-19. This cartoon makes a reference to the vaccine, as the cartoon was published after the Pfizer announcement. The Saudi cartoonist here shows the real

<sup>38</sup> That has been inferred from the publication date (April 17, 2020), which is the month that many countries worldwide have imposed this measure to stop the COVID-19 spreading.

possibility of a triumph over COVID-19 in light of the vaccine passing the second stage of testing. As indexed by his traditional attire, the Saudi man strangles the personified virus- COVID-19 IS A MONSTER- with his left hand, stating: “Now your end is approaching”. The sweat droplets around the Saudi man's head portray the effort he is exerting while choking COVID-19. COVID-19, however, does not pass out despite its suffering, as indexed by the flying droplets, the stars above its head, and having an exhausted facial expression (cross eyed and tongue out). Such a presentation shows that although the virus has not been completely defeated, the end of COVID-19 is almost approaching as also pointed by the mans’ speech. In this phase, Saudi cartoonist presents the Saudis as almost winning over COVID-19, contrary to the abovementioned phases, where COVID-19 was the winner in the first phase (spread of COVID-19), and shared equal power with the Earth in the second phase (lockdown). This change in presentation can be attributed to the hope of the vaccine’ effectiveness that gives people power to overcome COVID-19. Here, encouraging is the main purpose of this cartoon as it has been presented through a long-shot distance.

Despite the vaccine innovation, the fight with COVID-19 continues into the fourth phase, as presented in four cartoons in the analyzed data. The following cartoon in Figure 5.33 is an example of such illustration in this phase.



Cartoon 5.33: Vaccine

In this cartoon, COVID-19 is metaphorically depicted as a monster -COVID-19 IS A MONSTER - that is chasing the personified Earth- EARTH IS A PERSON – who is standing on a mountain edge, with the possibility of falling backwards. The Earth looks at the hybrid weapon- a needle and a gun labelled as a vaccine - which forms the metaphor- VACCINE IS A GUN. The direction of the Earth’s gaze shows that the vaccine is the only weapon that could be used to kill the virus and stop the Earth from falling off the mountain edge. However, vaccine

weapon being far away from the Earth also poses a lot of risks, and Earth is not sure if it will be able to grab the vaccine in time which signifies the essence of the people on the Earth to be fast in their action to take the vaccine in order to be saved from the virus.

In general, the cartoons, in this phase, highlight the importance of the vaccination to overcome the pandemic. As such, the Saudi cartoonists mostly use a long-shot distance (three out of four) to show that the fight between the two individual representations – Earth and COVID-19- is still ongoing. Such presentation is used to persuade and encourage readers to take the vaccine by showing the status of the “fight” and the potential of winning against COVID-19 when people worldwide unite in taking the vaccination.

Within this theme, the psychological and physical consequences of COVID-19 have been presented. The first sub-theme - panic and worry – has been portrayed particularly in the first three phases as that no cartoon has been published in the fourth phase, about this sub-theme. The Saudi cartoonists with the fourth phase began to pay more attention to the relief that citizens felt as the vaccination rollout began in Saudi Arabia, and thus focused their attention more on the need to encourage the Saudi public to take the vaccination, as shown with the fourth phase in the second sub-theme (the fight against COVID-19), and with the theme-vaccine rollout. Similarly in Pakistani cartoons, this sub-theme of panic and worry has been portrayed through a personified devil-like COVID-19 creature, which is thought to have been a contributing factor to increasing mental illness and public fear (Aazam et al., 2020). The panic of catching the virus and being infected is also a prominent theme in Jordanian cartoons, instilling fear in citizens towards the virus (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). Moreover, the fight against the virus, as a second sub-theme, is portrayed differently depending on the phase. In the cartoons of the first phase, COVID-19 is depicted as a strong creature with power over the Earth. In the second phase, the cartoons depict the Earth and Covid-19 to have equal power, whilst in the third phase, there is a possibility that humans may regain power over COVID-19. In the last phase, a fight is presented between the Earth and COVID-19, although the cartoonists reveal a secret weapon to win the fight, which is vaccine, referring to the importance of ensuring all citizens are fully vaccinated. The fight with COVID-19 has mostly been depicted in general terms in Saudi cartoons, as occurring between the Earth and COVID-19, occurring with six cartoons out of ten. This is in opposition to the presentation of the struggle in Filipino (Imperial, 2020) and Nigerian (Asiru and Bello, 2020) cartoons, where the fight has been between COVID-19 and the health sector in their country, more specifically. In

general, using “WAR metaphors can motivate the public’s support for political action” (Alkhamash, 2023, p.2) as that the authorities could adopt such metaphors to encourage people to obey them (Benzi and Novarese, 2022) by showing the danger of such a fight and the essence to follow the rules to minimize such a loss.

### **5.2.7 International Political Discourse**

Different political issues emerged across the globe during the pandemic. However, Saudi cartoonists were particularly concerned with political issues related to two regions: the Middle East and the USA. These political issues received much attention due to their consistent representation and broad circulation in both local and regional news media, as shown in 15 cartoons. The following two sub-sections discuss these two sub-themes related to political discourse - Middle Eastern politics and US political affairs.

#### **5.2.7.1 Middle Eastern Politics**

Saudi cartoonists have dealt with different political issues related to various Middle Eastern countries in 11 cartoons, including Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Iran and Palestine. However, the political issue discussed the most in Saudi cartoons is related to Iran. In the first phase (spread of COVID-19), the Iranian government was portrayed as one of the main culprits behind the rapid spread of COVID-19. The reason for such a political accusation stems from the Iranian authorities’ failure to contain the spread of the virus, as they did not suspend the annual gathering for Shiite Muslims, that was held on February 2020. It was believed that pilgrims spread the virus to others when they returned to their home countries (Ebrahim and Memish, 2020). Indeed, the first case of COVID-19 found in Saudi Arabia was a pilgrim returning from Iran through Bahrain (Yezli and Khan, 2020). As such, Saudi cartoonists tend to show this issue in their cartoons. The following cartoon in Figure 5.34 is an example of such a political orientation.

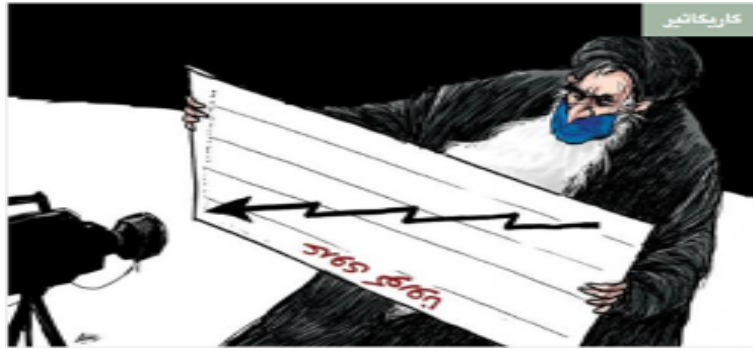


Figure 5.34: Corona infection<sup>39</sup>

The cartoonist here demonstrates the deceptive behaviour of the Iranian government, which is metonymically presented as A PERSON FOR GOVERNMENT FOR COUNTRY, creating the metaphor COUNTRY IS A PERSON. In the cartoon, the man, who is Ayatollah Khamenei, one of the Iranian leaders, is holding a chart that is upside down. This is indicated by the Arabic phrase "COVID-19 infection" (عدوى كورونا) being flipped out and the head of the arrow being placed at the starting point between the x and y axes in the line graph. The deception is being broadcast to the people, as indicated by the presence of the camera. In general, this cartoon shows that the Iranian government deceives people about the number of cases, and that what make an association with the spreading news about the high infection cases which may be resulted from the plagiarism.

Saudi cartoonists who deal with the sub-theme of Middle Eastern politics in their cartoons, present the political issues, such as corruption and revolutions related to Lebanon, Iraq, Irian, Yemen and Palestine. The presentation of these political issues with long shots, as seen in eight out of eleven cartoons, serves to detach readers from any negative connotations associated with these topics, thereby creating a more palatable experience for the audience. On the other hand, three cartoons have been presented with a medium-shot, however, two of them presented with the oblique angle. Therefore, no direct engagement was asked, but it is more used as a frame strategy to educate readers with such issue and making them aware as in the case of the above Figure 5.34 highlighting the deceiving behavior of the media in presenting the number of infection cases in the country. Moreover, the countries that have been discussed politically, have been represented as individual participant either by metaphorical presentation of them in the image mode as in the case above of Khamenei, who metonymically stands for the Iranian

<sup>39</sup> The caption in the top right corner says 'caricature' in Arabic, which means 'cartoon', as the cartoonist identifies the presented genre. The terms cartoon and caricature are used interchangeably in Arabic, and according to the Arabic dictionary, there is no difference between them.

government- A PERSON FOR A COUNTRY (nine out of eleven) or being exhibited in the writing mode as also shown with nine cartoons.

Besides covering Middle Eastern issues, American politics is also widely depicted in Saudi cartoons. The following sub-theme examines the second most commonly presented political issue in Saudi cartoons, which is US political affairs.

### 5.2.7.2 US Political Affairs

The American election was a hot topic around the world, as two strong presidential candidates had reached the final stage - Trump and Biden. The first presidential debate held between them was in September 2020, when they discussed the pandemic, which was considered to be a winning card (SkyNews, 2020). Both Trump and Biden shared their point of view about the pandemic and offered a solution to it. Trump, for instance, stated that drinking substances with a white spirit content (e.g sanitiser), and being exposed to sun light would kill the virus (BBC, 2020). Saudi cartoonists presented the US elections in their cartoons, and focused on the ways in which the two candidates exploited the COVID-19 pandemic to win the presidency as it presented with four cartoons. One example of these cartoons is presented below- Figure 5.35.



Figure 5.35: Biden (character on the right)  
Trump (character on the left)

In this cartoon, COVID-19 is depicted metaphorically as a ball-COVID-19 IS A FOOTBALL- while the two candidates are the players; on the right is Biden and Trump on the left. This forms the metaphor BIDEN AND TRUMP ARE FOOTBALL PLAYERS. Therefore, the USA election is metaphorically presented as a sports match- USA ELECTION IS FOOTBALL GAME – and the player with more scores will win the game. The metaphorical idea of victory and loss also applies to elections. The candidate who convinces people with their arguments

about COVID-19, whether by denying its existence (as in the case of Trump) or by showing their willingness to fight it (as in the case of Biden), will eventually be elected president. This representation draws heavily on popular and widely circulating news stories that cover how both candidates—Biden and Trump—have approached the pandemic crisis differently in their bids for election.

In analysing the four cartoons presented in this sub-theme, it is clear that the two candidates are mostly presented through the writing mode as shown in all four cartoons (Figure 5.35 is an example) while two cartoons show the candidate's representation through the image mode, portraying their individual unique hair styles<sup>40</sup>. As these cartoons cover an external political issue, Saudi cartoonists mostly draw their cartoons using a long-shot distance and oblique angle, to position the readers as outsiders who observe the election campaign and judge the two candidates' behavior.

Saudi cartoonists in this theme focus on international political issues related to specific countries, such as those in the Middle East and the United States. As a Middle Eastern country with strong political ties to these countries, Saudi Arabia has a vested interest in investigating and discussing the political issues. Moreover, under the watchful eyes of a global audience, the USA held an historic event, which was the presidential elections between two strong candidates who were notable rivals: Biden and Trump. During this same period, other international cartoonists represented different political issues around the world that occurred during the pandemic, but were not necessarily of interest to the Saudi public, such as black lives matter (Alkhresheh, 2020); government corruption in different countries, such as Jordan (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2020), Nigeria (Asiru and Bello, 2020) and the Philippines (Imperial, 2020); and the failure of Pakistani authorities to save their country's economy in light of the COVID-19 crisis (Aazam et al., 2020).

### **5.2.8 The Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Work**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, the Saudi Ministry of Education announced the closure of schools (Yezli and Khan, 2020) to maintain social distancing (Toquero, 2020). Schooling was

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<sup>40</sup> The haircut and the color of the hair are the two main visual signifiers that are used to distinguish between the two represented participants: Trump and Biden. Trump is depicted with yellow hair, while Biden is depicted with white hair.

transferred online for university students, while school students across all grades faced a different situation. King Salman ordered that all school children would pass the school year and transfer to the next grade due to the difficult situation facing the world and students across the globe (Almowaten, 2020). When the following school semester started in August 2020, online schooling continued with the use of different technological platforms depending on the grade. Higher education institutions used Blackboard, McGraw-Hill, Zoom, Google Class, and FaceTime (Hassounah, Raheel and Alhefzi, 2020), although specific usage depended on the university and the lecturer's preference. From elementary to high school level, the Ministry of Education launched a platform called *Madrasty* to deliver the classes online. Also, a previously launched TV channel called *Ein* had been redirected to provide live tutoring of all school level subjects, which were previously delivered by 127 teachers on 19 channels (Hoq, 2020). Many school teachers asked their students to refer to *Ein* for more in-depth understanding of lessons (Al Lily et al., 2021). Saudi cartoonists discuss education in the pandemic in 13 cartoons using different sub-themes, including: (un)disciplined students; parents' role in online schooling; and the challenges of online education and working from home. These three sub-themes are discussed in detail below.

#### **5.2.8.1 (Un)disciplined Students**

Huang et al. (2020) pointed out that online education trained students in the skill of self-discipline. Despite there being many examples of disciplined students in Saudi Arabia, there are also numerous examples of those that are undisciplined, particularly in relation to remote learning. Saudi cartoonists play an essential role in criticising the undisciplined behavior of students, referring to the widely reported reality that they spend time intended for online classes sleeping, watching movies, or playing games (Al Lily et al., 2021). Such criticism also targets online education as a novel experience, particularly its negative effect on learning outcomes. Four cartoons are found to discuss this sub-theme. A cartoon dealing with such a criticism is presented below in Figure 5.36:





Figure 5.36: Enough sleep; wake up and start your study

In this cartoon, a boy is presented on the left side, who has woken up from a deep sleep as indexed by his sleepy eyes, the pictorial run of droplet from his nose, and a blanket in his hand. The pillow appears to be responsible for waking him up, as it demands the boy to stop sleeping and start studying, as evidenced by the speech bubble. This presentation shows that the boy is undisciplined in relation to his attendance of the virtual classes, which leads the inanimate object to wake him up.

The multimodal analysis in this sub-theme reveals that Saudi cartoonists mock those students who do not pay attention to their classes, presented with three cartoons out of four. Such students are mainly depicted in the cartoons as single people to present these negative behaviors as individualised, and not generalized to all Saudi students. The students who are mocked in the cartoons are all male, which is supported by studies on gender differences in academic achievement and discipline in Saudi Arabia. These studies have found that male students in Saudi Arabia tend to underperform and be less committed to their studies than female students (Barry, 2019; Elsayed et al., 2022). Also, the cartoonists present these three cartoons through an oblique angle to detach the readers, so that they are not included as a target of such criticism. Moreover, Saudi cartoonists seek to encourage readers to form an objective point of view about such behavior, thus using the long-shot distance. Saudi cartoonists want to show that these negative behaviours towards learning are not acceptable, thus inviting readers to be their own judges of the reality of some students in Saudi Arabia during the pandemic. As shown in the above example, the long-shot presentation of a sleepy student who is not attending online classes encourages the reader to have a critical view of the situation and judge the behaviour as if it were being judged by an inanimate entity. On the other hand, one example of a discipline student is found in the data, and that was presented with the long-shot distance and oblique angle to make readers observe such a positive behaviour and follow in consequence. In general,

the number of illustrations found shows that more undisciplined students were portrayed than disciplined ones, which makes a strong argument for the role of cartoonists as critics who play a role in improving society.

One reason for the students' undisciplined behaviour is that they lacked direct mentoring by their teachers during the virtual lessons (Al Lily et al., 2021), as parents took over this role. The following sub-section discusses this concern and focuses on Saudi parents' role in remote schooling as a sub-theme.

#### **5.2.8.2 Parents' Role in Online Schooling**

This sub-theme highlights the important role that parents played in monitoring online education during the pandemic. Many parents, especially mothers, were tasked with leading the education process, as they helped their children with their homework, attending virtual classes, and completing exams. Mothers were forced to play the role of devoted parent who took on home-education responsibilities during the pandemic (Andersen et al., 2020; Al Lily et al., 2021). Arab mothers are the ones who tend to be blamed if their children fail at school, which is why they are often willing to do anything to help them successfully pass the school year, even if they resort to dishonest means (Al Lily et al., 2021). With such a huge educational responsibility that parents were suddenly forced to take on during the pandemic, Saudi cartoonists tried to make light of such a burden using funny depictions, along with highlighting some dishonest behaviours exhibited by parents while managing their children's online education. The Saudi cartoonists referred to dishonest qualities such as cheating, and implied that it was the parents who benefited from their children's educational achievements, more than the students themselves. This is supported with the use of witticisms; for example, "in one video, mothers dance on a stage; the caption reads 'Mothers' Graduation Party'" (Al Lily et al., 2021, p.5). This witticism is making fun of the misleading behaviour of the mother who "passes" final grade exams, and thus takes the credit for this educational outcome.

Several parental roles related to overseeing the educational process during the pandemic are portrayed in five cartoons from the data, one of which is presented below- Figure 5.37:



Figure 5.37: Mum.. do online exams have invigilators?! (the character on the right)  
Do not worry.. if you face any difficulties, I am around!! (the character on the left)

In this cartoon, the Saudi boy, indexed by his casual homeware, asks his mum if online exams are invigilated. The mother comforts her son regarding the monitoring of the online exam process, telling him not to worry and that she will be around during the exam should he need help. This example portrays how mothers play a very active role in their children's education during the pandemic, although the cartoonist also implies that one of the drawbacks of remote learning is that cheating is very common in exams.

The analysis of the five cartoons in this sub-theme reveals that Saudi cartoonists in this sub-theme most commonly present two main characters: one is the parents (either mum or dad), and the second is the student (either a girl or boy). These two characters are represented as Saudis, as indexed by their traditional clothes. Presenting these two characters means the cartoonists are specifically concerned with Saudi education, and use their illustrations to judge and assess its efficiency as it made the transition to an online system. The cartoonists within this sub-theme are divided into two groups; one group of Saudi cartoonists portray the suffering and challenge that parents face in monitoring their children's progress and attendance, while the other group is more critical towards parents and highlights the negative moral traits they have often displayed, such as cheating. Cartoons in both groups are presented through a long-shot distance and oblique angle to encourage readers to see the situation from a distance, and thus to develop a critical view of the new online educational model that Saudis have been forced to experience.

One of the reasons parents were required to play such an instrumental role in online education during the pandemic, was the challenge of getting children to adapt to the remote home-based model, and to learn to conform and be disciplined without any direct teacher intervention. The following sub-theme discusses this issue.

### 5.2.8.3 The Challenges of Online Education and Working from Home

This sub-theme portrays the idea that online schooling is difficult as the home is an informal environment that is not conducive to learning. The very nature of online learning does not support a productive or constructive workflow (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Moreover, a significant body of research has uncovered that online education during the pandemic has been the cause of anxiety among students (Khoshaim et al., 2020; Pragholaipati, 2020) which has greatly increased their chances of developing depression (Alyami et al., 2021). Such anxiety might relate to “concerns about the future and academic pressure such as managing stressful tasks and assignments and pursuit to improve their academic performance” (Khoshaim et al., 2020, p. 4). This sub-theme is presented with four cartoons, that Figure 5.38 presents an example of such a sub-theme.



Figure 5.38: The online education burden on students!!

The boy in this cartoon is carrying a large heavy sack on his back; the difficulty of carrying it is indexed by his facial expression along with the sweat droplets that correlate with the heavy movement lines. Such a visual depiction of the boy is further anchored by the written text on the right: "the online education burden on students". This cartoon presents a message similar to the findings of the studies mentioned above (Khoshaim et al., 2020; Pragholaipati, 2020) that students are perceived to suffer hugely as a result of online schooling.

As shown in the analysed cartoons, Saudi cartoonists within this sub-theme show both the student's individual representation, whilst also referring to a collective representation of all Saudi students. This is seen in the above example, where the image presents one person, but the writing refers to a collective representation of all students. Saudi cartoonists make us, as readers, witness such difficulties that Saudi students have to endure, as the published four

cartoons are drawn primarily through a long-shot distance. Moreover, detachment as an intent is presented by drawing the characters with an oblique angle. Such a presentation infers that the readers do not have a solution for such difficulties, as it is the pandemic that is to blame for students experiencing this kind of challenge in relation to online education.

The pandemic is the cause of closing educational institutions, as presented in the *Nation*<sup>41</sup> cartoons (Sattar et al., 2020), as well as the cancellation of many graduation ceremonies in 2020 (Al-Ghamdi & Albawadi, 2020). Within this larger theme - the impact of COVID-19 on education and work - Saudi cartoonists have addressed the education change in Saudi Arabia as it has undergone a huge shift to an online system, and have portrayed the ways in which students and parents have been able to cope with such a change. Despite the online education success in Saudi Arabia (MoE, 2021; World Bank Group, 2022), some shortcomings have been identified, such as the lack of discipline exhibited by some students. Moreover, another problem that has been highlighted is the significant role that parents, especially mothers, have played in online education, with some suggesting that parental involvement has exceeded what is normal or permissible. Perhaps most importantly, is the negative psychological impact of online education on students, as they suddenly found themselves forced to adapt to a completely new system of remote learning, being based in a home environment that does little to proactively support this kind of virtual education.

The transformation from in-person education to online has been a necessary solution to save lives and to contain the spread of COVID-19. However, online education suffers from several drawbacks that have not only been portrayed by Saudi cartoonists as presented above, but also by Jordanian cartoonists who discuss the unsatisfactory outcome of online education (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021).

### **5.2.9 The Vaccine Rollout**

During the initial stages of the pandemic, countries around the world depended on precautionary measures to fight the pandemic and to slow the spread of COVID-19. These measures were of significant importance at the time as there wasn't yet any idea of when a vaccine would be available (Hassounah, Raheel & Alhefzi, 2020). However, reports about the

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<sup>41</sup> English-language newspaper in Pakistan

possibility of an innovative Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine started to emerge in November 2020 (Pfizer, 2020), although global distribution started in December 2020. Indeed, by mid-December, 500,000 doses were delivered to Saudi Arabia, followed by 10 million doses between February and September 2021 (Assiri et al., 2021). The MoH did not just rely on the Pfizer-BioNtech vaccine, but it also exported the other successful vaccine – Oxford-AstraZeneca - in February 2021 (Assiri et al., 2021). It was announced that the vaccination program would take place across three distinct phases, starting off with the vulnerable and those most exposed to Covid-19, such as health workers. During the first phase, starting on 16 December 2020, the vaccination was offered to those aged 65 years and over; individuals with chronic health conditions; and people with a high risk of infection due to their work. During the second phase, starting on 18 February 2021, the vaccination was offered to citizens 50 years and over; people with chronic ailments; and those with high risk of infection. During third phase, starting on 12 June 2021, the vaccination was offered to everyone else (MoH, 2020c).

To register for the vaccination, Saudi citizens and residents had to book an appointment through MoH's *Sehhaty*<sup>42</sup>; an app launched in August 2019 to pursue different health promotional campaigns (MoH, 2019). However, in wake of the pandemic it was adapted to include different services such as booking appointments at dedicated COVID-19 clinics; locating drive-through mass testing locations around the Kingdom; and booking vaccination appointments (MoH, 2021). The app received positive feedback from its users, highlighting its ease of use, and its effectiveness in keeping them up-to-date with vaccination appointments and news (Shahzad et al., 2022).

Following on from the above, the vaccination as a main theme has been covered by Saudi cartoons in 13 cartoons, with a focus on four different sub-themes, including: slow vaccine production, vaccine distribution, vaccination criticism, and using the vaccination as a weapon to fight back against COVID-19. Each one is discussed in detail below.

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<sup>42</sup> The name of the app is retained as spelled in English by the founder, as illustrated in Section 4.6.

### 5.2.9.1 Slow Vaccine Production

Three cartoons within this sub-theme portray the critical view of Saudi cartoonists regarding the slow innovation of the vaccine, as no other medical solution was found to be effective in stopping the spread of COVID-19. This sub-theme was particularly prevalent within the first phase- the spread of COVID-19, and the second phase- lockdown – as Saudi cartoonists were pessimistic about the situation and the lack of an adequate solution. An example of such a cartoon is provided below- Figure 5.39:



Figure 5.39: Vaccines... (statement on the right)  
Corona (the center shadow)

In this cartoon, the bullseye game metaphorically represents the pandemic situation- PANDEMIC IS BULLSEYE GAME- and the darts are the innovative vaccines-VACCINES ARE DARTS. Furthermore, the bull's eye is corona, as indexed by its shape, as well as being labeled in the written mode as corona-COVID-19 IS BULL'S EYE/TARGET. Here, the vaccines/darts have failed to successfully hit the bull's eye, instead falling on the outer rings. Such a presentation shows that there have been many attempts to develop a successful vaccine, but in all of the trials, there has been failure and an inability to reach the “target”.

Saudi cartoonists who deal with this sub-theme present COVID-19 as an individual character that has a different balance of power compared to the vaccine. The cartoonists present this sub-theme and their judgment about the slow development of the vaccine in two different presentations. In one cartoon (Figure 5.39 above), they use a close-up shot to involve the reader in the message, showing the failure of the vaccine innovation. The camera angle is frontal, making the reader feel like they are the one throwing the darts. This angle creates a sense of close involvement in experiencing the failure. The other two cartoons, on the other hand, are depicted with a long-shot distance to encourage readers to be objective about the situation and

its metaphorical representation in the cartoons. Furthermore, the illustrations are mainly presented from an oblique angle to detach readers from being the target of the criticism, which in fact points towards the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. The next sub-theme to be discussed is using the vaccination as a weapon to fight back against COVID-19.

### 5.2.9.2 Using the Vaccination as a Weapon to Fight Back Against COVID-19

This sub-theme is shown with four cartoons. It portrays the vaccine's power over COVID-19, as it has been metaphorically represented by cartoonists to be a strong weapon. Saudi cartoonists here are optimistic about such an innovation and its promising results. One of the cartoons associated with this sub-theme is shown below- Figure 5.40:



Figure 5.40: New weapon ... ( the statement on the left)  
Vaccine ( the needle)

In this cartoon, the vaccine is presented as a rocket that is ready to be launched in battle, as indexed by the military vehicle. This visual presentation is backed-up by the statement in the upper left, which reads “new weapon”- forming the metaphor VACCINE IS A NEW WEAPON that is used in the war, referring to the shared metaphor about the pandemic COVID-19/PANDEMIC IS A WAR. The size of the vaccine, more specifically, carries a potential meaning of power on the battlefield which indicates an optimistic view of winning the war. In general, the cartoonist is optimistic about such an innovation.

The analysed cartoons have revealed that the positive attitude held by cartoonists towards the vaccine is presented through a long-shot distance to share the excitement and anticipation over the vaccine with readers. Most of the Saudi cartoonists detach the readers emotionally and position them as witnesses to such a huge innovation that has the potential to “save the world,” and lives of many peoples. Like the fighting against COVID-19 sub-theme, the WAR metaphor



here is presented significantly to show the potential for defeating the virus, as such metaphorical depiction could result in public support (Alkhamash, 2023) and, consequently, lead to higher vaccination rate. Saudi cartoonists, therefore, play a key role in encouraging readers to take the vaccine.

The innovation of the COVID-19 vaccine is a landmark development that contributes significantly to medical and scientific progress. However, this success has not been without its limitations, as many have questioned what they consider to be the unfair distribution of the vaccine amongst the world's populations, as discussed in the following sub-theme.

### 5.2.9.3 Vaccine Distribution

The world came to notice the unequal distribution of the vaccine among countries: rich countries were given access to the vaccine much faster than marginalized and poverty-stricken countries. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), points to their failure in providing equality in vaccine distribution, as he stated that although 832 million vaccine doses have been distributed, 82% have been sent to high- or upper-middle-income nations, while only 0.2 % have targeted low-income countries (United Nations, 2021). This injustice and lack of fair dissemination across the globe has led Saudi cartoonists to take a critical stance, which is portrayed in their cartoons (four of which are presented in the data). The following Figure 5.41 shows an example:



Figure 5.41: Europe (the statement on the right)

The cartoonist here brings to light the unfair priorities that underpin the vaccine distribution, as indexed by the single dose presented on the table as well as six people contemplating whom to give it to. These men are identified as countries, portrayed by the written statement on the

left side saying “Europe”. Such a personified presentation of countries forms the metaphor COUNTRIES ARE PEOPLE. These European countries are portrayed as facing a difficult decision, symbolized by a question mark and exclamation markers above their heads. This presentation shows that the vaccine distribution is not an egalitarian process, but is driven purely by power and capitalistic factors. Such a presentation aims to bring to the fore the unfairness of the vaccine distribution process.

As shown in the analysed cartoons, Saudi cartoonists portray those who are considered to be the cause of the unequal distribution of the vaccine in two ways: as collective representations (e.g., rich countries such as Europe, as shown in two cartoons) and as individual representations (e.g., the personified world and HOW, as shown in the other two cartoons). On the other hand, the victims of these injustices are portrayed as poor countries, which are shown in just two cartoons. As these are grand issues to be addressed and solved on a global scale, the depicted sub-theme is presented through a long-shot distance and an oblique angle in all the presented four cartoons, so that readers are positioned as bystanders who are simply observing the situation. This sub-theme reflects “imperialist and capitalist approaches even during life-taking pandemics like COVID-19” (Hameed and Afzal, 2021, p.99).

Lack of fairness in relation to vaccine distribution is not the only drawback of the vaccine innovation, as a lot of criticism has also surrounded the vaccine and its efficacy. Vaccine criticism, as a sub-theme, is discussed in the following sub-section.

#### **5.2.9.4 Vaccination Criticism**

Saudi cartoonists have dealt with the criticism that laypeople have expressed regarding the vaccine. These criticisms have mainly focused on the vaccination trials and controversial vaccine ingredients. It has been presented with two cartoons. An example of published cartoons portraying this sub-theme, is presented below in Figure 5.42:



Figure 5.42: Live creatures for experimentation! (statement on the upper right)  
pharmaceutical companies (statement on microscope)

The cartoonist here criticises vaccine trials that are carried out by pharmaceutical companies. A microscope is presented on the left side, labeled as ‘pharmaceutical companies’ and a small specimen is placed on the mechanical stage, which the magnified eyepiece lens reveals to be a Saudi man, as indexed by his traditional thawb. The title on the right ‘live creatures for experimentation’ portrays the idea that pharmaceutical companies are using human beings as the subjects of their medical experiments.

The analysis of these two cartoons dealing with this sub-theme, reveals the use of a collective generic representation as the target of this criticism, which is mainly pharmaceutical and medical companies signified by the written statements as shown in the above Figure 5.42. The cartoonists avoid including the readers in this criticism, and instead they are positioned mainly as external observers, as indexed by the long-shot distance and an oblique angle.

As the above section has demonstrated, in relation to the theme that has dealt with the COVID-19 vaccination, cartoonists have portrayed two points of view towards the vaccine. The first is criticism of the vaccine, presented in relation to the slow vaccine development process, (unethical) trials, and its unfair global distribution. A number of negative collective representations have been presented across this theme, including: the global capitalistic superpowers responsible for the unfair distribution of the vaccine, and the pharmaceutical giants responsible for dangerous and unethical trials. The second point of view is more positive, and portrays the vaccine as a strong weapon through which COVID-19 can be defeated. Within this more optimistic sub-theme, the individual and specific representation is depicted by focusing solely on the vaccine's power, and its role in initiating the decline of COVID-19. The

unfair distribution has been addressed in the study of Hameed and Afzal (2021) as shown that the power of capitalism and imperialism is the reason.

### **5.2.10 The Impact on Travel and Tourism**

Airline travel was considered one of the main reasons for the rapid spread of COVID-19 worldwide, with the WHO officially announcing on their website in March 2020, that there were “more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries” (WHO, 2020b, para.2). Indeed, travel between regions and countries was one of the prominent factors that moved the virus rapidly across the globe, leading to its uncontrollable spread (Schuchat, 2020). Therefore, Saudi authorities imposed travel restrictions by stopping flights gradually. It began with suspending Umrah<sup>43</sup> on 27 February 2020; Muslim travelers were not allowed to enter Saudi Arabia to do Umrah in order to prevent any mass gatherings (Ebrahim and Memish, 2020). On 9 March 2020, international travel was suspended between Saudi and specific infected countries, such as China, while on 14 March 2020, all international flights were suspended to and from Saudi Arabia. Six days later, domestic travel was halted across all regions of the Kingdom (MoH, 2020d). Saudi cartoonists used their illustrations as presented in nine cartoons to show the status of the airline sector, leading to the emergence of three sub-themes, including: open airline travel, halting airline travel, and resuming domestic airline travel and its impact on local tourism. These sub-themes are discussed in detail below.

#### **5.2.10.1 Open Airline Travel**

Cartoons within this sub-theme are three which were published during the first phase- the spread of COVID-19. Saudi cartoonists portrayed how international airline travel was the main reason for the global outbreak of COVID-19, and that banning international flights would be the only solution to stop such spreading. In other words, Saudi cartoonists justified the authorities’ actions to suspend flights as a logical solution to contain the spread of COVID-19, which was predominantly coming from abroad (WHO, 2020a). The following cartoon in Figure 5.43 is an example of such a situation as it was published on 13 March 2020 after the authority announcement of suspension between Saudi and specific infected countries. This cartoon may have encouraged the authority to expand the suspension to the other countries, which then happened four days later.

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<sup>43</sup> Umrah is an Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims do at any time of the year.

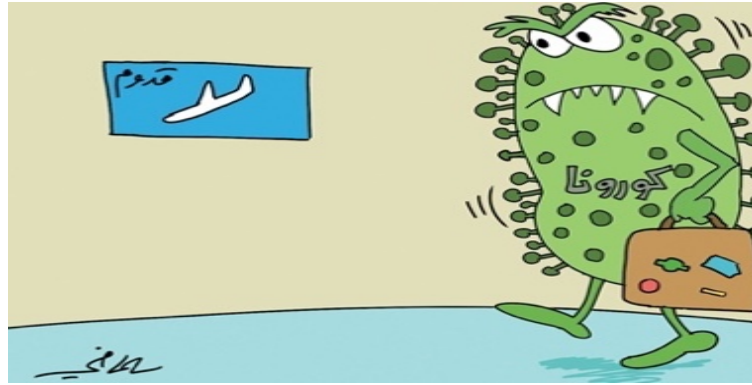


Figure 5.43: Corona (caricature on the right) ; Arrival (the sign on the left)

This cartoon indexes that travelling is the main reason for the outbreak, by personifying COVID-19 as a traveller at the airport -COVID-19 IS A TRAVELLER. The personified COVID-19 traveller carries a suitcase displaying numerous stickers indexing different travelling destinations that have been visited in a short space of time. The transport used is air travel, as indexed by the arrival sign, displaying the sign of an aeroplane and the word ‘arrival’. Such a presentation is a reference to news published by the WHO on 11 March 2020 about the number of infected countries to be 114 countries (WHO, 2020b). It has been found that the air travel is the main reason for the spread of the virus, and that shutting down flights from China’s Hubei Province is not enough, as other flights continued from countries with COVID-19 outbreaks, contributing to its spread (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

The analysis conducted reveals that Saudi cartoonists dealing with this sub-theme use a long-shot distance to shed lights on the reality of this situation, without any emotional engagement, as the oblique angle is presented with all the three cartoons. Such a framing technique is used by Saudi cartoonists to avoid inducing panic in citizens, instead attempting to educate them about the importance of limiting travel, as presented in the above cartoon in Figure 5.43, for example. The presentation shows that COVID-19 travels around the world and to limit that the travel suspension must be held, and that what Saudi authorities did with the international flights. The suspension was eventually extended to domestic flights, as discussed in the following sub-theme.

### 5.2.10.2 Halting Airline Travel

During the second phase, lockdown, domestic airlines were suspended to stop COVID-19 spreading (Yezli and Khan, 2020). Saudi cartoonists discussed the economic consequences that the Saudi airline sector suffered due to lockdown restrictions. This sub-theme is presented with

two cartoons. One example of the published cartoons that portrays the negative influence of COVID-19 on the Saudi airline sector, is presented below- Figure 5.44.



Figure 5.44: Aviation industry

In this cartoon, the aeroplane is sinking into the green water that could be signified river, sea or ocean. This green water indexes COVID-19- COVID-19 IS A WATER AREA. The right wing of the plane is raised, indicating that it is giving up and being more acceptable to the situation. This presentation makes a reference to published headline news at the time about the struggle of the sector during the pandemic, and how the Saudi Airlines were offering to make their meals available via home delivery in an attempt to overcome their financial crisis like the other aviation industry around the world did (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2020).

As shown in the analysed cartoons, Saudi cartoonists within this sub-theme present the financial crisis that the aviation sector experienced in light of the travel ban. Cartoonists depict this situation through a long- shot to show the reality of the situation facing the aviation industry. No direct engagement with the readers is presented, as an oblique angle is adopted by the cartoonists in these two cartoons, implying that this issue is not for the public to solve but is for the authorities to address.

After three months of suspension, domestic flights resumed, which really boosted domestic tourism, as no international flights were yet operating. However, as domestic travel recommenced, Saudi cartoonists shared their concern about the potential impact on public safety and domestic tourism, which will be discussed in the following sub-section.

### 5.2.10.3 Resuming Domestic Airline Travel

After lifting the curfew, domestic airline flights resumed, thus increasing the focus on domestic tourism, which led to Saudi cartoonists covering this issue. One drawback of domestic tourism

at that time was the inflated prices of local hotels, which caused Saudi cartoonists to criticise such unreasonable rates, which were unaffordable for many. This sub-theme is presented with four cartoons. These high hotel prices were the result of a sudden increased demand to visit domestic destinations, as international flights had not yet resumed. An example of such a critical view is presented in the below cartoon in Figure 5.45.



Figure 5.45: Hotel prices (character on the right); Tourist (character on the left)

In this cartoon, the obese man on the right metaphorically stands for unreasonable hotel prices, as shown through the writing label, and thus HOTEL PRICES IS A BIG OBESE MAN. This man has a knife and a fork and is running after a short thin man, who is labelled as a tourist. Both of them - hotels and tourists- are identified as having a representation of Saudi person, indexed by Saudi traditional clothes. The main theme presented here is the inaccessibility of domestic tourism, and that Saudi hotels exaggerate their rates, and thus take advantage of Saudi tourists. The two represented characters here differ in size to signify that the prices of the hotels are high (obese man), that the domestic tourist is helpless and not able to afford them (small and thin). This is supported by the tourist's flying sweat droplets, indexing his worry and concern. In general, Saudi cartoonists within this sub-theme are highly critical of the unreasonably high prices of local hotels in Saudi Arabia.

The analysis of the four cartoons in this sub-theme reveals that they all use a long-shot distance to portray critical views of internal domestic issues, which positions readers as witnesses to these internal domestic issues in their country; particularly that local and international hotel chains in Saudi Arabia are taking advantage of the international flight suspension. International flights eventually resumed on 17th of May 2021, although travellers were required to follow strict mandatory precautions, including quarantining and PCR testing (Arab News, 2021). However, the data in this thesis was collected up until March 2021; therefore, no presented cartoon discusses this travel change.

Within this theme, Saudi cartoonists have presented the initial reason for COVID-19 spreading so rapidly, which was international travel, and how the suspension of flights was the correct decision taken by Saudi authorities. Despite the fact that banning national and international flights had a positive impact on decreasing the rates of infection, it had a negative financial impact on the aviation sector, and on raising the prices of domestic tourism in Saudi Arabia. This theme has also been discussed by Jordan cartoonists, who presented travel as the main cause of the outbreak, and how COVID-19 resulted in international aviation travel being banned (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021).

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter was devoted to a discussion of the themes extracted from the content analysis of 212 cartoons published in Saudi Arabia. Section one presented an overview of the ten themes and the frequency of their presentation across the four phases of the pandemic. The virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, the impact on education and work, vaccine rollout, lockdown, international political discourse, public protection, the change in social relations, the impact on travel and tourism, and the economic impact of COVID-19 are the ten main themes deducted from the given 212 Saudi cartoons. There were variations in the ways in which the themes were presented, and these depended largely on wider events and occurrences that took place in each of the four phases that Saudi Arabia went through during the pandemic.

The second section of this chapter discussed the ten themes as well as their sub-themes in more detail, while providing extensive examples. The cartoons in the ten themes have been represented the participants differently, using framing, personalisation vs impersonalisation, and collective vs individual representations. The most presented participants in the cartoons are Earth, COVID-19, Saudis men and women, Saudi authorities and international countries who differ depending on the presented theme and the ways in which it correlates explicitly or implicitly with published news and wider events. In general, Saudi cartoons have played a significant and notable role during the pandemic, functioning as important platforms for raising awareness about the pandemic, as well as shaping public opinion and behavior.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Humour in Saudi Cartoons**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 61 cartoons that have been selected for more a detailed examination out of the original pool of 212, as discussed in the Methodology Chapter. An introduction about humour in Saudi context about COVID-19 is introduced in Section 6.2. The first type of humour analysis- Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications is presented in Section 6.3. Then, humour forms are illustrated in Section 6.4, started with humour types in Section 6.4.1 and humour techniques in Section 6.4.2. Section 6.5 discusses the relation between the humour forms and Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classification with other independent variables such as themes and cartoonists. Then, a conclusion of this chapter is introduced in Section 6.6.

#### **6.2 Humour in the Saudi Pandemic- Related Cartoons**

'Comic disposition' (Holm, 2021), forming the main overarching concept driving the analysis of the cartoons in this study, which means that any artefact has the potential to be humorous. In this regard, all the cartoons can be considered to be part of the humour category where "audiences become pre-inclined to interpret any and all texts as potentially comic" (Holm, 2021, p.13). The humour in COVID-19 cartoons can be called *disaster humour* (as discussed in Section 3.4); this kind of humour does not just include the dark side of the pandemic, such as death, but also other aspects, such as activities during the lockdown (Bischetti, Canal, and Bambin, 2021). Such humorous presentation in the COVID-19 cartoons was analysed depending on Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classification (Section 6.3), and humour forms (Section 6.4).

The following section presents the incongruity-resolution classifications (Yus, 2016, 2021) found in the Saudi cartoons.

#### **6.3 The Incongruity–Resolution Classifications**

This section examines the types of incongruity–resolution classifications that have emerged from different cartoons. Analysing the 61 cartoons based on Rothbar and Pien's (1977)

argument about the possibility of having more than one incongruity classification in the presented artefact. Therefore, different cartoons have different number of presented incongruity-resolution classifications (IRs). The total number of incongruity-resolution classifications across the 61 cartoons is 128, while for each cartoon, the number of incongruity-resolution classifications varies from one to five. Figure 6.1 presents a breakdown of the number of incongruity-resolution classifications that have one, two, three, four or five.

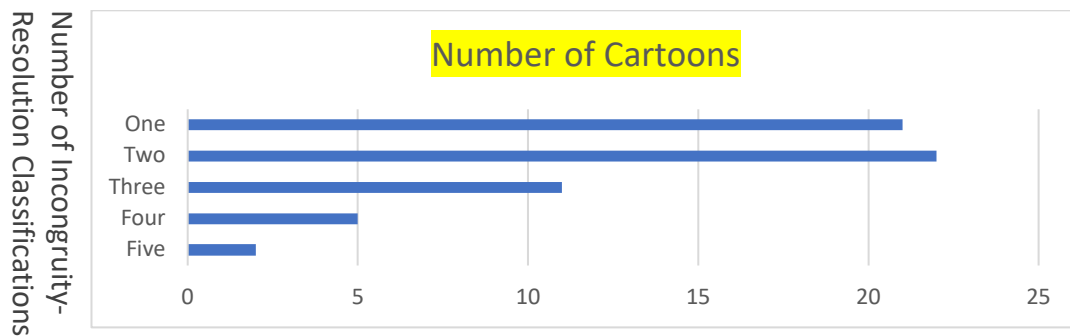


Figure 6.1: Number of incongruity-resolution classifications in 61 cartoons

Figure 6.1 illustrates the number of incongruity-resolution classifications within the 61 cartoons, ranging from one to five incongruity-resolution classifications. Most cartoons have either one classification (21 cartoons) or two classifications (22 cartoons), indicating that the majority of the illustrations tend to have fewer incongruity-resolution classifications possibilities, which might be due to the cartoonists' focus on being direct in delivering the humorous message within the cartoons, and the fact that Arabic language is known for its clarity and being straightforward. On the other hand, fewer cartoons have multiple incongruity-resolution classifications, including 11 cartoons that have three classifications, and five cartoons that have four classifications. Only two cartoons have five classifications, which is rare, as these cartoons involve many characters and different metaphorical presentations, thus enabling the possibility for many potential incongruity-resolution classifications.

Starting with incongruity, four different classifications are proposed, three of which are drawn from the Yus classification system (2016, 2021). These are: frame-based incongruity, writing-image incongruity, and writing-based incongruities (see Section 3.1.2.3.1). A fourth classification named -image-based incongruity (see d in Section 4.3.1.1.2) has been added by the researcher. Table 6.1 presents how frequently each of the four incongruity types have occurred in the cartoons.

Incongruity Type	Frequency	Percentage
Frame-based incongruity	69	54%
Image-based incongruity	25	19%
Writing-image incongruity	23	18%
Writing-based incongruity	11	9%

Table 6.1: The distribution of the incongruity types

According to Table 6.1, frame-based incongruity is the most presented type with a proportion of 54%. The fact that frame-based incongruity is the most presented type confirms the argument by Attardo and Raskin (1991) and Attardo (2017b) that incongruity is based on the given frame schema in the reader’s mind due to previous experience and knowledge. Many cartoonists in this study depend on a common frame already built in readers’ minds, and juxtapose it with another frame in the cartoon that is usually representative of abnormal and unrealistic frames. Two incongruity types, writing-image incongruity and image-based incongruity are similar in frequency with 18% and 19%, respectively. Having writing–image incongruity as one of the most commonly used incongruity type, supports and encourages the multimodality function of the cartoon since cartoonists tend to deploy two modes (writing and image) to create incongruity. The image-based one, as the incongruity type that emerged from this research, occurred more frequently compared to writing-based incongruity which is presented with 9%, due to the visual nature of cartoons, and the inherent creativity that cartoonists display in using the visual mode to present and communicate key strategies such as humour. Such a finding also supports the affordance of each mode as the image mode is more adept at clearly conveying ideas and themes that “maybe more difficult to express through language” (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 31). The above–mentioned incongruities are addressed by one of four resolution types, three of which are once again drawn from the Yus classification system (2016, 2021), and include: frame-based resolution, implication-based resolution, and writing-based resolution (see Section 3.1.2.3.1). Image-based resolution is an additional resolution type that has materialised from the data in this study, and is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.1.1.2. The frequency by which these four resolution types occur across the cartoons is illustrated in Table 6.2.

The Resolution Type	Frequency	Percentage
Implication-based resolution	54	42%
Frame-based resolution	41	32%
Writing-based resolution	22	17%
Image-based resolution	11	9%

Table 6.2: The distribution of the resolution types

Table 6.2 presents the frequency rate of each of the four resolution types. The most frequently occurring resolution is implication-based, at 42%. The percentage of this resolution is relatively similar to the frame-based resolution, with a percentage of 32%. Conversely, the two other types, writing-based and image-based, are used the least at 17 % and 9%, respectively. Such a notable difference between these classifications suggests that cartoonists attempt to solve the presented incongruity by depending mainly on readers' knowledge experiences. The cartoonists may include some hints, leading readers to decode such hints by using their external knowledge and life experiences, which forms the basis of an implication-based resolution. More specifically, cartoonists rely on frames already implicit in readers' minds (usually based on common sense or innate knowledge of their audience) to solve the incongruity. The cartoonists assume that their readers are familiar with different topics, subject matters, and issues of public concern that these cartoonists then drawn upon in their illustrations by either critiquing, mocking or commending them.

The four incongruities and four resolutions are paired together to gain a more detailed and in-depth understanding of how the different types of incongruity and resolution types work together to create overall meaning in the cartoons. The proposed 16 patterns are shown in Table 6.3.

Type of Incongruity	Type of Resolution	Frequency	Percentage
Frame-based	Implication-based	29	23%
Frame-based	Frame-based	20	16%
Frame-based	Writing-based	11	9%
Image-based	Implication-based	10	8%
Writing- image	Implication-based	10	8%
Image-based	Frame-based	9	7%
Frame-based	Image-based	9	7%
Writing- image	Frame-based	9	7%
Writing-based	Implication-based	5	4%
Image-based	Writing-based	5	4%
Writing- image	Writing-based	4	3%
Writing-based	Writing-based	2	2%
Writing-based	Frame-based	3	2%
Image-based	Image-based	1	1%
Writing-based	Image-based	1	1%
Writing- image	Image-based	0	0%

Table 6.3: The number of incongruity-resolution pairs presented in the cartoons

According to Table 6.3, the most common pair is frame-based incongruity and implication-based resolution, presented in 23% of the cartoons. The second is frame-based incongruity and

frame-based resolution, presented in 16% of the cartoons. This is an expected result due to the fact that, as discussed earlier, frame-based is the most common incongruity, while frame-based and implication-based are the two most common resolution types (see Table 6.1 and Table 6.2). Therefore, the Saudi cartoonists based on the given knowledge of the readers to create the incongruity and resolution and that generally based on the general presentation of the two modes- writing and image.

However, one possible classification was not found at all in the analysed data: writing-image incongruity and image-based resolution. Importantly, the absence of this pairing cannot be generalised to all Saudi cartoons, although within the data set related to this study, this is more likely as image-based resolution is the least occurring type (see Table 6.2), and its pairing with the other three incongruities is also considered the least ones compared with the other presented resolutions as shown to be 1% when pairing with image-based and writing-based incongruities. Such none or low presentation of the image- based resolution with the incongruity indicates that the image is more likely used to represent the set-up of the ‘joke’ more than considered as a resolution of such incongruity (see Table 6.1). The other two least presented pairs presented in Table 6.3 are writing-based incongruity and writing-based resolution, and writing-based incongruity and frame-based resolution, presenting with 2% each. The low percentage of using such pairs can be attributed to the use of the writing- based as the main incongruity in the analysed data, which is considered the least presented incongruity compared to the other four incongruity types (see Table 6.1). It can be shown that cartoons make the Saudi cartoonists not to depend mainly on the writing mode to form the incongruity, as that the image mode raise the preference or even using the two modes- writing and image. In contrast, writing-based resolution is preferred by the cartoonists to solve the incongruity compared to the image-based resolution.

Even though the 15 patterns identified function differently, they share the same presentation of the four incongruity and four resolution types. Therefore, a sample of four patterns is explained below in-depth, presenting four different incongruities (frame-based, writing-image, image-based and writing-based) and four different resolutions (frame-based, implications, image-based and writing-based). The choice of the pairing covers the cognitive, monomodal and multimodal functions. The choice of the first pairing (frame-based incongruity and frame-based resolution) presents the cognitive function that is also identified as the most presented type in the analysed data with 23%. The second pairing (writing-image incongruity and implication-

based resolution) based on the multimodal function in a sense that the incongruity is formed by making opposition between the two presented modes in the cartoon: image and writing. Moreover, the implication resolution is based on the given hints presented in the one or the two modes presented in the cartoons. On the other hand, the other two pairings present the monomodal presentation of the incongruity and its resolution to be presented either in the image or writing modes.

### 1 – Frame-Based Incongruity and Frame-Based Resolution

In this classification, incongruity is based on the opposition between two presented frames in a cartoon, or the presented frame in the cartoon against a frame that is perceived to be part of readers' mental and subjective experiences. Importantly, the resolution is presented within the frame of the cartoon. The following cartoon in Figure 6.2 is an example of such a classification.



Figure 6.2: Vaccine

This cartoon depicts the COVID-19 vaccination in a humorous manner by presenting the incongruity and its resolution as frame-based. The incongruity is based on two vaccination frames – one presented by the cartoonist and the other perceived by the reader depending on their background and experience. The first frame is depicted visually by the cartoonist through the metaphorical presentation of the vaccination and the corona situation in general. The pandemic is represented as a rainy day where protection is required- CORONA IS RAINDROPS. Here, CORONA is indicated through a symbol whose shape and colour has come to represent the virus. Indeed, the green colour signifies corona in many Saudi cartoons along with shaping it as a spike entity. The ability of the audience to understand this meaning is due to their exposure to an increasing number of Saudi cartoons which have used this symbol to address the pandemic as also evidenced by the many examples shown in the present thesis. The source 'RAINDROPS' is inferred from the image of rain falling out of the sky and is shown

through the line vectors presented by the movement lines. The vectors here signify the dynamicity as a meaning potential. The two curved vectors on both sides show the drops' changing direction because they have rebounded due to the firm surface they hit. The firm exterior is the umbrella that is labelled as the vaccine. Such a presentation indexes the importance of the vaccination in protecting citizens from catching the virus; it works as a shelter that safeguards against infection. Such a meaning potential is also strengthened by other added semiotic resources- colour; the dark green colour of the umbrella indexes immunity as inferred from the Tawakkalna<sup>44</sup> app, the official COVID-19 application in Saudi Arabia. This metaphorical frame presented in the cartoon opposes the given frame in the readers' mind, that the vaccine acts from within a person's body rather than being an external accessory that one carries in their hand like an umbrella.

Such opposition in the two frames about the work of the vaccine is solved through a frame-based resolution that the readers associate the similarity between the metaphorical analogy and the function of vaccine to be protection. Such resolution is also supported by the Saudi man's facial expression in the cartoon indexes the meaning potential of reassurance and optimism due to being protected by the vaccination. This is also supported by the bright colour of the background, as brightness is associated with optimism, while dark colours connote pessimism. Thus, the satisfied facial expression and the bright colours indicate a positive feeling towards the vaccination as being a protection tool that is used to be protected from COVID-19.

In this pairing, it can be noticed that the incongruity is presented through an opposition between the presented frame in the cartoon and the one that is already stored or emerged in the mind of the readers. Another presented frame solves such incongruity by, for example, showing the potential similarity between the opposing frames. The cartoonists within this type are more confident with their presentation as they oppose the common ideologies and sense that the

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<sup>44</sup> The readers experience this meaning potential due to their previous exposure and knowledge of the Tawakkalna application, as they can make an association with the given codes in the app. The app's main screen includes a coloured box identifies a person's health status. Six different colours in the box index different meanings, from which the cartoon's audience are able to infer the green colour's meaning potential. The light green colour means no record of infection, dark green refers to an immune status where all doses of the vaccination have been taken, orange means exposed to the virus, and brown confirms that the person has been infected. Moreover, blue and purple identify those individuals who have arrived from abroad; the former presents countries with a low infection rate (A), and the latter refers to the high infected countries (B). Therefore, in cartoon in Figure 6.2, the umbrella's dark green colour indexes the person's immunity status due to the vaccine.

Saudi community holds. Therefore, humour in this pairing is based mainly on the cognitive function and the ability of the readers to interpret the given frame and solve it based on the given experience and knowledge. Within this pairing- explicitly based on the incongruity- the metaphor as a rhetorical figure plays an essential role in creating the humorous frame in the cartoon. However, this humour technique- metaphor- is not the only form that occurs with this type of incongruity, which needs more investigation to see other occurrences of humour forms within such incongruity- presented in Section 6.4.2.4.

## 2 – Writing–Image Incongruity and Implication-Based Resolution

In this classification, the incongruity is clearly presented using both the image and writing presentations in the cartoons. The resolution of such an incongruity is usually inferred from the whole context, with particular emphasis on the hints provided by the cartoonists. The following cartoon in Figure 6.3 is an example of such a classification.



Figure 6.3: Education

The cartoon shows two adults, a male and a female, carrying the word 'education' while a boy is lying down looking into his mobile phone. Here, the two parents and a child are indicative of the Saudi nuclear family, while the resource of dress that the family members wear are typical of traditional Saudi attire.

The humour in this cartoon stems from the fact that the writing–image incongruity is presented alongside the implication-based resolution. At the surface-level, the word education is represented as an image, seen in the way it is portrayed as a heavy object carried by the two characters as indexed by the vectors around their two hands. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals that it is treated more as writing, with the opposition being based on the cartoonist's choice of Arabic calligraphy. The word 'education' itself has been written in the Reqaa style, where the



dots are connected in the form of a dash, as opposed to the Naskh style, which involves two clear dots (e.g., ت). The use of this Reqaa calligraphy style helps us to understand the opposition where the cartoonist has positioned the mobile phone (image mode) in place of the dots of the letter Yā' (ي) instead of the actual dots (-) presented in the written mode, as in the case of the letter Tā' (ت).

The incongruity, illustrated in the use of the mobile phone in place of the dots is, in this case, solved by the implication-based resolution. The reader comprehends the meaning from the hints provided in the cartoon, as the mobile indexes the meaning potential of online education, whereas parents carrying the word indexes their responsibility and monitoring role in the education process. Such a role is heavy as indexed by the parents' facial expression, body posture (curved legs) and the pictorial runes-triangle lines- shown around the characters as they struggle to carry 'education'. Conversely, the boy is relaxed as he uses his mobile phone. The implication for the resolution would be easily made by readers at the time when the cartoon was published, given that Saudi was in the second semester of online schooling, when parents were feeling the exhaustion of this new role. Thus, the resolution of the given incongruity raises the significance of online education and the role of parents and their children in the process.

In this pairing, the incongruity occurred between the image and writing mode in the cartoon, which signifies the importance of the multimodality in creating humour. Solving such incongruity is based on the given hints that are presented in the both modes- image and writing and associate that with the publication date of the cartoons. Within the presented incongruity-writing-image incongruity, the exaggeration as a humour form is used by exaggerating the size of the words and the facial and body postures of the characters. However, as illustrated above, the presented humour form in the exemplified pairing is not exclusively associated with the given incongruity. The explanation of the pairing helps the readers to understand how the presented incongruity (writing-image), and resolution (implication-based) are identified in the Saudi cartoons and the possibility of the use of the humour forms beside the exaggeration.

### 3 – Image-Based Incongruity and Image-Based Resolution

The incongruity and resolution in this taxonomy are both based on the image mode<sup>45</sup>. The following cartoon in Figure 6.4 is an example of such a classification.



Figure 6.4: Coexisting with corona.....

The cartoon shows a married couple- Earth and corona- walking in the aisle and followed by a flower boy and a flower girl and having the doctor as a guest. The image-based opposition occurs between the metaphorical presentation of Earth as a groom (EARTH IS GROOM) opposing the visual depiction of COVID-19 as a bride (CORONA IS BRIDE)<sup>46</sup>. Earth as a groom is indexed by the tuxedo and the whole depiction of the marriage. The other character drawn arm-in-arm with the Earth is corona. The colour indexes such a meaning potential as the cartoonist Ramsi always presents corona in the purple colour<sup>47</sup>. Thus, assuming the readers

<sup>45</sup> In this cartoon, there are five different incongruity-resolution classifications; however, one is presented here that has the incongruity and its resolution based on the image mode. The other four are as follows: The cartoon presents a marriage ceremony between the Earth and COVID-19, which is incongruous with the given frame in the readers' mind as a union between two humans, forming frame-based incongruity. This incongruity is resolved by the written statement "coexisting with corona," which suggests that the marriage is a metaphor for the Earth's attempt to coexist with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, such an interpretation can be opposed to forming another classification, as the written statement is the one that carries the incongruity. The written statement "coexisting with corona" is the source of the incongruity. The incongruity lies between the statement's literal meaning, which is dealing effectively with COVID-19 by following preventive measures while returning to everyday life, and the visual image of marriage, which represents coexisting. This incongruity creates writing-image incongruity, which is resolved by implication-based resolution. The reader infers that the relationship between the Earth and COVID-19 is a long-term commitment because a vaccine has not been developed and people must learn to live with the virus. The other two incongruities are more specific to the characters in the cartoon and their opposite real-life counterparts, creating frame-based incongruities. These incongruities are resolved by the hints in the cartoon that COVID-19 is dominant (in control) while the Earth is submissive during the phase of vaccine rollout and return back to everyday life, creating implication-based resolution.

<sup>46</sup> Although the Earth is feminine from the Arabic linguistic perspective, in all the analysed data, it is visually personified as masculine based on the clothing and body features used. COVID-19, on the other hand, carries the masculine subject in the Arabic linguistics and is presented as masculine in all the analysed data. However, in this cartoon, the cartoonist depicts COVID-19 as a feminine creature to convey the message that it is controlling the Earth, like a woman who controls a man in a marriage relationship.

<sup>47</sup> Compared with the other cartoonists, Ramsi is the only cartoonist who colours the creature that represents corona purple or pink; others present it in shades of green.

have previous exposure to Ramsi's work, they can easily infer that this monster-like purple entity is corona. The five presented stings (four on the head and one in place of the nose) also index the meaning potential of corona, as most cartoonists present the stings as a main feature of the virus, as shown in many given examples across this thesis. In this cartoon, corona has been personified as a bride; a long dress and a tiara index this meaning potential. The metaphorical presentation of them as a couple is also indexed by marriage as the main theme in the cartoon connoted by the handcuffs, the couple walking down the aisle, the flower girl and boy, and the guests behind them. The handcuffs here are used to signify the wedding rings, and while the handcuffs usually lead to an actual jail, the rings lead to the "marriage cage". The common theme across both metaphorical depictions is the idea that freedom has been lost. The "couple" is positioned walking down the aisle followed by the two-flower kids (a boy and a girl). Here, the flower boy and the girl attending the wedding ceremony are represented as school students as indexed by the school uniforms. Those students metonymically stand for children's schools that are taking measures to enable co-habitation as indexed by the boy has sanitiser, and the girl has cleaning paper. Furthermore, the presence of the doctor as a wedding guest supports the meaning potential of marriage. The doctor here appears to be encouraging this marriage union as indexed by the movement lines around his hands that signify clapping. The doctor here metonymically stands for the Health Ministry and its supportive reaction toward such coexisting as it encourages people to return to practising their normal life. In general, the whole presentation shows that people have now accepted that corona is just a part of our daily lives and that the different sectors of the community, i.e. health and school children, have come together to "bless" this union.

The incongruity presented in this cartoon is solved based on the image. The two resource modes – the posture and facial expressions of the characters – help us as readers to evaluate who has the power in this marital relationship. The determined eyes and tough facial expression of the bride, along with the hand position placed above the Earth's arm, demonstrate her power over the groom, supported by the handcuffs. The bride is the one that forces such a marriage and this meaning potential is indexed by the ugly presentation of the bride, including the evil facial expression and the pirate's peg leg. On the other hand, the groom is presented differently compared to the bride. The groom, the Earth, has been drawn with a hunched back, indicating his weakness, and the pictorial run-sweat droplets on his head signify his nervousness about the relationship. Such presentation is based on the gender stereotyping and ideology as those men feeling trapped by women into a marriage.

This pairing illustrates that the incongruity and resolution are based mainly on the image mode. The incongruity here compared the visual presentation of the two identities based on the two metaphorical presentations. The incongruity here has also been solved in the image mode by presenting the reason for such a relation. This pairing is rare in its presentation, as shown in Table 4.4. However, explaining this pair helps the readers to know how incongruity and resolution can be presented in the image mode despite the existence of the writing mode in multimodal cartoons. Moreover, the illustration of the image-based incongruity helps the readers understand how the presented incongruity strongly relates to the humour from metaphor and exaggeration, explained further in the following section.

#### 4 – Writing-Based Incongruity and Writing-Based Resolution

Like the above classification, this taxonomy is based on one mode to create both incongruity and resolution. Within this classification, both incongruity and resolution are based on writing. The following cartoon in Figure 6.5 is one of the two examples found in the data.



Figure 6.5: The mother (the character on the right): Come on girl get on *al-minaṣṣah* [the platform]. Don't miss attending!!

The daughter (the character on the left): Ya salam ... mum, can you believe that the word *al-minaṣṣah* reminds me of wedding parties!! We surely miss them!!

The cartoon presents a conversation between a mother and daughter about the educational platform (i.e. المنصة : *al-minaṣṣah*). In this cartoon, the humour is created based on writing-based incongruity alongside the writing-based resolution. Here, the incongruity is occurred with the daughter's answer of her mother's demand to get on *al-minaṣṣah* "Ya salam ... mum, can you believe that the word *al-minaṣṣah* reminds me of wedding parties!!" where the daughter made a memorial connection to the parties. Here, the opposition is created due to the verbal punning where the mother meant the educational platform and the daughter make a reference to the other meaning which is the wedding stage.

The incongruity presented in this cartoon is solved based on the writing in the punchline, “We surely miss them!!”, pointing to the fact they are not anymore allowed due to the pandemic situation. Therefore, the opposition and its solution in the writing mode form the compound of writing-based incongruity and writing-based resolution.

This section first introduced the variation in the number of incongruity-resolution classifications (Yus, 2016, 2021) found in the 61 analysed cartoons to range between one to five classifications for each cartoon. Moreover, a summary of the found taxonomies was presented in Table 6.3, founding that the taxonomies associated with the frame-based incongruity are the highest compared with the others. Furthermore, cartoonists rarely depend on the writing mode to create humour, leading the taxonomies that draw on this mode to be used the least by Saudi cartoonists. Finally, four taxonomies were illustrated in detail to show how the four presented incongruities and the four resolutions are deployed in the Saudi cartoons and how the presented incongruities raise the possibility of deploying specific humour forms. The choice of these classifications was based on the nature of their presentation to cover the three functions as being cognitive, multimodal and monomodal.

The following section introduces the different forms of humour used in the analysed cartoons and shows their relationship to the three independent variables underpinning this study, which include: the ten dominant themes (presented in Chapter 5), the eleven cartoonists (identified in Chapter4), and the four incongruity classifications discussed above.

#### **6.4 Forms of Humour**

This section will take the previous analysis further by investigating the specific humour forms, that were used as a vehicle to portray the humour in the Saudi COVID-19 cartoons.

Each cartoon has been examined extensively with an aim to extract and highlight all the potential humour forms that have been used to create humour. Eight humour forms have been discovered within the data set in this study and have been used by the Saudi cartoonists examined to create humour. These eight forms are divided between four humour types (jokes, puns, irony, and putdowns) and four humour techniques (comparison, exaggeration, metonymy, and metaphor). These eight humour forms differ in their frequency of occurrence, as shown in Table 6.4.

Humour Classifications	Humour Form	Frequency	Percentage
Humour Types	Jokes	25	56%
	Irony	11	24%
	Puns	7	16%
	Putdowns	2	4%
Humour Techniques	Exaggerations	58	33%
	Metonymies	54	31%
	Metaphors	43	24%
	Comparisons	21	12%

Table 6.4: The distribution of humour forms

According to Table 6.4, two humour classifications, humour types and humour techniques, are presented. Comparing the two, humour techniques are more presented than the humour types in the analysed data. The difference in their presentation could be attributed to the fact that the presented humour in the COVID-19 cartoons is classified as 'disaster humour'; therefore, using the direct humour types could not be considered appropriate, especially with the joke, discussing for example, the death cases in the world. However, the other humour techniques, which are rhetorical figures in nature are used in everyday representation, and also can be deployed to create humour that not necessary cause a bright laugh but a bitter smile or a sad grin. Therefore, using humour techniques with 'disaster humour' makes them more appropriate than using the humour types.

Within the humour types, joke occurs most in the analysed data, at 56%. Such a high percentage of this type is associated with Dynel's (2016) claim that the joke is the most presented type in the multimodal artefact. Irony and puns are the second and third most frequent humour techniques, respectively, with frequencies of 24% and 16%. Both techniques require linguistic and cultural knowledge to create, making cartoonists creative artists who manipulate words, phrases, or situations. This is illustrated in more detail in Sections 6.4.1.3 and 6.4.1.4. The least presented type in the analysed data is a putdown at 4%. Using the putdown less frequently than the other three humour types might be attributed to the Saudi cartoonist's preference to avoid offending the targets or readers by not exposing them to negative adjectives, whether in writing or in image mode. According to the humour techniques, exaggerations and metonymies are the ones that occur mostly in the analysed data, at 33% and 31%, respectively. The second most common humour technique used is metaphor, with a frequency of 24%. Those three humour techniques are used with relatively similar frequencies, suggesting that all three are essential characteristics to create such a genre- cartoon. On the other hand, comparison is the least

presented humour technique in the data, with a frequency of only 12%. Such a low presentation could be justified with the limited definition used in the thesis, which only allows for comparisons between two identities that belong to the same category. This is illustrated in more detail in Section 6.4.2.1.

In general, all humour forms vary in their occurrence across the cartoons. Indeed, in some cartoons, only one humour form is found, while in other cartoons, multiple humour forms are used. The coming subsections introduce each of the eight humour forms in detail and examine their relationship to the three independent variables underpinning this study: the eleven cartoonists, the ten dominant themes, and the four incongruity-resolution classifications.

The following two sub-sections introduce the humour types and the humour techniques in detail.

### **6.4.1 Humour Types**

This section introduces the four humour types found in the analysed data, including joke, putdown, pun and irony.

#### **6.4.1.1 Joke**

This humour type is found in 56% of the analysed data, forming a large portion of the cartoons. Unlike Dynel (2016), who argues that the image can stand alone and create jokes (see Section 3.3.1 of the Literature Review Chapter), this thesis argues that jokes are primarily created by the writing mode, with the image mode being added or having an equal contribution. Therefore, the two joke classifications by Dynel (2016) are considered in the analysis, adding a third one, showing that the image mode cannot stand alone but can play a supportive role in creating the joke. Thus, the three classifications used in the analysis are jokes that (1) are based solely on the writing mode, (2) depend mainly on the writing, but the image also adds to the humour, and (3) depend on the opposition that occurs between the writing and image modes. These three classifications are discussed in more detail below.

##### **6.4.1.1.1 Jokes Based Solely on the Writing Mode.**

In this classification, humour is created through a joke that is depicted solely in the writing mode. It rarely occurred in the data as only two examples were found, one of which is presented

below. The rareness of this form of humour supports the multimodality nature of cartoons and the general inclination towards using two modes together to create humour. An example of a joke created in the writing mode is presented in the Figure 6.6 below.

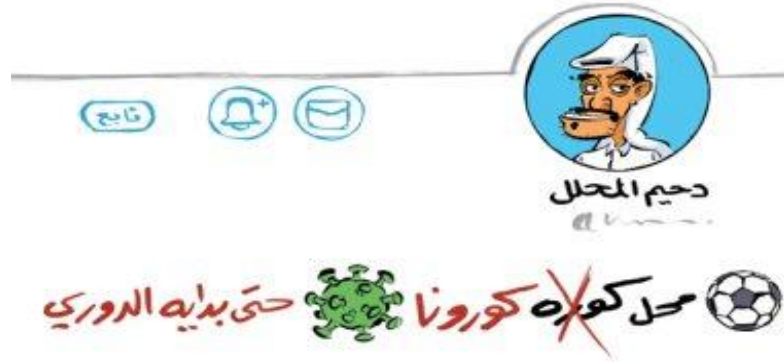


Figure 6.6: Dahaym analyst (the name under the personal picture)  
 –Football Corona analyst until the league starts (the bio)

In this cartoon, the setup is one that creates humour by changing the presented character’s job in the Twitter bio from a football analyst to a corona analyst. This opposition is resolved by the punchline- ‘until the league starts’. The joke is exclusively formed through the writing. Despite the existence of the two visual signs- corona and football-, they do not add a sense of humour as they are just a presentation of the existing identified words-corona and football. Therefore, writing is the only mode that creates humour.

#### 6.4.1.1.2 Jokes that Depend Mainly on the Writing, Although the Image Adds to the Humour.

This classification is based mainly on the writing mode, but the image mode also adds a sense of humour. This classification is found in six cartoons as shown in Figure 6.9 below and is thus considered the second most presented classification in the joke category. An example of this classification is presented in the following Figure 6.7:





Figure 6.7: Alo-Hi Munirah.. I have not driven for a few days, and I will go out now... the brake is on the right and the accelerator is on the left, right?

Here, the joke occurs mainly in the writing mode as the setup and punchline are presented in the writing mode: the setup ‘I have not driven for a few days, and I will go out now’ opposes the question in the punch line about the location of the two pedals ‘the brake is on the right and the accelerator is on the left, right?’. The image mode adds a sense of humour by pointing to the driver as a woman. Using a woman as the main target of the joke gives us a hint concerning the new political issues in Saudi Arabia regarding women driving there, where they have been allowed to drive since 2018, and driving is a new skill for them. Therefore, forgetting a new skill after staying home for a few days can be humorous, particularly if the target is a woman, not a man. The joke in this cartoon is based mainly on the writing, although the image references the target of such forgetting, and that complements this humorous element.

#### 6.4.1.1.3 Jokes that Depend on the Opposition Between the Writing and Image Modes

In this type of joke, a clear opposition occurs between the image and the writing modes that creates the humour. The cartoonists take advantage of the multimodality nature of the artefacts and create jokes by establishing a clear opposition between the two modes. It is the most presented classification type, with 17 cartoons as shown in Figure 6.9 below. An example of this type is presented in the following Figure 6.8.



Figure 6.8: I do not like the vaccine formula.

In this cartoon, the joke is created based on the opposition of the two modes- writing and image. The man on the right is questioning the vaccine formula and suggesting that he is not happy with the ingredients of the vaccine, as stated in the speech bubble: ‘I do not like the vaccine formula.’ This attitude is seen to be in stark opposition to his consumption of a lot of other substances whose ingredients are harmful, such as hookah, soft drinks and cigarettes. The hookah is lit up, as indicated by the smoke lines, and the pipe is being held in his left hand. The cans and packet of cigarettes on the floor suggest that the character is a heavy smoker and consumer of sugary soft drinks. Such opposition creates humour by highlighting the contradiction in the character expressing concerns about the vaccine being potentially harmful, while taking a lot of harmful substances.

After introducing the three joke classifications with examples, Figure 6.9 presents the frequency of their occurrence across the analysed data.

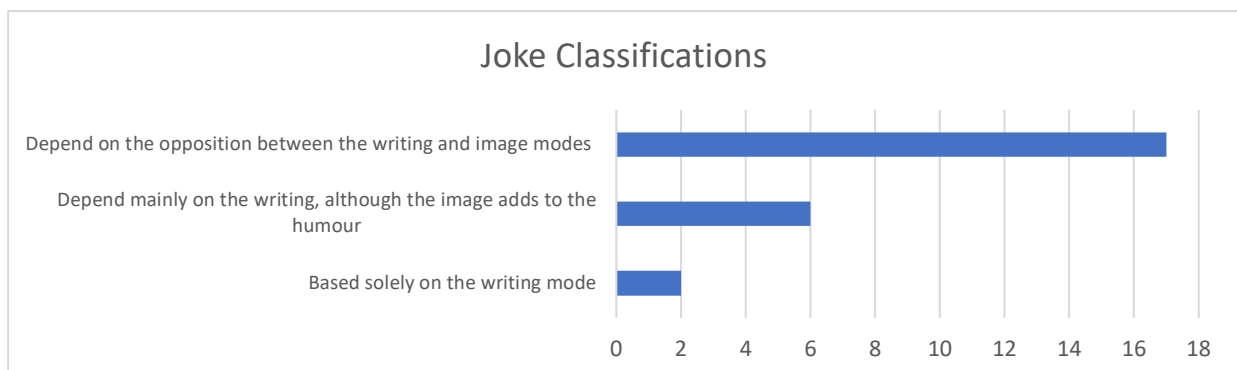


Figure 6.9: The distribution of the joke classifications

As Figure 6.9 illustrates, jokes with the opposition between the image and writing mode occur at a higher rate (64%) than the other two types. Such a high presentation of this format shows that the cartoonists take advantage of the multimodality of the cartoon artefact by deploying the two modes together to create the joke. Indeed, this technique of combining the two modes has been used the most by almost every Saudi cartoonist included in this study, as shown in Table 6.5. Only two cartoonists- Hulu and Hajad- appear not to use this combination. Moreover, two Saudi cartoonists, Almarzuqy and Almathy, predominantly use the joke classification that depends on the writing mode. On the other hand, half of the cartoonists use the classification of the joke that depend on the writing, but the image adds a sense of humour. However, Ahmad is the only cartoonist who does not deploy jokes in his cartoons, which might be attributed to his own style.

When cross-analysing the use of different joke formats specifically in relation to each of the ten dominant themes in the cartoons, it is clear that using the two modes in opposition is the most common technique to create humour, as shown in Table 6.6. However, just one theme shows a preference over the joke based on the opposition of the two modes; the international political discourse has used the classification of the joke based on the writing, but the image adds to the humour. Such a finding may indicate that the target of the joke in this theme needs to be presented in the image mode for maximum humorous impact. On the other hand, two of the themes do not create humour using the joke form at all, which includes virus transmission rate, and the impact on travel and tourism. Such a finding might be attributed to the fact that cartoonists presenting the former theme in illustrations that were published during the first stage of the pandemic may have felt it inappropriate or even socially unacceptable to make light of events due to the gravity of the situation. On the other hand, the theme of the impact on travel and tourism uses other humour forms (discussed later in the chapter) as it can be inferred that the cartoonists found it difficult to depict any related issues in the writing mode compared to using the image mode as stated by Machin and Mayer (2012) that "visual communication semiotic resources are used to communicate things that may be more difficult to express through language since image do not tend to have such fixed meaning" (p.31).

Cartoonists	Based solely on the writing mode	Depend mainly on the writing, although the image adds to the humour	Depend on the opposition between the writing and image modes
Jabbar	0	1	4
Alzaydy	0	0	4
Almarzuqy	1	1	1
Alrabee	0	1	2
Almathy	2	0	1
Alkamasy	0	0	2
Hajad	0	2	0
Alqamady	0	0	1
Ramsi	0	0	1
Hulu	0	1	0
Ahmad	0	0	0

Table 6.5: The joke classification in relation to the cartoonists

Theme	Based solely on the writing mode	Depend mainly on the writing, although the image adds to the humour	Depend on the opposition between the writing and image modes
The change in social relations	0	2	4
Public protection	1	1	4
The impact on education and work	1	1	2
Lockdown	1	1	2
The economic impact of COVID-19	0	0	2
Vaccine rollout	0	0	1
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	0	0	1
International political discourse	0	1	0
Virus transmission rate	0	0	0
The impact on travel and tourism	0	0	0

Table 6. 6: The joke classification in relation to the theme

As illustrated in Table 6.7, the three joke classifications correlate differently to each of Yus' incongruity types.

Incongruity-classifications	Based solely on the writing mode	Depend mainly on the writing, although the image adds to the humour	Depend on the opposition between the writing and image modes
Frame-based	0	0	0
Image-based	0	0	0
Writing-based	3	6	0
Writing-image	0	0	16

Table 6.7: The joke classification in relation to the incongruity classification

According to Table 6.7, two of the joke classifications, including being based only on the writing mode, or using the image to add a sense of humour, tend to employ the writing-based incongruity type. On the other hand, the other joke classification - based mainly on uniting both the writing and image modes- correlates strongly with the writing-image incongruity type. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a strong correlation between jokes as a humour form and the incongruity type, which is based mainly on the mode used to create humour.

The following sub-section discusses the second humour type, putdown.

#### 6.4.1.2 Putdown

Putdown as humour type occurs less frequently in the analysed data, as mentioned above in Table 6.4. Despite its low frequency, it is used in the form of a scathing and almost aggressive response towards negative beliefs or behaviours prevalent in society. The two cartoons that use putdown present it in different ways; one in the writing mode, while the other is demonstrated in the image mode. The following two cartoons in Figure 6.10 and Figure 6.11 are examples of such presentations.



Figure 6.10: Do not believe

In Figure 6.10, the putdown is shown in the image mode, as the cartoonist makes fun of the man on the left by depicting him as vacuous, connoted by the “empty head” resembling an open dustbin with a fly buzzing out. Such a presentation is intended to criticise the man who does not believe in the existence of the COVID-19 virus as indexed by his hand gesture and his statement in the speech bubble 'do not believe'. He is addressing the man on the right who is more cautious and wears a mask to protect himself from the virus. Thus, the cartoonist judges

these people who do not believe in corona as being empty-minded and unintelligent. The following cartoon in Figure 6.11 presents the written putdown.



Figure 6.11: When will you leave this mask, sanitiser, and obsession behind?! (the man on the right); When you leave carelessness and recklessness behind, ignorant!!! (the man on the left); sanitiser (the label on the bottle)

The man on the left puts down the man on the right by calling him ignorant. This is in response to the man on the right who asks him when he plans to stop wearing masks, using sanitisers and generally being obsessed with the virus. The man on the left becomes angry at such a question, as indexed by his facial expression and responds that he would do so when the other man stops being reckless and careless. Here, the putdown is employed in the writing mode to criticise people who do not follow precautionary measures, by referring to them as being ignorant. The two putdowns are used by the cartoonists -Alkamy and Almathy - in different ways to portray and comment on two different themes; social relations (rumour) and public protection, respectively. Importantly, the analysis has shown that the visual putdown occurs in the writing-image incongruity, while the verbal putdown correlates with the writing-based incongruity<sup>48</sup>. This illustrates an obvious correlation between the type of putdown and the incongruity classification used.

<sup>48</sup> The given incongruity-resolution classifications presented in this cartoon are four: (1) writing-image incongruity that is presented with the man asking the cautious person when he would leave wearing the mask, using the sanitiser and being obsessed that contradicts with his visual presentation as being infected by Covid-19, (2) writing-image incongruity that is presented with a given statement of the man on the right wondering about stopping using the sanitiser opposing in the sense of the man on the left of being lived inside it, (3) image-based incongruity based on the big picture of comparing the two characters visually and being different from each other based on following the precautionary measures. The last one presented with the given humour type is (4) writing-based incongruity, where the man on the left responds to the man on the right with another wondering about his ability to stop being reckless and careless instead of answering his question.

The following subsection discusses the third humour form found in Saudi cartoons; puns and their types.

### **6.4.1.3 Puns**

All three types of puns using different modes, including verbal pun, visual pun and multimodal pun (see Section 3.3.3) have appeared across the data with different frequency rates. In general, puns have a low frequency of occurrence as illustrated earlier in Table 6.4 above. This is confirmed by El-Din (2022), who concluded that Arab cartoonists rarely use this humour form, as it is prevalent in only about 2% of cartoons in comparison to other forms used more frequently.

Each of the three puns will be outlined below with an example to illustrate it.

#### **6.4.1.3.1 Verbal Pun**

In this type, Saudi cartoonists create the pun using mainly the writing mode, as the dual meaning of the word is usually presented in a conversational format; one conveying the literal meaning, and the other connoting the figurative meaning. This particular type of pun only appeared once in the analysed data, as exemplified by the cartoon in Figure 6.5, discussed earlier. In this cartoon, the verbal pun centres around the word (المنصة: *al-minaṣṣah*). This word is a pun since it has extended its meaning in the physical world metaphorically to the digital world. The extended meaning is communicated through the mum's words: 'come on girl get in *al-minaṣṣah* [the platform]. Do not miss the attendance!!'. This refers to the virtual education platform created by the Saudi government to facilitate online learning. The other meaning is constructed through the girl's response 'Ysalam ... mum can you believe that the word *al-minaṣṣah* reminds me of wedding parties!! We surely miss them!!'. The original meaning of *al-minaṣṣah* is a platform that guests dance on at wedding parties. Here, the cartoonist creates humour by presenting the two meanings of the word to create a bitter-sweet smile, that highlights how people are missing normal social activities before the pandemic.

#### **6.4.1.3.2 Visual Pun**

This pun is similar to the verbal pun discussed above in the sense that it depends on one mode to create two different meanings of the same word. However, in this type of pun, the two

meanings of the word are presented in the image mode. This type is shown in one cartoon in the analysed data, presented in Figure 6.12.



Figure 6.12: China adjusts the death rate...

In this cartoon (Figure 6.12), the numbers seen in the sack and the small shovel held by the figure are used as part of a visual pun, referring to their graphical iconicity. The numbers here are icons that indicate two meanings: quantity in the form of being abstract symbols, and actual objects that can be measured. The dominant reading of the cartoon portrays the second meaning, with numbers as material objects, shown by the man holding a shovel with numbers that he scooped out from the sack beside him. These numbers index the death rates inferred from the caption 'China adjusts the death rate', while the black colour of the numbers signifies death, as black is a universal symbol of death and mourning. The visual pun is deployed creatively by the cartoonist to simultaneously create humour and criticise the deceiving behaviour of the Chinese government, as the international community believes China is presenting a low death rate (numbers in the shovel) to cover up the actual high number of deaths (indicated by the numbers in the sack).

#### 6.4.1.3.3 Multimodal Pun

The pun that is created multimodally presents one meaning in the writing mode, while the other meaning is shown in the image mode. This type is presented with five cartoons. An example of such a type is illustrated in the following cartoon in Figure 6.13.





Figure 6.13: Social connections

In this cartoon (Figure 6.13), the word (روابط: *rawābit*) is a pun that has two meanings presented differently in two different modes. The first meaning is presented in the writing mode that is seen in the caption on the upper left, stating ‘social *rawābit* [connections]’. This indicates the abstract and literal meaning of social connections referring to the relations between people in society. The other meaning is conveyed more figurative, presented visually through the cables that connect individuals. Three semiotic resources are presented here: colour, different body postures and different facial expressions signifying the general sentiment towards this new “virtual” social connection. Thus, the first meaning portrayed in the cartoon is a literal one, while the second meaning depicted in the illustration presents a figurative usage of the word. As such, the use of the pun in this way shows a bitter type of humour by illustrating the unique nature of social connections that have been transformed in wake of the corona pandemic.

The differences between the three types of puns, as shown in the above examples, are in the way they use the writing and image modes to create humour. These three pun classifications differ in their occurrence across the analysed data. The multimodal pun is the most frequent with five cartoons, compared to the verbal and visual puns presented in one cartoon each. Such a difference supports the multimodality function of cartoons and the way Saudi cartoonists exploit two modes of the cartoons to present puns in a humorous way. Indeed, the usage of the multimodal pun is preferred by almost half of the Saudi cartoonists analysed in this study who use this humour form, including Jabbar, Almathy and Alkamasy, as portrayed in Table 6.8. The verbal pun is used by one cartoonist- Almarzuqy - showing his preference for using only the writing mode to deliver puns in his cartoons. On the other hand, Ramsi is the only cartoonist who uses two types – the visual and multimodal pun - indicating his reliance on the image

mode more, as he did not deploy any verbal pun despite his cartoons have a large presence within the data set in the study.

It can be concluded from the above discussion on puns that the cartoonists' creativity is the main driving force behind such a presentation, as they must possess sound linguistic skills to be able to create humour by manipulating words and phrases. Also, shared cultural knowledge is important both to the creation and interpretation of the meaning of the puns, which goes far beyond the literal lexical system (Heller, 1983 in Al-Masri, 2016). Moreover, it is clear that the use of puns as a main form of humour is related to the ten dominant themes in the cartoons as shown in Table 6.9. The table illustrates that the impact on education and work theme deploys more puns compared to the others. This could be attributed to the novelty of the corona situation and the fact that schooling transitioned from a face-to-face to a virtual learning system, which led to established concepts such as “platform” and “online education” gaining new meanings. In this regard, Saudi cartoonists have shown their creativity by manipulating these “new” terminologies, showing their ability to make use of the new-established repository.

Cartoonists	Verbal Pun	Visual Pun	Multimodal Pun
Jabbar	0	0	2
Alzaydy	0	0	0
Almarzuqy	1	0	0
Alrabee	0	0	0
Almathy	0	0	1
Alkamasy	0	0	1
Hajad	0	0	0
Alqamady	0	0	0
Ramsi	0	1	1
Hulu	0	0	0
Ahmad	0	0	0

Table 6.8: Cartoonists and the use of different pun types

Theme	Visual Pun	Verbal Pun	Multimodal Pun
The change in social relations	0	0	1
Public protection	0	0	0
The impact on education and work	0	1	2
Lockdown	0	0	1
The economic impact of COVID-19	0	0	1
Vaccine rollout	0	0	0
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	0	0	0
International political discourse	0	0	0
Virus transmission rate	1	0	0
The impact on travel and tourism	0	0	0

Table 6.9: Dominant cartoon themes and the types of puns used

Table 6.10 illustrates the relationship between the three pun types and the four incongruity classifications.

Incongruity-classifications	Multimodal Pun	Visual Pun	Verbal Pun
Frame-based	1	0	0
Writing-based	0	0	1
Image-based	0	1	0
Writing-image	6	0	0

Table 6.10: Incongruity classifications and the types of puns used

Table 6.10 shows that there is a strong correlation between the pun as a main humour form and the incongruity classifications. Here, the multimodal pun, which is the most frequent type in the data, occurs mainly with the writing-image incongruity, confirming the importance of the two modes together (image and writing) in creating the pun. Moreover, the frame-based incongruity also correlates with the multimodal pun, which uses the two modes to oppose the given frame already present in readers' minds. As the above table also illustrates, there is a strong and logical correlation between the visual pun with image-based incongruity, and the verbal pun with writing-based incongruity.

In general, Saudi cartoonists mainly depend on the image mode (presented in the visual pun and multimodal pun) to create the pun more than purely depending on the writing mode, and this illuminates the importance of the image mode in creating puns that make cartoons more amusing (Khir, 2012).

The following subsection discusses irony as the fourth humour form found in Saudi cartoons.

#### **6.4.1.4 Irony**

In the data, three different types of irony have been identified to include verbal, situational and dramatic (see Section 3.3.2). These different forms of irony are presented below with examples.

##### **6.4.1.4.1 Situational Irony**

This is the most common irony type, where Saudi cartoonists use it to show that what actually happens often opposes what is expected to occur. The two modes here are used together to portray this ironic presentation; what is expected is usually shown in the writing mode, while what is actually happening is shown in the image mode. It is found with eight cartoons that the following cartoon in Figure 6.14 is an example of such irony.



Figure 6.14: You were in the controversial series (presenter in the television)  
Most viewers (the statement of the chair)

In this cartoon (in Figure 6.14), the humour occurs due to the use of situational irony. Here, the speech bubble coming from the presenter in the television set states how the drama series just broadcast was controversial, implying that it is a popular series that attracts a lot of audience attention and triggers a lot of reactions. However, the visual mode employed in the cartoon presents the opposite of what is expected- which is a sense of interest in this “controversial” and engaging drama. In fact, extreme boredom is portrayed through the deep sleep of the man who is reclined on the armchair with his legs resting on the table. This is also indexed by the onomatopoeic representation of the snoring “Zzz” coming from his mouth, along with the modal resources, including his facial expression (closed eyes) and body posture (lying down). The man’s reaction creates the situational irony as it contrasts with the expectations set up by the presenter’s statement.

#### 6.4.1.4.2 Dramatic Irony

This insinuates that readers know something that the main characters in the artefact do not know. This kind of irony was found in two cartoons where a character is portrayed as having COVID-19 as a hidden infection that the main characters in the artefact do not know about. Such a use of dramatic irony creates humour by emphasising the oblivious character’s false beliefs and reprehensible behaviour. An example of this type is presented in the cartoon in Figure 6.11. In this cartoon, the man on the right criticises the man on the left for using protective measures, specifically masks and sanitisers. He describes this as obsessive compulsive behaviour. The dramatic irony is presented through the visual signs indicating his own infection, such as the spotty rash all over his body and the green virus germs that have attached themselves to his clothes. His infection is clearly visual to the audience, who know about his health status and his unrighteousness to judge others who follow the rules. As such,

dramatic irony here is used as the audience know something that the main characters in the cartoon do not.

#### 6.4.1.4.3 Verbal Irony

This depends on an overt opposition between an uttered statement and the speaker's true intention. This kind of irony is presented in just one example in the analysed data, as seen in the below cartoon in Figure 6.15.



Figure 6.15: Come I will teach you (mum on the right)  
Teach me from a distance (boy on the left)

In this cartoon (in Figure 6.15), the mother utters the following command in Arabic: “come, I will teach you,” showing her well to help her son with his lessons, presented with studying environment as indexed with the book, cup, and pencil. However, the real meaning is presented in the image mode through the slipper behind her back which shows that she intends to discipline her child. This irony highlights the contrasting nature of her seemingly friendly invitation and her actual intention to discipline.

These three different irony types have occurred with different frequency rates across the cartoons, as shown in Figure 6.16.

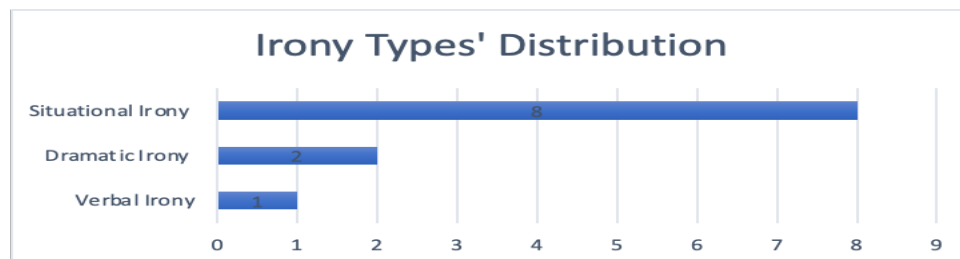


Figure 6.16: Distribution of the irony types

According to Figure 6.16, situational irony has been used more often than the other two types, with a frequency of 73%. The cartoonists here creatively use the two modes, image and writing, to show ironic presentations of abnormal and unexpected behaviours that oppose normal behaviour or reactions in certain situations. Such a presentation supports Sevenois’s (2021) conclusion that multimodality helps the artefacts’ creators be more creative in the presentation of their themes and overall message. Despite dramatic irony being the second most presented form at 18%, this is considered an unusual finding because this type of irony has not been found in many studies that investigate multimodal artefacts, including memes (Lestari, 2019; Zuhdah, 2021) and cartoons (Al-Hindawi & Abdulazeez, 2015; Yanti & Fitri, 2018). The absence of dramatic irony in these genres could be due to the fact that it is more often found in the narrative presentation as in the case of ‘a novel or story’ (Lestari, 2019, p.120). The least presented irony type in the Saudi cartoons is verbal irony, with a frequency of 9%<sup>49</sup>, which is no surprise as other verbal humour types tend to have a low frequency in cartoons, as cartoonists rely more on the image or the multimodality function.

In addition, it can be noticed that there is a strong preference amongst all the cartoonists to use irony, (Table 6.11), as half of them have used irony in the analysed cartoons. However, some cartoonists prefer using this humour form more than others, as in the case of Jabbar who uses irony more than twice as much as Ramsi, Alzaydy, Almathy, and Alqamady. Moreover, some cartoonists show preference in using specific type than the other, more specifically, Jabbar and Ramsi use situational irony more than the other cartoonists, and Jabbar is the only cartoonist to use verbal irony. Moreover, dramatic irony has been deployed by just two cartoonists: Alzaydy and Almathy. In relation to the ten dominant themes, irony has been used across most of them, as illustrated in Table 6.12, except for the economic impact of COVID-19, virus transmission rate, and the impact on travel and tourism. The absence of irony here is not related to a specific reason that is inherent to these three themes, but rather, it is attributed more to the cartoonists’ preference (or not) in using irony to create humour in the cartoon.

Cartoonists	Situational Irony	Dramatic Irony	Verbal Irony
Jabbar	3	0	1
Alzaydy	1	1	0
Almarzuqy	0	0	0
Alrabee	0	0	0
Almathy	1	1	0

<sup>49</sup> Despite being called verbal irony, it cannot be ignored the vital role of the image in giving hints about this genre- irony- like the other presented types- dramatic and situational irony.

Alkamasy	0	0	0
Hajad	0	0	0
Alqamady	1	0	0
Ramsi	2	0	0
Hulu	0	0	0
Ahmad	0	0	0

Table 6.11: Cartoonists using the different irony types

Theme	Situational Irony	Dramatic Irony	Verbal Irony
The change in social relations	2	1	0
Public protection	1	1	0
The impact on education and work	0	0	1
Lockdown	2	0	0
The economic impact of COVID-19	0	0	0
Vaccine rollout	1	0	0
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	1	0	0
International political discourse	1	0	0
Virus transmission rate	0	0	0
The impact on travel and tourism	0	0	0

Table 6.12: The ten dominant cartoon themes and irony types

Importantly, despite their low rate of occurrence, the three irony types have a logical correlation with the four incongruity classifications, as presented in Table 6.13.

Incongruity classifications	Situational Irony	Dramatic Irony	Verbal Irony
Frame-based	2	0	0
Writing-based	0	0	0
Image-based	5	0	0
Writing-image	3	2	1

Table 6.13: Incongruity classifications and irony types

According to Table 6.13, verbal irony is deployed with writing-image incongruity, as the writing mode conveys the untrue intention of the speaker that is clearly presented in the image mode. The cartoonist with this ironic type based on the modality of the cartoon to present the ironic sense of the written statement that it could not be identified as so if the image does not illustrate the opposite. Dramatic irony is used mainly with the writing-image incongruity where the writing mode illustrates the main character's beliefs, while the image presents the consequences of such beliefs that only the reader has an insight into, leaving the main character oblivious. Situational irony has been found across the largest number of incongruities, including frame-based, image-based, and writing-image incongruities. As this irony form is situational, the writing mode is not enough to express the situation in the cartoons, which

supports the importance of the image mode to this type of irony like the others- verbal and dramatic.

The following main sub-section discusses the humour techniques found in the Saudi cartoons.

## **6.4.2 Humour Techniques**

This section discusses the four main techniques of humour found in the data: comparison, exaggeration, metaphor, and metonymy.

### **6.4.2.1 Comparison**

Comparison as a humour form has been used by the Saudi cartoonists analysed, although within the context of this research, there has been an attempt to narrow its definition beyond the wide scope it has often been confined to within the literature, as mentioned in Section 3.3.11. These discussions have centred around the significance of incongruity and metaphorical analogy as the two main criteria for identifying comparison. However, basing the analysis on these two proposed criteria would mean all the 61 cartoons would include comparison because all of them are based on incongruity. Also, most cartoons deploy metaphorical analogies, especially in presenting COVID-19 caricatures.

As a result, comparison within this research was approached more specifically as a humour form that illuminates the differences or similarities between two entities from the same category, such as two or more humans (personification), animals (zoomorphism), or objects. This definition has a similarity to the definition proposed by Alsadi and Howard (2021) in defining juxtaposition. Despite that the two – comparison and juxtaposition- share the same definition, in this thesis, the comparison would be based on explicit features, identifying four main resources: two panels, size, shape, and character roles. They are based on different modal resources used to portray similarities and differences. Examples of the comparison types and the modal resources they use are presented below.

#### **6.4.2.1.1 Size**

This comparison criterion defines humour mainly in relation to the visual resource of size – which shows the difference between two presented characters. The modal resource size portrays the intended entity either as big or small compared to the other presented entities. This



modal resource presents different meaning potentials related to the cartoonist's message, including power, superiority, evilness, and quantity. The size here is based mostly with the juxtaposed metaphors identified in Alsadi and Howard's (2021) work. An example of this type of comparison is presented in Figure 6.17 below:

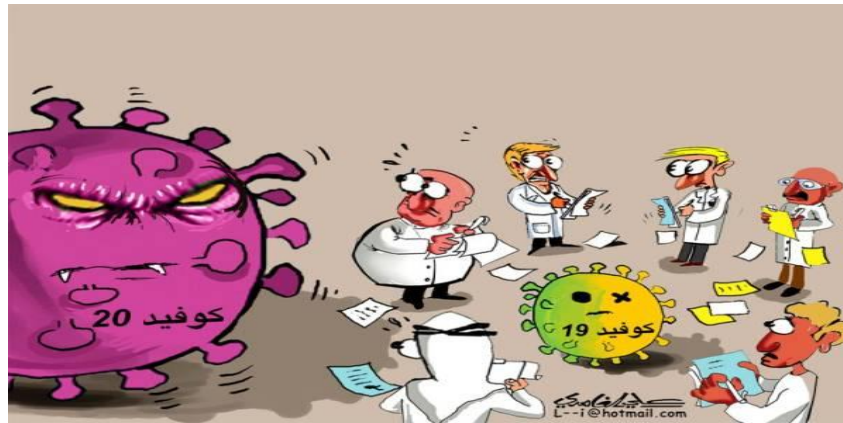


Figure 6.17: COVID-19 (the creature on the right); COVID- 20 (the creature on the left)

In Figure 6.17, the cartoon compares two types of coronavirus – COVID-19 and COVID-20 - with the comparison here being based on the modal resource of size. These two identities identified by the shared metaphor COVID IS A MONSTER. However, the size difference between the COVID-19 and COVID-20 is used to present danger as a meaning potential. Such a meaning is also supported by other modal resources, including shape, colour, and the facial expression of the two presented caricatures. Such a presentation shows that COVID-20 is more dangerous than COVID-19, which creates humour by pointing out that scientific studies focusing on the small virus are worthless as a new, much larger virus has emerged.

#### 6.4.2.1.2 Two-Panels

This comparison is established through the presentation of two panels that create different scenarios. The creation of the panel depends on framing as a modal resource, using either a vertical or horizontal presentation as identified by the visible or invisible lines. The two-panel classification shows two different situations presented before and during the pandemic and that is similar to juxtaposed situation mentioned in Alsadi and Howard's (2021) work. An example of this kind of comparison is shown in the following cartoon in Figure 6.18:

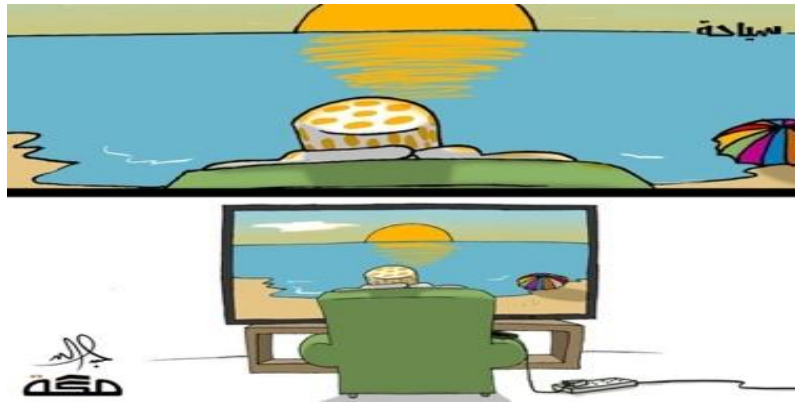


Figure 6.18: Tourism

This cartoon (Figure 6.18) presents the ideal concept of tourism (top panel) compared with the current reality (bottom panel). The ideal panel depicts a man indexed by ‘tāqyḥ’ - a man’s hat - sitting on a chair facing the beach, which indicates an ideal summer vacation. This panel is directly compared to the reality (bottom panel) that has hit Saudi society due to lockdowns, where vacations are now spent in front of the TV. This comparison uses the top - bottom layout orientation to create ideal vs real meanings, as Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). It is deployed by the cartoonist to demonstrate how the concept of tourism has changed due to lockdown.

#### 6.4.2.1.3 The Role of the Characters

This comparison criterion creates humour by presenting characters' different roles within the cartoons. Cartoonists discussing issues related to the pandemic present these roles from a humorous perspective using either the writing or image mode. The most commonly used modal resources in the image mode are facial expressions and the body posture of the presented characters, while words and syntax are the most widely used modal resource in the written mode. The two compared roles portrayed in the cartoons are mostly presented through the dualities of active versus passive, dominant versus subordinate, and positive versus negative unlike Alsadi and Howard (2021), who limit the character's role to gender in the juxtaposed metaphor. The following example in Figure 6.19 presents such a role through the duality of dominant versus subordinate.



Figure 6.19: COVID-19

In this cartoon (Figure 6.19), the role of the two characters is mainly presented through the modal resource, body posture, where Covid-19 is metaphorically presented as a bull -COVID-19 IS AN BULL. Moreover, the bull takes on the role of a matador, as indicated by its posture, highly focused facial expression, and the red cape it is holding, which is conventionally used in bullfighting to anger the bull and make it charge. In this case, the zoomorphic COVID-19 bull is in a standoff with the personified Earth that takes on the role of the “bull” by responding to the movement of the cape as identified by Earth’s body posture. Here, the cartoonist presents the role of the two through a duality where COVID-19 is dominant and the Earth is subordinate, yet achieves this by switching around conventional roles that are the norm within bullfighting. Whereas the bull is usually the subordinate entity being controlled by the matador in the standoff, here the roles are reversed with the bull taking on the role of the dominant one as the fighter. On the other hand, the humanified Earth has been depicted as the subordinate one, ultimately being controlled by the animal. The humour here depends on the opposition between the Earth (human) and COVID-19 (animal), as the two have been depicted as occupying roles that oppose reality.

#### 6.4.2.1.4 Shape

In this category, two similar entities are compared using different modal resources, including colour and size. Cartoonists often use shape to allude sayings and myths in their cartoons, creating juxtaposed metaphors that are both humorous and thought-provoking. In the following cartoon in Figure 6.20, as an example, the comparison takes place in relation to the shape of two animals.



Figure 6.20: Corona (the cheetah) Vaccine (the tortoise)

This cartoon (Figure 6.20) compares two animals, a cheetah and a tortoise, by presenting them in different zoomorphed shapes. Using comparison in this cartoon creates humour by showing the differences in the two presented animals, which the cartoonist intends to allude to a comparison between vaccines and COVID-19. Through captions on the animals, the cheetah is identified as COVID-19, and the tortoise as the vaccine. By drawing on readers' general knowledge, the cartoonist here is building the intended message on the awareness that a cheetah is a fast animal, whereas a tortoise is a slow one. The same concepts of quick versus slow can be applied to COVID-19 and vaccines, respectively. As such, the cartoonist deploys this comparison to demonstrate how the vaccine has slowly progressed compared with the rapid spread of the virus. This cartoon was actually published in the early phase of the pandemic when no vaccine had been proposed in the medical field. Therefore, the comparison indicates the anxiousness and anger of the cartoonist towards the slow progress of vaccines.

The frequency by which the four comparison types appear in the data is presented in Figure 6.21

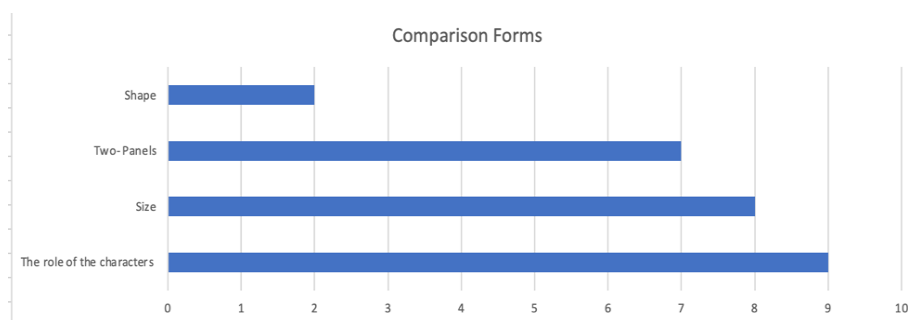


Figure 6.21: The frequency of distribution of the comparison forms

As shown in Figure 6.21, the four presented comparison types differ in their number of occurrences. The most frequently occurring comparison forms in the cartoons are the role of the characters, size, and two panels forming nine, eight and seven, respectively. On the other hand, shape is the least frequently used as it has been deployed in two cartoons. The variation in the presentation of the different comparison classifications could be attributed both to the style of the cartoonists and the dominant cartoon themes. Indeed, it can be seen that the role of the two characters is the most widely used comparison classification by half of cartoonists, although Al Kamasy, Ramsi and Jabbar are the three cartoonists who use this form the most. This comparison classification is also shown to be more closely related to the three themes: the change in social relations, lockdown, and the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19. The first theme typically presents the active and passive roles of people in the social context. The second theme presents the characters as either positive or negative towards the lockdown measure. However, the latter theme presents the roles of the two main characters, COVID-19 and Earth in the action of fighting. Size, as the second most used comparison classification, is employed by four cartoonists, Alrabee, Hajad, Ramsi and Alqamady, who deal with different themes. However, the theme that mostly uses size as a comparison classification is the economic impact of COVID-19. This is because the negative consequences of the pandemic on the economy can be metaphorically signified by size to represent the quantity of losses. Moreover, the size in this theme also can be used to represent power.

The two-panel classification has been used as a comparison form by five cartoonists, including Ramsi, Alrabee, Jabbar, Ahmad, and Alqamady. These cartoonists use the two-panel format with a low frequency compared with their presentation of the cartoons in a one-panel format. Nevertheless, this comparison classification is mainly used to portray four themes: international political discourse, lockdown, transmission rates and the economic impact of COVID-19. Lockdown and the economic impact of COVID-19 present this comparison classification more than twice as much as international political discourse and virus transmission rates. The two panels' classification within the lockdown theme shows the ideal vs. real presentation and a choice of two different situations. On the other hand, all the presentation of this comparison within the other three themes is presented in the format of the given-new meaning (before vs. after). Interestingly, their presentation of such a meaning differed depending on the theme. With the economic impact of COVID-19, the old information is often presented on the left side, while the new information is presented on the right side of the cartoon. This supports the claim made by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) that the meaning

of any artefact can be conveyed through the distribution of space; left presents the given information while the right shows the new information. However, the opposite is true for cartoons about the virus transmission rate. In this case, the old information is presented on the right side of the cartoon, while the new information is presented on the left side, and that what Hayik' (2011) found in his study where the meaning of space distribution in Arabic is different from that in English artefact, due to the fact that Arabic is written from right to left. Contrary to the two previously mentioned themes, a cartoon about the international political discourse theme shows a different way of presenting given-new information. Instead of using a right-left distribution, top-bottom distribution is used to carry the same meaning: the new information is presented at the top of the cartoon, while the given information is presented at the bottom. Therefore, the framing of the two panels can affect the presentation of given-new information, depending on the cartoonist's style and preference. However, due to the influence of the Arabic writing system, most Saudi readers are accustomed to the second framing order. When cartoonists choose to arrange their panels differently, they often employ numeric numbering to avoid confusing readers. In general, Saudi cartoonists use two-panel cartoons to present three types of meaning: choices of two situations, given-new, and ideal-real.

The comparison classification that occurs least frequently – shape - is used by Alzaidy and Ramsi, who mainly discuss two different themes: the change in social relations and vaccine rollout, respectively. The low presentation of shape as a main comparison classification could be attributed to the fact that it is strongly tied to the cartoonists' overall thematic frame of choice, as both Alzaidy and Ramsi tend to rely on myth, which may be more fitting for this comparison type. Ramsi uses the shape comparison to compare the speed of the vaccine to COVID-19 based on the old folklore "The Tortoise and the Hare". On the other hand, Alzaidy uses shape comparison to show that the consequences of being exposed to COVID-19 news can make people see everything as being COVID-19, based on the old saying "If you think about something too much, you start to see it everywhere."

In general, most of the cartoonists, as shown in Table 6.14, deploy comparison as a humour technique, except for Almarzuqy and Hulu. This might be attributed to the few cartoons within the data set belonging to these two authors: Hulu has one cartoon, and Almarzuqy's has three cartoons. Moreover, Almarzuqy's cartoons do not depend on image-based incongruity, and as will be explained later (with the Table 6.16), there is a strong correlation between comparison as a humour form and the incongruity type used. Moreover, most of the themes, as shown in

Table 6.15, are depicted using different comparison forms, although one theme does not deploy comparison at all, which is the impact on education and work. A possible explanation for the nonexistence of this humour form with this theme is that the definition of comparison used in the thesis is based on having two entities from the same category, which is not found in the analysed data in relation to education and work. Generally, comparison is used to critique various issues and social groups that the cartoonists are concerned about. This aligns with the same conclusion of Issa (2016) who also stated that relations between positive and negative representations are shown clearly through comparison.

Cartoonists	Size	The Role of the Characters	Two-Panels	Shape
Jabbar	0	2	1	0
Alzaidy	0	0	0	1
Almarzuqy	0	0	0	0
Alrabee	3	1	1	0
Almathy	0	1	0	0
Alkamasy	0	2	0	0
Hajad	1	0	0	0
Alqamady	2	0	3	0
Ramsi	2	2	1	1
Hulu	0	0	0	0
Ahmad	0	1	1	0

Table 6.14: Cartoonists using the different forms of comparison

Theme	Size	The Role of the Characters	Two-Panels	Shape
The change in social relations	0	3	0	1
Public protection	0	1	0	0
The impact on education and work	0	0	0	0
Lockdown	0	2	2	0
The economic impact of COVID-19	3	1	3	0
Vaccine rollout	0	0	0	1
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	2	2	0	0
International political discourse	1	0	1	0
Virus transmission rate	1	0	1	0
The impact on travel and tourism	1	0	0	0

Table 6.15: The ten main cartoon themes in relation to comparison forms

The relationship between the four comparison classifications and the four incongruity classifications is presented in Table 6.16 below:

Incongruity classifications	Size	The Role of the Characters	Two-Panels	Shape
Frame-based	3	4	3	0
Writing-based	0	0	0	0
Image-based	8	8	5	2
Writing-image	0	0	0	0

Table 6.16: Incongruity classifications in relation to comparison forms

Table 6.16 presents the correlation between the four comparison forms and the four incongruity types. As can be seen, the three comparison forms - size, role of the characters, and two-panels tend to mainly depend on two incongruity types - frame-based and image-based. The other comparison form - shape - is used mainly in the image-based incongruity, which could be due to the low frequency rate of this comparison form within the analysed data and the fact that all the comparison types are predominantly found in the image-based incongruity. Moreover, it can be noticed that the comparison classifications do not occur with either writing-based or writing-image incongruities. The image mode, in general, allows a more obvious comparison to be made between two entities that can create humour for the readers.

The next sub-section discusses exaggeration as a second humour technique found in the analysed data.

#### 6.4.2.2 Exaggeration

Exaggeration is one of the main techniques used by Saudi cartoonists to create humour. This technique occurred in 58 out of 61 cartoons, meaning that only three cartoons have not utilised exaggeration. As the published cartoons exaggerated different situations during the pandemic, the two modes were exaggerated by the cartoonists to create humour. Different features in the two modes were identified, including facial expression, pictorial runes, size, body posture, caricature and number for the image mode and colour, font and style for writing mode<sup>50</sup>. All these mentioned features are not usually exaggerated in isolation, but are often combined as a group of two or more to jointly create humour. This means that exaggeration as a main form of humour can only be understood by taking a broad view, as humour is created depending on the whole unified presentation. This thesis is focused on how Saudi cartoonists use exaggeration in their work, specifically how they combine different exaggerated features to create humour.

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<sup>50</sup> In this thesis, all three sources, including font, colour and style in the writing mode, will be explained as a whole under the criterion writing due to its low frequencies in the analysed cartoons compared to the other sources in the image mode.



This is unlike of Alsadi and Howard's (2021) orientation in analysing exaggeration, as they focus more on the specific type of relationship between the two modes, image and writing, in creating exaggeration. Having more than one exaggerated feature in a single cartoon to create humour is significantly found in the analysed data; the following examples show such presentation. The first example is shown in Figure 6.22.



Figure 6.22: Twitter rumours.... (the statement top right)  
 'They say the vaccines are dangerous – I don't want to put myself at risk' (on the balloon).  
 Corona (the word on the left, identifying the green creature above the man's head)

This cartoon uses exaggeration to convey the main message of the cartoon in a humorous sense. The message is that the Saudi man, as indexed by his traditional clothes, is questioning the safety of the vaccine, identified by the statement in the speech bubble. This is despite him being infected by the virus himself as portrayed through three exaggerated features, which include:

#### 6.4.2.2.1 Caricature

It is defined as changing or distorting a person's feature or mannerism for comic effect; a technique often used to portray well-known political figures. However, caricature is often used with fictional characters based on personification or reverse personification. This draws on the definition of caricature provided by the Oxford Learner's Dictionary (n.d.) as "a description or presentation of a person or thing that makes them seem ridiculous by exaggerating some of their characteristics". Thus, any changing of a particular entity, such as personification or zoomorphism, is classified as a caricature. The most presented caricatures in the data, alongside political figures, are a personified COVID-19 character, and Earth. In cartoon Figure 6.22, the caricature is presented as a personified COVID-19 germ. Its physical features have been exaggerated and it is portrayed as having a happy facial expression, indicating that it is winning the battle with the person it has successfully infected. Portraying this caricature in this way,

and positioning it on the top of the man's head, creates humour by showing that although the man is afraid of taking the vaccine due to safety concerns, he has already been unknowingly infected by it. Having this caricature on his head is a metaphorical presentation of the literal traditional Saudi proverb 'the disease rides on you' meaning that it binds to the person and has a significant negative effect on them (sometimes without them knowing). Drawing the caricature here also makes the readers more visually aware with such kind of infection, not being seen or noticed by the infected people. The other two exaggerated features supported such a function are shown with the Saudi man's facial expression and body features- explained below.

#### **6.4.2.2.2 Facial Expressions**

Facial expressions are usually exaggerated in cartoons to portray different intense emotions, including fear, worry and anger. These emotions are shown by exaggerating characters' eye expressions and the shape of their mouth. The above cartoon portrays surprise by exaggerating the shape of the open mouth and wide eyes. Such a surprised facial expression is supported by the writing mode where the speech bubble demonstrates the man's questioning of the vaccine safety. Exaggerated facial expressions are one feature that create humour in this cartoon. The other exaggerated feature is physical features, as explained below.

#### **6.4.2.2.3 Physical Features**

It refers to an exaggerated feature that the cartoonist draws to transmit their humorous message. The exaggerated physical features are not exclusively presented in the shown caricature as explained above, but also presented with normal characters in the cartoons. Such exaggeration can be in the appearance of the character's physical features, or even in their posture that might be exaggerated to create humour. In cartoon (Figure 6.25) above, the exaggerated feature of the red nose helps communicate the humorous message by showing that the main character- the Saudi man- has been infected by COVID-19, with the swelled up red nose being a universal indicator of the flu virus.

The following cartoon (Figure 6.23) also deploys different exaggerated features that are used in a general sense to create humour.



Figure 6.23: The Ministry of Commerce “seizes a facility that stores large quantities of masks with the intent to sell them later” (the title in the middle); The law (the stick); Crisis traders (the man on the left)

This cartoon in Figure 6.23 presents different exaggerated features to convey the message of the cartoon. The message is that Saudi crisis traders, presented metonymically with the man on the left, are punished by Saudi authorities as indexed by the big man on the right. This punishment is a result of traders storing masks during the COVID-19 outbreak to create a shortage in the market, thus generating more demand, leading to them making more profits. This message is delivered in the cartoon by the writing mode and the exaggerated features presented in the image mode, including size difference between the two men, facial expression, and pictorial runes. These three exaggerated features are explained below:

#### 6.4.2.2.4 Size

The exaggeration of size can either make an entity larger or smaller than it naturally is. Such exaggeration of size by Saudi cartoonists is used to show the superiority or inferiority of the given entity. In this cartoon, the man on the right is exaggerated in size compared to the man on the left<sup>51</sup>. The difference in size shows the power of Saudi authorities over the traders. Additionally, the size of the stick refers to the huge punishment awaiting them, which is a fine of 3 million Saudi Riyals and a five-year prison sentence. Fining is indicated metaphorically

<sup>51</sup> Here, size has been counted as a feature of exaggeration and comparison because the cartoonist exaggerates the size of the man on the right to compare him with the other man on the left to highlight the power imbalance between them. However, there are other instances that the size has been deployed only as an exaggerated feature to show more humours presentation, for example, exaggerated the size of truck labelled as “loses of 2020” to show the large number of losses that occurred that year.

through the act of being beaten. This is portrayed using the pictorial runes around the head of the beaten man, as explained below.

#### 6.4.2.2.5 Pictorial Runes

These are exaggerated runes that cartoonists use to transmit their message. Saudi cartoonists in general depend heavily on this feature, although the type used in the data analysis is the emo-rune as it tends to correlate more with portraying emotions. Table 6.17 illustrates the emo-runes found in the analysed data:





Pictorial Runes	Description
Droplets (  )	Appear in the shape of sweat droplets that are usually drawn around a person's head
Spikes (  )	Circles or semi-circles made of straight lines. They are usually placed above or behind the character's head
Spirals (  )	Corkscrew-like flourishes that appear around a person's head or body
Stars (  )	The shape of stars that are usually combined with other lines (movement lines or a spiral) to indicate that a character is feeling dizzy

Table 6.17: Definitions of the different Pictorial Runes

The frequency of each rune's occurrences across the data is shown in Table 6.18:

Pictorial Runes	Number of occurrences
Droplets	10
Spirals	4
Stars	2
Spikes	2

Table 6.18: The distribution of the pictorial runes

The most frequently used of the pictorial runes, according to Table 6.18, are droplets, which are considered to be runes if they are drawn with exaggeration. Such exaggeration in the cartoon's illustration aims to portray different intense emotions, including fear, hunger, and worry, that “are experienced in some sort of a psychological or physical discomfort” (Tasić and Stamenković, 2017, p. 131). The second most commonly presented pictorial rune found in the analysed data is spiral lines, presented as tingle lines, either short or long. The feelings associated with the spiral lines are weakness resulting from hunger or fear, or sickness resulting from high fever. The least presented runes are stars and spikes. The former stars -connote dizziness as a meaning potential. The latter- spikes- transmit emotions like pain, confession, or surprise. All four pictorial runes are combined with two modal resources - facial expression

and body posture - to transmit the intended feelings and emotions of the characters, which helps to generate the overall sense of humour.

In cartoon (Figure 6.26), two pictorial runes are used to present the dominant feeling, including spikes and stars. The spikes present the pain the man is feeling due to being beaten on the head. This feeling is also associated with dizziness as indexed by the stars, which confirms the Saudi proverb “يشوف النجوم بعز الظهر” (he sees stars at the height of noon). On the metaphorical level, this proverb means that the punishment is so tough that the person sees stars – usually a night-time phenomenon - in bright sunlight. Such a meaning potential is supported by the light background tone of the cartoon indicating that it is early in the day. The feeling of pain, as shown through the two pictorial runes, correlates with the modal resource of the facial expression: crossed eyes and tingled mouth. Therefore, the exaggerated features create a comic presentation and thus help to deliver the reading in a humorous way.

Cartoon in Figure 6.24 below, presents a different kind of exaggeration that is used in the cartoon along with above mentioned features, namely writing. The following cartoon portrays an example of such an exaggerated feature.



Figure 6.24: Health awareness (the caricature on the right); Corona (the caricature on the left)

In this cartoon (Figure 6.24), the exaggerated feature- writing- is used to convey the importance of the health awareness in eradicating corona. The exaggerated feature is explained in more detail below.

#### 6.4.2.2.6 Writing

It takes place when different modal resources within the text are exaggerated by Saudi cartoonists, including font size, writing colour, and Arabic writing style (Reqaa and Naskh). In

the above cartoon, the exaggerated resources of colour and font size are applied. Here, the red colour and large size font index the importance of health awareness that are supported by the other two exaggerated features size and caricatures presented on the metaphorical presentations- HEALTH AWARENESS IS A GIANT MAN and COVID-19 IS A SMALL MONSTER. However, the use of red colour is confined to the written statement of the health awareness and not employed for the labelling of COVID-19, which is marked in black colour. This selective application of red colour underscores its significance, as it is commonly perceived as a colour that emphasizes importance, both in the Arabic system and globally.

The next cartoon in Figure 6.25 presents the final exaggerated feature- number.



Figure 6.25: Social distance

Humour in this cartoon (Figure 6.25) is created through the opposition between the sign on the floor that requests social distancing and people carelessly stepping on it. The violation is creatively presented by the cartoonist by exaggerating the number of characters and their feet. The use of number as a feature of exaggeration is explained below further.

#### **6.4.2.2.7 Number**

It refers to quantity meaning that the cartoonists create humour by violating the normal amount or number of an entity or situation in real life. This form of exaggeration is portrayed in cartoons through an unusually small or high quantity of objects or people, which opposes what it normally would be. More specifically, Saudi cartoonists often draw the same entity many times in a single illustration to transmit the meaning of abundance. In cartoon (Figure 6.25), exaggeration leads to humour by portraying the violation of social distancing rules by

presenting a huge number of people gathered in one place and ironically stepping on the social distancing sign.

After presenting all seven forms of exaggeration used in the cartoons with the given examples, we can conclude that exaggeration as a main humour form is usually presented by using a combination of exaggeration types in a single cartoon, and not just relying on one. Importantly, exaggeration is the main form of humour that characterises cartoons as a distinct genre in comparison to other kinds of illustrations. The differences between the seven exaggerated features in relation to their frequency of occurrence across the data is shown in Figure 6.26.

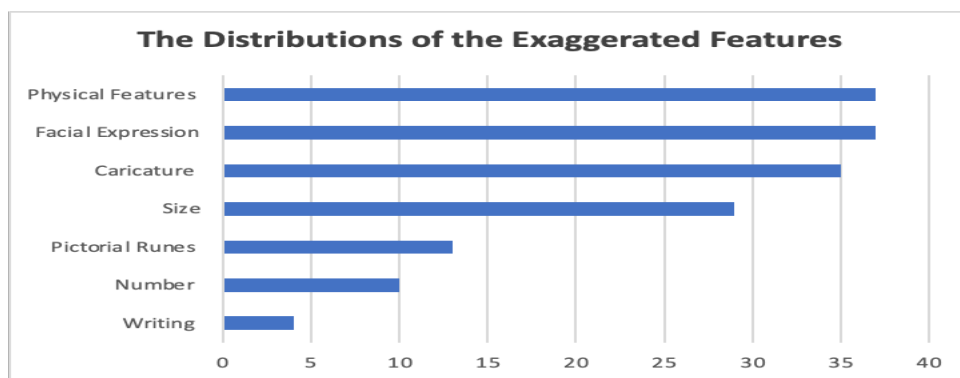


Figure 6.26: The distribution of the seven forms of exaggeration.

Figure 6.26 presents the seven exaggerated features used by Saudi cartoonists to create humour. It can be noticed that the three most frequently occurring forms, including caricature, physical features and facial expressions, are almost equal in presentation. In relation to caricature, this frequent occurrence might be attributed to the fact that in comparison to other forms it is inherently based on exaggeration, particularly in the use of facial expressions to show emotions, and physical features to portray identity, actions and power. However, exaggeration in relation to facial expressions and physical features is not exclusively associated with the caricature, as they have been deployed differently in various cartoons. The analysis has revealed that the different uses of the exaggeration in the cartoons is correlated to two main independent variables: the ten dominant themes and the cartoonists. As Table 6.20 illustrates, all three forms of exaggeration are used across all ten themes. Yet, despite their presence in mostly all the themes, they differ in their frequency of occurrence. Caricature is present in most of the themes, with half of the themes deploying this form with a high frequency, including public protection, the economic impact of COVID-19, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, virus transmission rate and the impact on travel and tourism. The

two most recurring caricatures in the cartoons are personified versions of COVID-19 and Earth. The former is usually presented as a person, animal or monster, while the latter is mainly portrayed as a person who stands for all nations worldwide.

One of the main reasons for using caricature as a form of exaggeration to depict COVID-19 is that its true physical identity is unseen by the naked eye. Importantly, whilst its physical appearance is unknown, its effects on health are very well acknowledged by citizens globally, which is what leads Saudi cartoonists to use their creativity to physically personify this virus. The chosen identity presentations of the virus change according to the time phase being portrayed, as discussed in Chapter 5. During the first phase of the spread of the virus, COVID-19 has been drawn as a strong devil caricature, while during the lockdown, it has been presented mostly as a weak and subordinate caricature. The two modal resources, facial expression and physical features, have been used by the cartoonists to present COVID-19's identity and ideology at different times. However, one presented modal resource, colour, differs depending mainly on the cartoonists and their style. Indeed, most Saudi cartoonists present COVID-19 in a green colour except for Ramsi who illustrates COVID-19 in purple and pinkish colours. This can be due to the fact that Ramsi resides in London, and UK newspapers in general portray the personified virus in purple in order to cater to the readers of these papers who are mainly British-Arab citizens accustomed to certain presentations that are conventional in European cartoons.

In addition to the above, caricatures that present the theme of political discourse usually exaggerate the features of renowned political figures such as Biden and Trump using different resources including hairstyle, facial features, and body shape. Furthermore, caricatures within the theme of political discourse often portray certain leaders that are metonymically stands for certain countries such as Iran and Iraq. The other independent variable that affects the difference in the presentation of caricatures is the cartoonists. Most cartoonists exaggerate this feature except for two: Jabbar and Hulu. Jabbar never uses caricatures in his cartoons, which contradicts Carbajal-Carrera and Sanchez-Castro's (2020) conclusion that caricature is the main component of opposition in cartoons. The style of Jabbar shows that the main characters in his work are Saudi characters whose features are exaggerated such as facial expressions and body postures to convey the humorous message. These characters are not known in the real-life as he uses them as being his signature, and to stands for the Saudi community (see McCloud, 2006).



Exaggerating physical features occurs generally across all ten themes, yet with a particularly high frequency in relation to three specific themes, including: the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, virus transmission rate, and the change in social relations. This exaggerated modal resource is used to show the actions and reactions of the presented characters in the cartoons. Exaggerated body posture in relation to the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 is used to portray the actions and reactions of the presented characters participating in the “fight” i.e., the fight against the virus. This exaggerated feature is also often used to portray the idea that the transmission rate of the virus has spiralled out of control, with the exaggerated body posture of the personified caricature COVID-19. Furthermore, the exaggeration of body posture within the theme of the change in social relations portrays the criticism of the negative action of some people, especially the rumourmongers and their believers.

Moreover, facial expressions as a form of exaggeration is used frequently across all the themes, which can be attributed to the importance of facial expressions in portraying and conveying emotions. All the cartoonists use a combination of at least two forms of exaggeration in their cartoons to transmit their message. However, Hulu is the only cartoonist who does not deploy the three forms of exaggeration mentioned above, including caricature, physical feature and facial expression which is mostly attributed to his own unique style.

Size is the second most presented form of exaggeration, at a frequency rate of 18%. It has been used in almost all the themes, although two themes use this feature with a higher frequency compared to the others: the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 and the economic impact of COVID-19. The former exaggerates size to show the power and superiority of one entity over another. The latter deploys size to index the huge economic devastation. Most of the cartoonists exaggerate the size of their characters except in the case of Hulu, as identified in the Table 6.19. However, three cartoonists in particular demonstrate their strong preference for exaggerating the size of the identified characters, including Alrabee, Alqamady and Alzaydy (see Table 6.19).

Exaggerated pictorial runes are only used in 8% of the analysed data. Such a low presentation might be attributed to the cartoonists' dependence on facial expression as the main modal resource through which to express emotion. It has been noticed that when pictorial runes are exaggerated, the facial expression is also exaggerated, although not always the other way around. While pictorial runes make an appearance in half of the themes, they appear mostly

with the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, and social relation. The most presented rune within these themes is droplets expressing the pain, worry and fear resulting from COVID-19. Two themes are identified as not using pictorial runes at all, including the impact on education and work, and vaccines rollout. Not presenting this exaggerated feature in these two themes, as the used pictorial runes in these themes are direction and movement runes that are not the focus of this thesis as only the emo-runes are examined. The other independent variable that influences the use of pictorial runes is the cartoonists. It has been noticed that pictorial runes as an exaggerated form has been used by most of the cartoonists as shown in Table 6.19 bellow, with Alrabee being the cartoonist who uses pictorial runes the most. Almathy and Alkamasy do not use pictorial emo-runes at all in their cartoons, from which we can infer that they use facial expressions instead to express emotions. Hulu is the other cartoonist who does not use this feature, as he depends more on exaggerating the features in the writing mode, not the image mode.

The two least frequently occurring forms of exaggeration are number and writing, at 3% and 2%, respectively. Half of the cartoonists deploy exaggerated numbers in their cartoons that are specific to certain themes, as illustrated in Table 6.20. The themes most likely to use exaggerated numbers are public protection, the virus transmission rate, and the change in social relations. In relation to the public protection theme, Saudi cartoonists tend to exaggerate the number of depicted characters to mostly portray the violation of social distancing and how people have become reckless towards precautionary measures, leading to increasing infection rates. In relation to the virus transmission rate, the exaggeration of numbers is used to express the rapid spread of the virus and the high number of infections. Concerning the change in social relation theme, the number has been exaggerated to show online as a new communication tool people use during the lockdown.

Furthermore, exaggeration with writing is used by just four cartoons, which supports the general conclusion discussed above that Saudi cartoonists do not prefer using the writing mode alone to express meaning in the multimodal artefact. Indeed, only three themes out of the ten use exaggerated writing to create humour, including the change in social relations, lockdown and international political discourse. Using this exaggerated feature within these three themes is attributed mainly to the cartoonists' style in delivering the intended messages.

Cartoonists	Caricature	Size	Facial Expression	Body Posture	Pictorial Runes <sup>52</sup>	Number	Writing
Jabbar	0	2	4	2	1	1	1
Alzaydy	5	4	7	7	1	0	0
Almarzuqy	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Alrabee	7	5	6	6	6	3	0
Almathy	2	3	2	3	0	0	1
Alkamasy	5	2	6	5	0	2	0
Hajad	3	2	2	2	1	2	0
Alqamady	4	4	4	5	1	0	0
Ramsi	5	3	2	4	1	2	1
Hulu	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ahmad	3	3	3	3	1	0	0

Table 6.19: Cartoonists and the use of different exaggerated forms

Theme	Caricature	Size	Facial Expression	Body Posture	Pictorial Runes	Number	Writing
The change in social relations	3	4	6	7	3	2	1
Public protection	4	2	2	3	2	3	0
The impact on education and work	0	0	2	1	0	0	0
Lockdown	3	4	5	4	1	1	2
The economic impact of COVID-19	4	5	6	4	2	0	0
Vaccine rollout	2	2	2	1	0	0	0
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	6	5	5	6	2	0	0
International political discourse	3	1	3	2	1	1	1
Virus transmission rate	5	2	3	5	1	2	0
The impact on travel and tourism	5	4	3	4	1	1	0

Table 6.20: The ten dominant cartoon themes and the use of different exaggerated forms.

The seven different forms of exaggeration and their relationship to the incongruity types are presented below in Table 6.21.

Incongruity	Caricature	Size	Facial Expression	Body Posture	Pictorial Runes	Number	Writing
Frame-based	55	39	43	53	17	8	1
Image-based	13	15	12	15	7	4	1
Writing-based	2	2	2	2	0	0	2
Writing-image	8	6	12	9	5	2	1
Total	(78)	(62)	(69)	(79)	(29)	(14)	(5)

Table 6.21: Incongruity classifications and exaggerated forms

<sup>52</sup> Table 6.18 shows all 18 pictorial runes presented in the analysed data. The relationship between them and the cartoonists and themes is taken from their general perspective of occurrence in the 13 cartoons. For example, in Figure 6.26, three different pictorial runes (star, spiral, and spikes) appear in one cartoon, but they are counted as one in the presented relation to see their correlation with the cartoonist (Alrabee) and theme (the economic impact of COVID-19).

Table 6.21 presents the four incongruity types and their relationship to the seven forms of exaggeration. Generally, all the four incongruity types use the exaggerated features of caricature, size, facial expression, body posture, and writing to create humour. However, two forms of exaggeration, including pictorial runes and number, are not used at all in relation to writing-based incongruity, as they are based more heavily on the image mode, thus being associated with the frame-based, image-based and writing-image classifications. In general, writing-based incongruity makes use of fewer forms of exaggeration, as illustrated in Table 6.21.

In relation to exaggeration as a humour form, it can be shown that the seven different types are essential in enabling an illustration to be classed as being part of the cartoon genre. This humour form-exaggeration- is the most identified one in the analysed data, although the type of exaggeration used depends more on the cartoonists' style and the theme being discussed.

The following sub-section discusses the third humour technique found in Saudi cartoons, namely metonymy and its subtypes.

### 6.4.2.3 Metonymy

Saudi cartoonists use this trope frequently in their cartoons to avoid offending the target and to deliver their humorous message in a general manner. In this respect, metonymy can be defined as a word or expression used in a figurative sense to stands for another meaning. However, there are also some instances where this trope is used in a narrow scope, which will be discussed in detail later. Alsadi and Howard (2021) identified two types of metonymy in the cartoon, including visual and multimodal, but the analysed data in this study show four different types of metonymy to be presented in Saudi cartoons, as shown in Table 6.22.

Metonymy Type	Number of Occurrence	Percentage
Visual metonymy	93	72%
Multimodal metonymy	34	26%
Verbal metonymy	1	1%
Metonymy-based metonymy	1	1%

Table 6.22: The distribution of the metonymy types

According to Table 6.22, the most frequently occurring metonymy in the cartoons is visual metonymy at 72%. The second type is multimodal metonymy at 26%, while verbal and

metonymy-based<sup>53</sup> metonymies are the least used, at 1%, respectively. This distribution pattern in relation to the different types of metonymies points to the power of the image in conveying more meaning than the writing mode alone, and that cartoons heavily depend on their visuals to create meaning despite their multimodal potential. The image and writing modes in multimodal metonymies are used for specific functions, as the target is mostly identified by the writing mode while the source is creatively presented in the image mode (see Sub-Section 6.4.2.3.3).

The following subsections discuss each metonymy type.

### 6.4.2.3.1 Visual Metonymy

Visual metonymy is where a concept is shown in the image mode, and intends to stand for another concept. Twenty-five different visual metonymies are identified to be used by Saudi cartoonists to discuss pandemic-related topics through a light-hearted presentation. The following cartoon in Figure 6.27 provides an example of this metonymy type.



Figure 6.27: Conspiracy believer

This cartoon identifies the passive listener who listens to conspiracy believer' talk, as presented with three metonymic presentations. First, his identity is a Saudi man as indexed by his traditional clothes, including thawb and shimāq. Here, this Saudi man stands for all passive Saudi listeners, forming A PERSON FOR PEOPLE metonymy. His status of being passive is shown with his head to be large in size like a balloon that inflated using air pumper, which is formed by INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymy. The act of inflation is presented with the lines around the head- PICTORIAL RUN FOR ACTION, showing the extension of the head's size. Such visual metonymic presentations are shown with the traditional idiom in Saudi Arabia

<sup>53</sup> A metonymy based on the other presented metonymies in the cartoon.

" تعبي راسه " (to blow into someone's head). The meaning of this proverb is that some people spread false information or negative comments, leading to the negative change in the thought and emotions of people toward certain individuals or situation. So, here the three visual metonymies were used to present the passiveness of (some) Saudi people toward the rumour.

The visual metonymies found across the analysed data are presented in Table 6.23.

Visual Metonymy	Target and Source Domains	Frequency	Percentage
INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	Target-in-Source	32	34%
PICTORIAL RUNES FOR FEELING	Source-in-Target	15	16%
PERSON FOR PEOPLE	Source-in-Target	11	12%
PART FOR WHOLE	Source-in-Target	5	5%
PICTORIAL RUNES FOR ACTION	Target-in-Source 2	4	4%
PICTOGRAM FOR ACTION	Target-in-Source	3	3%
EARTH FOR INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE	Target-in-Source 2	3	3%
PICTORIAL RUNES FOR MOVEMENT	Target-in-Source	2	2%
PICTORIAL RUNES FOR DIRECTION	Target-in-Source	2	2%
PART FOR WHOLE FOR ACTION	Source-in-Target, then Target-in-Source	1	1%
EARTH FOR PEOPLE	Target-in-Source	1	1%
PART FOR WHOLE FOR AUTHORITY	Source-in-Target 2	1	1%
BODY PART FOR FUNCTION	Target-in-Source	1	1%
PART FOR WHOLE FOR GLOBAL ECONOMY	Source-in-Target 2	1	1%
OBJECT FOR LOCATION	Source-in-Target	1	1%
INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION FOR PLACE	Target-in-Source, then Source-in-Target	1	1%
PUNCTUATION FOR FEELING	Target-in-Source	1	1%
ACTION FOR FEELING	Target-in-Source	1	1%
EARTH FOR COUNTRY	Target- in-Source	1	1%
PART FOR WHOLE FOR PERSON FOR PEOPLE	Source-in-Target 2	1	1%
PART FOR WHOLE FOR EVENT	Source-in-Target 2	1	1%
PERSON FOR GOVERNMENT FOR RULER	Source-in-Target, then Target-in-Source	1	1%
INSTRUMENT FOR LOCATION FOR EVENT	Source-in-Target, then Target-in-Source	1	1%
BODY OUT OF EARTH FOR DEATH CASES	Source-in-Target	1	1%
PERSON FOR COUNTRY	Source-in-Target	1	1%

Table 6.23: The distribution of the visual metonymy types

Table 6.23 presents the 25 visual metonymies used in the given cartoons. The most commonly used visual metonymy by Saudi cartoonists at 34% is INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION. Such a high percentage indicates that action is likely difficult to be shown in static, two-dimensional techniques, and thus visual creativity helps cartoonists identify the intended action to deliver the humorous message. This is portrayed through a number of signs that represent such action as can be seen across all the themes, although it is mostly found in the economic impact of COVID-19, virus transmission rate, and the change in social relations themes. The visual presentation of the instrument is easy to identify by the readers as their presentation resemble its existence in the real life.

Two other forms of visual metonymy, A PERSON FOR PEOPLE and PICTORIAL RUNES FOR FEELINGS, occur at 12% and 16%, respectively. The former is used in a more general manner by the cartoonists where one character stands for others who uphold the same negative ideologies or beliefs. Such a metonymy is used to lessen the possible offence that the criticised target group may feel, by letting the audience decide for themselves who does or does not belong to that group on the basis of the – usually negative - characteristics portrayed in the cartoon. The data shows that the PERSON FOR PEOPLE metonymy correlate mainly with negative connotations presented in three themes: the change in social relations, and the impact on education and work the most, followed by the vaccine rollout theme. Half of the cartoonists use this metonymy, with Jabbar being the one who uses it most extensively. This could be a result of Jabbar not using caricatures in his cartoons, depending instead on delivering his message through his signature nuclear Saudi family composed of four main characters. The latter metonymy – PICTORIAL RUNES FOR FEELINGS - is used when the implicit feeling is difficult to express, and so using pictorial runes is essential to deliver the emotional action or reaction of the cartoon characters. Half of the themes use pictorial runes, including lockdowns, the change in social relations, the impact on travel and tourism, virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, international politic discourses and the economic impact of COVID-19. Importantly, runes are used to convey different feelings, and are mostly presented when portraying intensive conflicts between the main characters in the cartoons. Moreover, most Saudi cartoonists include them in their illustrations, which refers to the importance of runes in delivering the dominant feeling in the cartoon as they have the power to transmit more emotions than words.

When the EARTH is a target, as in EARTH FOR PEOPLE, EARTH FOR INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE, and EARTH FOR COUNTRY, Ramsi is the main cartoonist who displays a preference for using the globe to stand for particular people and countries. Half of the presentations of this metonymy are in relation to the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 theme that highlights the Earth's importance as an individual identity, indexing the solidarity of the countries and people to fight against the pandemic.

PART is another target presented with a small portion of six different sources in the presented visual metonymies as shown in the Table 6.23. Despite being used by half of the cartoonists, the most common themes it is found in are the economic impact of COVID-19, the change in social relations, and lockdown. The metonymies based on PART as a target are used by the cartoonists when the given source is either abstract or difficult to be depicted in the image mode, such as the following concepts: GLOBAL ECONOMY, AUTHORITY and RAMADAN.

The remaining 13 visual metonymy types occur very infrequently, with proportions that range between 1–3%. In general, metonymies are used by different cartoonists to portray different themes, and several are often used in combination in a single cartoon. Therefore, a combination of techniques and strategies work in tandem, depending on the cartoonist's style, to make an overall inference that depicts the intended message. The medley of techniques used in a single illustration suggest that visual metonymy alone cannot always be sufficient to create humour, but an association with other metonymies and metaphor types are essential in portraying the messages intended by the cartoonists.

#### **6.4.2.3.2 Verbal Metonymy**

In verbal metonymy, the cartoonists use one word to stand for another. The example of this type of metonymy is presented in Figure 6.3. The cartoonist in this cartoon (Figure 6.3) uses the presentation of chirography with the word 'education' standing for the action of teaching-CHIROGRAPHY FOR ACTION. Such a verbal metonymic presentation shows the burden of education on parents, supported by the size of the word carried by the mum on the left and the dad on the right. This cartoon is the only example of verbal metonymy found in the analysed data, and occurs with one cartoon. Such a low frequency supports the idea that Saudi cartoonists do not prefer to use the writing mode to create humour. They tend to either use the image mode



or the two modes together to create humour around themes related to the pandemic, as words are limited in function and expression compared to the image (Rose, 2022).

The following sub-section discusses the function and use of the multimodal metonymy.

### 6.4.2.3.3 Multimodal Metonymy

Multimodal metonymy, comprising two modes, is used creatively by cartoonists to create meaning. The two domains of the metonymy -target and source- are presented in the artefact; one is shown in the writing mode and the other in the image mode. Occasionally, one domain (either target or source) is presented in both modes. The example of such a type is presented in the following cartoon in Figure 6.28:

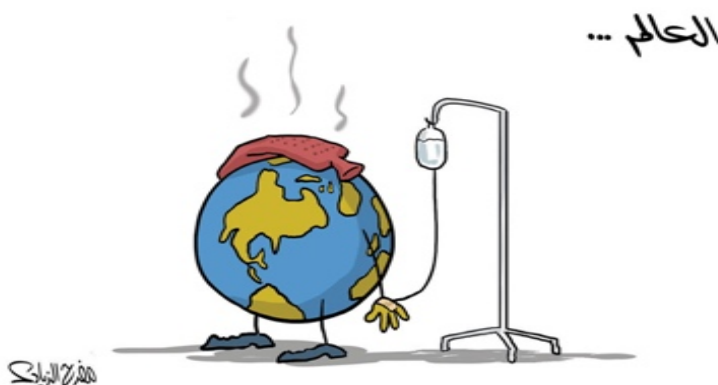


Figure 6.28: The world...

In this cartoon (Figure 6.28), a multimodal metonymy is presented as THE WORLD FOR PEOPLE. The target, THE WORLD, is presented in the image mode and writing mode. The source -PEOPLE- is inferred from the given visual signs as steam indexes the symptom of a high fever that people could suffer from, and the IV and hot water bottle index the kind of treatment that a people could have. Here, the cartoonist uses the metonymical presentation to show that people around the world get infected by COVID-19.

In total, sixteen multimodal metonymies have been found in the analysed data, presented below in Table 6.24.

Multimodal Metonymy	Target and Source Domains	Image	Writing	Frequency	Percentage
INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	Target-in-Source	Target	Target	4	12%
INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	Target-in-Source	Target	Source	4	12%

PART FOR WHOLE	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	4	12%
PERSON FOR PEOPLE	Source-in-Target	Source	Source	3	9%
PERSON FOR COUNTRY	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	3	9%
PERSON FOR PEOPLE FOR INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	3	9%
THE WORLD FOR PEOPLE	Target-in-Source 2	Target	Target	2	6%
PERSON FOR PEOPLE	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	2	6%
BODY PART FOR FUNCTION	Target-in-Source	Target	Source	2	6%
PLACE FOR LOCATION FOR EVENT	Source-in-Target, then Target-Source	Source 1	Source2	1	3%
PERSON FOR INSTITUTION FOR CONTROLLER	Source-in-Target, then Target-in-Source	Source (1)	Target 1 and 2	1	3%
PART FOR WHOLE FOR PERSON	Source-in-Target 2	Source and Target (1)	Target 2	1	3%
PERSON FOR TOURISM	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	1	3%
A PERSON FOR PRICES	Target-in-Source	Source	Target	1	3%
PERSON FOR SOME PEOPLE	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	1	3%
PERSON FOR COUNTRY' AIRLINE	Source-in-Target	Source	Target	1	3%

Table 6.24: The distribution of the multimodal metonymy types

According to Table 6.24, PERSON as a target has been used in different metonymies and presented multimodally, with a frequency of 45%. The most commonly used metonymy is PERSON FOR PEOPLE, presented in 15% of the cartoons. This metonymy is divided into two categories depending on the presented mode: the source is shown in the image while the target is presented in the writing mode 6%; and the other 9% is where the source is in both the image and writing modes. This metonymy is used mostly within the change in social relations theme, as the cartoonists dealing with social issues prefer using a single identity to stand for a collective one. Jabbar is the cartoonist who uses this metonymy most in his work. In second place, the most frequently used multimodal metonymies associated with the target PERSON with a similar frequency (9%), are PERSON FOR PEOPLE FOR INSTITUTION and PERSON FOR COUNTRY. These two metonymies are mostly presented within the

international political discourse theme, indicating the difficulty cartoonists face in presenting a country/institution in the image mode, depending instead on a personified character that is known politically to stand for the country/ institution. Moreover, these two metonymies are mostly associated with the work of Alrabee, Ramsi, Alzaydy and Alqamady.

The other metonymies associated with the target PERSON occur with a low frequency, as being presented in one cartoon. PERSON FOR INSTITUTION FOR CONTROLLER is used within the economic impact of COVID-19 theme by one cartoonist- Jabbar. This cartoon portrays a company to be a PERSON using the image mode to signify wealth and power. A PERSON FOR TOURIST and A PERSON FOR PRICE are metonymies associated with PERSON and occur at 3%. These metonymies correlate strongly with the theme the impact on travel and tourism where the cartoonists represent the status of domestic tourism through a Saudi person identified by their traditional national dress. Moreover, two metonymies, including PERSON FOR SOME PEOPLE and PERSON FOR COUNTRY AIRLINE, appear with a similar frequency of 3% and in relation to two different thematic presentations by two different cartoonists: lockdown (Almathy), and the impact on travel and tourism (Alqamady), respectively. In general, having PERSON stand for a concrete entity is used creatively by Saudi cartoonists as, otherwise, these ideas and entities are difficult to be presented in the image mode. Using the metonymic presentation allows the cartoonists to portray these serious and complex themes through a light-hearted and humorous frame, which may contradict how readers are conventionally accustomed to receiving information about these topics.

The second most commonly presented target in the multimodal metonymy is INSTRUMENT at 24%. The metonymy based mainly on INSTRUMENT is INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION which almost all the cartoonists use. This metonymy can be divided according to the mode used: 12% present the target in both image and writing, while the other 12% portray the target through the image mode and the source in the writing mode. This metonymic presentation is most frequently used within the public protection and lockdown theme, where the cartoonists use the multimodality approach to mostly identify key precautionary measures in both the writing and image modes to signify the importance of the protection and to encourage readers to do the same. This is in comparison to the many themes that are presented solely in the writing mode, as in these specific cases, this technique may be deemed sufficient enough to allow readers to identify with themes that are more common and familiar.

PART is the third target that is used with a frequency of 15%; 12% representing PART FOR WHOLE, and 3% representing PART FOR WHOLE FOR PERSON. These metonymies are used mainly within the economic impact of COVID-19, and impact on travel and tourism themes as the cartoonists are often not able to portray the whole presentation due to the cartoon's limited 2D frame. To overcome this, the cartoonists aim to be more strategic in their presentation, often making a small object stands for the whole picture. Half the cartoonists use these metonymies, including Jabbar, Alrabee, Alkamasy, Almathy and Ahmad.

The other three multimodal metonymies have different targets, and their frequency of occurrence ranges between 3–6%, mostly occurring in one cartoon. In general, it can be seen that the use of specific multimodal metonymies is attributed to the cartoonists' style in delivering the intended message.

The following sub-section discusses the fourth metonymy type found in the analysed data, which is metonymy-based metonymy.

#### **6.4.2.3.4 Metonymy-Based Metonymy**

Cartoonists sometimes form metonymies based on other metonymies to deliver their message. This more complex metonymy type is presented in just one cartoon which is discussed earlier in Figure 6.3. The cartoonist in this cartoon uses the whole presentation of the chirograph 'education' and instrument to stand for the action: online teaching- THE WHOLE FOR ACTION. This overarching multimodal metonymy is based on two different metonymies: one visual metonymy-INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION- and one verbal metonymy-CHIROGRAPHY FOR ACTION. The former shows that the phone in the hand of the boy represents online learning, while the latter shows that education is a burden signified by its large size and the struggle of the parents to carry it. The whole presentation here portrays that online education is a heavy responsibility on the parents, indexed by the tangles around the parents' body and their distressed facial expressions.

Figure 6.29 presents a diagram that visually outlines all of the different metonymies involved in metonymy-based metonymy, presented in the Figure 6.3.

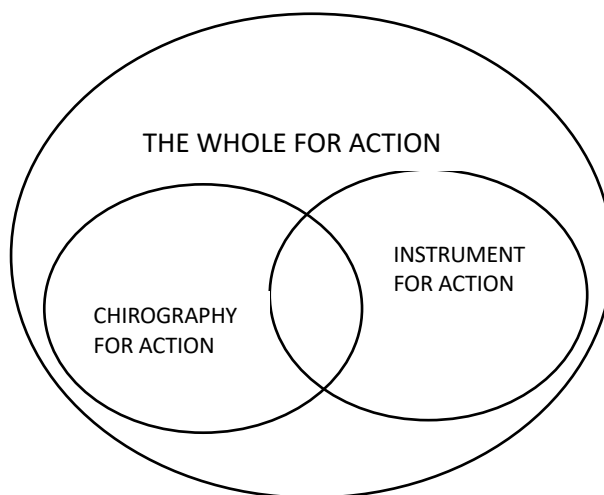


Figure 6.29: Metonymy-based metonymy

In this section, the four subtypes of metonymy have been presented. The most commonly used one by Saudi cartoonists is visual metonymy, followed by multimodal metonymy, and lastly verbal and metonymy-based metonymies. The differences between them can be attributed to the three independent variables: the cartoonists' style, the ten dominant themes in the cartoons, and the incongruity classifications, as discussed below.

The first independent variable that affects the use of the different metonymy types<sup>54</sup> is the cartoonists and their unique styles, as shown in Table 6.25.

Cartoonists	Visual Metonymy	Verbal Metonymy	Multimodal Metonymy
Jabbar	17	1	6
Alzaydy	12	0	5
Almarzuqy	3	0	0
Alrabee	14	0	9
Almathy	3	0	4
Alkamasy	12	0	1
Hajad	2	0	3
Alqamady	10	0	2
Ramsi	15	0	2
Hulu	0	0	1
Ahmad	5	0	1

Table 6.25: Metonymies used by the different cartoonists

<sup>54</sup> Here, types of metonymy have been classified as mentioned above, with the modes being visual, verbal, and multimodal. The fourth type, metonymy-based metonymy, has also been classified based on the mode in which it is presented. One example of this is found in the data, which is explained in Figure 6.3 as being a multimodal metonymy. Therefore, the classification of the metonymies in relation to the other independent variable has been examined by considering the modes.

According to Table 6.25, most of the cartoonists mainly use two types of metonymies in their illustrations; visual and multimodal metonymy, with a strong preference for the former. The preference might be attributed to the easy identified metonymies by the readers who get access visually to such presented metonymies connotated to its existed to in the real world, supporting Alsadi and Howard’s (2021, p. 122) conclusion “a reader would usually rely on their world knowledge to access the correct metonymic inferences”.

On the other hand, two cartoonists – Hulu and Almarzuqy - show a preference for using one type of metonymy only. Hulu uses multimodal metonymy, although this cannot be taken to be his general style due to the shortage of his work in the analysed data. The other cartoonist - Almarzuqy- uses just visual metonymies, as he uses PICTORIAL RUNES FOR FEELING and INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION where both of the targets are portrayed solely in the image mode and are easily understood by the readers. The scarcity of Almarzuqy's cartoons in the dataset makes it difficult to say for sure that visual metonymy is his signature style. However, the fact that he uses visual metonymies in all of the cartoons that are in the dataset suggests that it is a style that he is comfortable with and that he is skilled at using. On the other hand, Jabbar is the only cartoonist who uses all three types of metonymies- visual, verbal and multimodal. However, like the other cartoonists, he has a preference for using visual metonymies more than the other forms.

The other independent variable that affects the distribution of metonymy type is theme, as shown in Table 6.26

Theme	Visual Metonymy	Verbal Metonymy	Multimodal Metonymy
The change in social relations	23	1	3
Public protection	4	0	4
The impact on education and work	6	0	1
Lockdown	8	0	5
The economic impact of COVID-19	15	0	5
Vaccine rollout	6	0	2
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	11	0	2
International political discourse	7	0	5
Virus transmission rate	9	0	2
The impact on travel and tourism	4	0	5

Table 6.26: Metonymies in relation to themes

According to Table 6.26, two themes in the analysed data use metonymies more the others, including changes in social relations and the economic impact of COVID-19. These two

themes portray the impact of employing metonymy to create humour in cartoons, where one entity is used to stand for another. This is particularly so where the entity or subject matter being discussed is abstract or general, thus requiring the cartoonist to be creative in the presentation to convey the intended message. Most of the themes are presented using two metonymies- visual and multimodal - although the visual presentation is used more than the multimodal one, except for the public protection and the impact on travel and tourism themes that use both types in almost a similar frequency.

The relationship between metonymy types and incongruity classifications is presented in Table 6.27 below:

Incongruity classifications	Visual Metonymy	Verbal Metonymy	Multimodal Metonymy
Frame-based	92	1	22
Image-based	40	1	16
Writing-based	2	0	10
Writing-image	16	1	14

Table 6.27: Metonymies in relation to incongruity classifications

It can be seen from Table 6.27 that no significant correlation is found between the four incongruity classifications and the three types of metonymy because both visual and multimodal metonymy occurred with all four incongruity classifications. Moreover, the surprising result is that no correlation is found between the verbal metonymy and the writing-based incongruity, as verbal metonymies are equally found across the data in the image-based, frame-based and writing-image incongruities. Thus, it can be concluded that metonymy is not the main vehicle of humour in the cartoons, as it does not correlate directly with the four incongruity types. However, it can be seen as a secondary form of humour that works in conjunction with the other main humour forms to create a sense of light-heartedness in the cartoons. Such a finding supports Alousque (2014) and Genova's (2018) claim of the importance of metonymy in supporting metaphor, as there are critical links between everyday experience and coherent metaphorical systems (Genova, 2018). Following on from this claim, the next subsection introduces metaphor as the final humour technique.

#### 6.4.2.4 Metaphor

Depending on the mode used, two different types of metaphors, including pictorial/visual metaphors, and multimodal metaphors (Forceville, 2009), have been presented in the analysed

data with varying degrees of frequency. Moreover, a third type presented in the cartoons is the conceptual-chain metaphor, which depends on metonymy and metaphor in creating the metaphorical presentations, forming the metonymy-based metaphor, metaphor-based metaphor, and metonymy and metaphor-based metaphor (Ruiz de Mendoza and Mairal, 2007; Alousque, 2014). It can be seen that the analysed cartoons exhibit greater variation in metaphorical presentation than those identified by Alsadi and Howard (2021), which are primarily based on multimodality (multimodal metaphor and multimodal metaphor based on metonymy).

The frequency of occurrence of these three types in the analysed data is illustrated in Table 6.28.

Metaphor Types	Number of Occurrence	Percentage
Verbal metaphor	0	0%
Visual metaphor	15	17%
Multimodal metaphor	25	29%
Conceptual-chain metaphor	47	54%

Table 6.28: The distribution of the different types of metaphor

According to Table 6.28, conceptual-chain metaphor is the most widely used metaphor by Saudi cartoonists because it is built on other tropes, metonymies and metaphors, which will be discussed in detail in the following sub-section 6.4.2.4.3. The second most frequently used metaphor is multimodal at 29%, followed by visual at 17%. However, the verbal metaphor has not been employed at all by Saudi cartoonists included in this study, illustrating the limited capacity of the writing mode in portraying metaphors in cartoons. Indeed, most of the cartoonists tend to express different metaphorical presentations using either the two modes together (image and writing), or just the image mode. Such a preference is attributed to the power of the image mode over the writing mode in transmitting the intended message (Rose, 2022) and creating metaphors (Forceville, 2011).

The following subsections discuss the three types of metaphor in detail.

#### **6.4.2.4.1 Visual Metaphor**

This is the least common metaphor in the analysed cartoons. By comparing the outcomes of this study against the four subtypes of visual metaphors identified by Forceville (2008, 2016) (see Section 3.3.10), it is clear to see how only two subtypes are found in this data set: hybrid



and contextual metaphors. The former- hybrid metaphor- combines two entities to form a new and creative one. The latter -contextual metaphor- means that one of the domains- target or source- is shown in the image mode, while the second domain is inferred from the context. The frequency of occurrence of these two types of visual metaphor is illustrated in Table 6.29.

Visual Metaphor Type	Frequency	Percentage
Visual hybrid metaphor	9	56%
Visual contextual metaphor	6	44 %

Table 6.29: The distribution of visual metaphor types

According to Table 6.29, the two visual metaphor types have a very similar presentation. However, the specific differences between them are discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### 6.4.2.4.1.1 Visual Hybrid Metaphor

The hybrid metaphor is the first type of visual metaphor that cartoonists use by creatively combining two different entities or characters in one visual form to create the metaphorical presentations. The following cartoon in Figure 6.30 is an example of such a presentation.



Figure 6.30: Handshaking during the period of Corona

In this cartoon (Figure 6.30), the hybrid metaphor -CORONA IS A PERSON is shown in the image mode. The five personified creatures here have been metaphorically presented by mixing characteristics of both a COVID-19 virus and a PERSON. Many Saudi cartoonists visualise COVID-19 in their illustrations through green coloured balls that have needle-like ends. In this cartoon, such an entity has been personified as having legs that index its ability to walk. The humour is created here by attributing the walking ability to COVID-19, which in turn “moves”

to transfers the infection from one person to another, for instance, through handshaking, as portrayed in the cartoon. This hybrid metaphor COVID-19 IS A PERSON, is one out of seven such metaphors found in the data, as illustrated in Table 6.30

Visual Hybrid Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
COVID-19 IS A PERSON	3	34%
EARTH IS A PERSON	1	11%
COVID-19 IS A MONSTER	1	11%
COVID-19 IS THORNS	1	11%
COVID-19 IS MINES	1	11%
COVID-19 IS A SPIDER	1	11%
COVID-19 IS A BALL	1	11%

Table 6.30: The distribution of the visual hybrid metaphors

According to Table 6.30 most of these visual metaphor types (89%) present COVID-19 as a target. This target is metaphorically hybridised with other entities, such as PERSON (34%), MONSTER (11%), THORNS (11%), MINES (11%), SPIDER (11%) and BALL (11%), with an aim to portray COVID-19’s evilness and its negative impact on the world. These sources are portrayed mainly within six themes: virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, public protection, lockdown, the impact on travel and tourism, and international political discourse. However, this metaphorical presentation, which is based on mixing the identity of the virus (green in colour and with needle-like ends) with other entities, is mostly included in the work of Alkamasy, whose illustrations are informed heavily by this hybrid approach. The second target in the visual hybrid metaphor category is EARTH, as presented in the metaphor EARTH IS A PERSON, with a rate of 11%. This presentation is shown in the work of Ramsi, particularly when discussing the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 theme. Such a finding is also supported by Ramsi’s preference for using EARTH as a target in the metonymies as discussed above, as well as using EARTH as the main target in his cartoons in order to portray the pandemic as a universal crisis experienced by communities across the globe. Furthermore, analysis of the data reveals that the differences in the presentation of the hybrid metaphor across the cartoons is attributed to the cartoonists’ creativity and the different scenarios they depict to deliver a particular message. The following sub-section discusses the second type of visual metaphor, which is contextual metaphor.

#### 6.4.2.4.1.2 Visual Contextual Metaphor

The second type of visual metaphor, occurring with a frequency of 44%, is the visual contextual metaphor, with cartoon (Figure 6.31) being an example.



Figure 6.31: Face to face  
WHO (the man on the left); Corona (the creature on the right)

In this cartoon (Figure 6.31), the contextual visual metaphor is shown with NEEDLE IS WEAPON. The target domain here, NEEDLE, is shown visually in the cartoon, while the source domain, WEAPON, is inferred from the battlefield context and the main character's posture. The man, who appears to be a doctor, as indicated by the medical scrubs he is wearing, is holding the needle almost as if it is a bazooka weapon. This metaphor creates humour by exaggerating the metaphorical presentation of the war scene, with the World Health Organization (represented by the doctor) battling against COVID-19 (green monster). Such a metaphorical presentation exaggerates the safety procedures that the WHO took to stop the spread of COVID-19. Using this metaphorical type makes the audience read actively and anticipate the interpretation of the cartoon's metaphorical meaning by looking at the effort that the WHO present to fight against COVID-19.

The metaphor used in the above cartoon - NEEDLE IS WEAPON - is one example amongst many that are included in the analysed data. The different visual contextual metaphors and the frequency of their occurrence is presented in Table 6.31.

Visual Contextual Metaphor	Visual	Contextual	Frequency	Percentage
COVID-19 IS A WRESTLER	Target	Source	1	15%
COVID-19 IS A BASEBALL	Target	Source	1	15%
COVID-19 INFECTION IS GREEN DOTS	Source	Target	1	14%
NEEDLE IS A WEAPON	Target	Source	1	14%
CAT IS A HUMAN	Target	Source	1	14%
COVID-19 IS RAIN	Target	Source	1	14%

Table 6.31: The distribution of the visual contextual metaphor types

The visual contextual metaphors presented differ in their target domains, as shown in Table 6.31. The dominant target in these contextual metaphors is COVID-19, included in 44% of the metaphors. This target is metaphorically presented in the image mode, while the source domain is inferred from the contexts. The source domains associated with COVID-19 as a target are WRESTLER (15%), BASKETBALL (15%), and RAIN (14%). Such presentations have occurred in relation to different themes by different cartoonists, including: the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 (Hajad), virus transmission rate (Ramsi) and vaccine rollout (Alkamasy). The other metaphorical presentations occur with different targets, presented in one cartoon, including COVID-19 INFECTION IS GREEN DOTS is used by Almathy, presenting the public protection theme, while NEEDLE IS A WEAPON and CAT IS HUMAN covered the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 theme, and been presented by Alqamady and Alrabee, respectively. The analysis of the data reveals that the different metaphorical strategies used depend heavily on the scenarios presented by the cartoonists, as each metaphor is associated with a different cartoon that covers a specific topic and subject matter. The following section introduces the second type of metaphor, which is multimodal metaphor.

#### **6.4.2.4.2 Multimodal Metaphor**

Multimodal metaphor is another type of metaphor that has been found in the data. This type of metaphor is based on using two modes: writing and image. The deployment of these modes with the domains (target and source) takes different forms: 1)- the target domain is shown in the writing mode while the source is presented in the image mode; 2)- the target is shown in the image and writing modes while the source is shown in the image mode; or 3)- the target is presented in the image and writing mode while the source is presented in the writing mode. This variation refutes Alsadi and Howard's (2021) claim that the typical pattern of multimodal metaphor in Saudi cartoons is for the target to be presented in the written mode and the source to be depicted in the image mode. The following cartoon in Figure 6.32 presents one of the three forms of multimodal metaphor:



Figure 6.32: The world is recovering gradually from Corona

In this cartoon (Figure 6.32), the metaphor THE WORLD IS HUMAN is presented multimodally, with the source HUMAN depicted in the image mode and the target THE WORLD presented in both modes- the writing and image. Here, the target WORLD is given a personified characteristic that signifies recovery from illness, also supported by the caption. The recovery is usually attributed to living creatures, especially humans. The cartoonists here make a generalisation about the status of the world as being in a recovery phase, by creating a multimodal metaphor- THE WORLD IS HUMAN. Table 6.32 presents all the multimodal metaphors used across the cartoons, the modes of the presented domains, and their frequency in the analysed data.

Multimodal Metaphor	Image	Writing	Frequency	Percentage
COVID-19 IS A MONSTER	Source	Target	6	24%
COVID-19 IS A WARRIOR	Source	Target	1	4%
VACCINE IS TURTLE	Source	Target	1	4%
COVID-19 IS CHEETAH	Source	Target	1	4%
COVID-19 IS A SKELETON	Source	Target	1	4%
COVID-19 IS A BRIDE	Target and Source	Target	1	4%
COVID-19 IS AN EXPORTED OBJECT	Target	Target and Source	1	4%
TOURISM IS WATCHING TV	Target and Source	Target	1	4%
COMPANIES ARE BOATS	Source	Target	1	4%
PANDEMIC IS A SEA	Source	Target	1	4%
2021 IS A SMALL CAR	Source	Target	1	4%
COMPANIES LOSSES IN 2021 ARE A BIG TRUCK	Source	Target	1	4%
BOOK IS A PERSON	Target and Source	Target	1	4%
HOTEL PRICES ARE A BIG MAN	Source	Target	1	4%
SWINE FLU IS A MONSTER	Source	Target	1	4%
SARS IS A MONSTER	Source	Target	1	4%

ALJAZEERA PRESENTERS ARE CORONA	Source	Target	1	4%
FINANCING IS CRYING ON THE SHOLDER	Source	Target	1	4%
THE WORLD IS HUMAN	Target and Source	Target	1	4%
TERRORISM IS AN EXPORTED OBJECT	Target	Target and source	1	4%

Table 6.32: The distribution of the multimodal metaphors

Table 6.32 portrays 20 multimodal metaphors that differ in terms of the frequency of their presentation in the Saudi cartoons. The most frequent target within these metaphors is COVID-19, presented in six metaphors, with a rate of 44%. As a target, COVID-19 correlates with different sources, including: MONSTER (24%), HUMAN (8%), ANIMALS (4%), SKELETON (4%), and EXPORTED OBJECT (4%). Such metaphorical presentations in relation to COVID-19 are associated with most of the themes, but more specifically with the virus transmission rate, and the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19. Such a presentation, mostly within these two themes, reflects the cartoonists' intention to show the evilness of COVID-19 as being overspread worldwide, resulting in health, financial and social negative consequences. It is important to note that the target mentioned above, COVID-19, is mostly presented in the writing mode, which relates to cartoonists' intention to use the writing mode as a label to identify COVID-19. Conversely, source domains are presented in the image mode. Most metaphors associated with COVID-19 show the transmorphism of certain entities, where the cartoonists portray the similarity between the imaginary identity and the given one. The reason for doing so may be that COVID-19 is an invisible creature that cannot be seen by the naked eye; the cartoonists have to use their creativity to present COVID-19 identity in a humourous manner. Therefore, identifying the target in the writing mode made the readers recognise the metaphorical presentation otherwise find it difficult to interpret. Furthermore, the other thirteen different metaphorical presentations presented in Table 6.32 are used by different cartoonists discussing various themes. These metaphorical presentations are associated with different targets, most of which have been depicted in the writing mode, and most of their sources in the image mode. This represents a common pattern used by Saudi cartoonists.

The above three sub-sections have discussed the three metaphors used in Saudi cartoons, while identifying the mode used for the target and source domains. The next sub-section will discuss the concept of the conceptual-chain metaphor and its three subtypes in detail.

#### 6.4.2.4.3 Conceptual-Chain Metaphor

Alsadi and Howard (2021) proposed that the only type of conceptual-chain metaphor in Saudi cartoons is the metonymy-based metaphor. However, the analysed data reveals three distinct types of conceptual-chain metaphors: metonymy-based, metaphor-based, and metonymy and metaphor-based. These three types differ in terms of their frequency of occurrence in the cartoons, as shown in Table 6.33.

Conceptual-Chain Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
Metonymy-based metaphor	28	59%
Metaphor and metonymy-based metaphor	14	30%
Metaphor-based metaphor	5	11%

Table 6.33: The distribution of the conceptual-chain metaphor types

The most frequent type of metaphor in Table 6.33 is metonymy-based metaphor, with a frequency of 59%. Metaphor and metonymy-based metaphor is the second most used type by Saudi cartoonists, at 30%. This confirms Alousque's finding about the importance of metonymy as a fundamental trope in creating metaphorical meaning. On the other hand, the last conceptual-chain metaphor is a metaphor-based metaphor, with a frequency of 11%, which might be attributed to the difficulty and the complexity of such a combination where one metaphor is based on another metaphor. These three conceptual chain metaphor subtypes are discussed in detail in the following sub-sections.

##### 6.4.2.4.3.1 Metonymy-Based Metaphor

59% of the cartoons analysed in this thesis showed a strong correlation between metonymy and metaphor (Table 6.34) which aligns with Alsadi and Howard's (2021) claim that metonymy is essential for accessing metaphor in Saudi cartoons. However, Alsadi and Howard (2021) only identified one type of metaphor associated with metonymy: multimodal metaphor. This identification narrows the range of metaphor types that Saudi cartoonists use to create humour. The analysed data revealed other two visual metaphors are associated with metonymy to include hybrid visual metaphor and contextual visual metaphor. These metaphors (multimodal and visual) are found to be associated with different metonymy types: visual metaphors typically associated with visual metonymies, and multimodal metaphors associated with various forms of metonymies (verbal, visual, and multimodal). However, this thesis focuses on metaphor types, regardless of metonymy type. The metonymy-based multimodal metaphor and the two visual metonymy-based metaphors (contextual visual metaphor and hybrid visual metaphor) occur with different frequencies in the data (Table 6.34).

Types of Metonymy-Based Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
Metonymy-based multimodal metaphor	19	69%
Metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor	6	21%
Metonymy-based hybrid visual metaphor	3	10%

Table 6.34: The distribution of metonymy-based metaphors

According to Table 6.34, the most common metaphor based on metonymy is the multimodal metaphor, with a frequency of 69%. Such a finding was confirmed in the previous section in relation to the discussion on the modes used to present metaphors, where the majority were depicted multimodally (see Table 6.28). This supports the conclusion that Saudi cartoonists prefer using the two modes (writing and image) to present their metaphorical presentations, which is most likely attributed to the difficulty in portraying the target of the metaphors that mainly involve abstract entities. In this regard, the cartoonists often express the target in the writing mode, while the source is depicted in the visual mode (Forceville, 2016).

As mentioned above, the most commonly presented metonymy-based metaphor is multimodal metaphor, at 69%. This metonymy type is exemplified in the following cartoon in Figure 6.33.



Figure 6.33: Corona around the world....

This cartoon in Figure 6.33 has a metonymy-based multimodal metaphor CORONA IS A TRAVELLER based on the visual metonymy INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION. The target domain in the metaphor – CORONA - is presented in the writing mode while the source is shown in the image mode, with a focus of the action presented on the visual metonymy INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION (suitcase for travelling). Such a metaphorical presentation is



humorous, referring to the spread of the virus around the world to be caused by the opened airline. The presentation of this metaphor is shown in Figure 6.34.

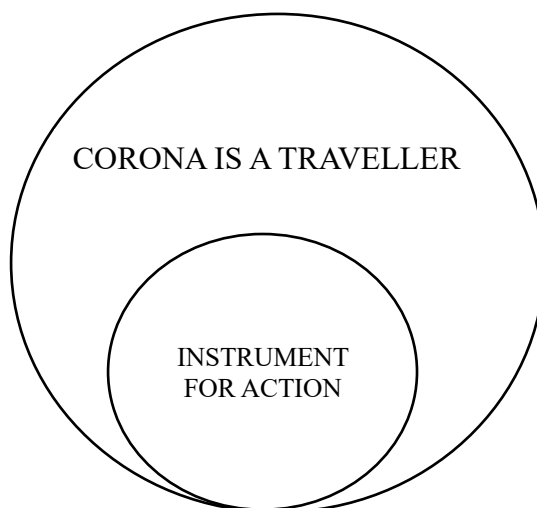


Figure 6.34: Metonymy-based multimodal metaphor

Eighteen multimodal metaphors based on metonymy found in the analysed data are presented in Table 6.35.

Metonymy-Based Multimodal Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
CORONA IS A TRAVELLER	2	10%
SOCIAL CONNECTION IS CONNECTED BY CABLES	1	5%
CORONA IS AN IRON BALL	1	5%
ECONOMIC CRISIS IS AN IRON BALL	1	5%
UK IS A BASEBALL PLAYER	1	5%
BREAKING THE RULES IS STEPPING ON THE SIGN	1	5%
THE WORLD IS A PATIENT	1	5%
THE HEAD IS CORONA	1	5%
WHO IS A WARRIOR	1	5%
STOPPING THE FLIGHTS IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION	1	5%
CHINESE FLIGHT IS AN HUMAN	1	5%
KILLING COVID-19 IS BEING SHOCKED BY HANDS	1	5%
THE HEAD OF AN UNBELIVER IS EMPTY	1	5%
INFLUXES OF CORONA IS A WAVE	1	5%
PANICKING IS RUNNING	1	5%
GREETING IS THROUGH THE EYES	1	5%
RECOVERING IS FLYING RED DOTS	1	5%
USING SANITISER IS LIVING IN ITS BOTTLE	1	5%

Table 6.35: The distribution of the metonymy-based multimodal metaphors

These multimodal metaphors based on metonymy have been used by most of the cartoonists. However, Ramsi, Alzaydy and Alqamady are the cartoonists who use such a presentation the

most. Also, the seven themes are presented with different frequencies, including the change in social relations, the economic impact of COVID-19, virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, public protection, the impact on travel and tourism, and lockdown. As can be seen in Table 6.35, the source PERSON is shown as a general identity of the other presented sources, including: BASEBALL PLAYER, TRAVELER, WARRIOR, PATIENT and A HUMAN. The occurrence of these sources in six cartoons demonstrates the significance of the transmorphim in the cartoons to transmit the intended messages.

The second most presented metonymy-based metaphor is contextual visual metaphor, with a frequency of 21%. An example of its presentation in the analysed data is illustrated in the following cartoon in Figure 6.35.



Figure 6.35: Challenge!!

This cartoon in Figure 6.35 shows the role of the Earth imbued with metonymy-based metaphoric meaning. The image depicts a personified Earth that metonymically stands for all the public and private institutions in the countries that have a responsibility in fighting against the virus thus profiling the metonymy EARTH FOR INSTITUTION. At the same time, the source of this metonymy, INSTITUTION, is linked in such a way that it becomes the target domain of the second metonymy, creating INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE. The whole metonymical presentation is thus, EARTH FOR INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE. Hence, this is an instance of double-domain expansion. This metonymy forms the base of the target of the visual metaphor EARTH IS AN ARM WRESTLER. This contextual visual metaphor creates the target EARTH through the image modes and the visual metonymies discussed above, while the source ARMWRESTLER is inferred from the context-being an ARMWRESTLER. Here, humour is created through the personified EARTH that gets into a physical challenge with corona, which opposes the reality kind of the fight that the people

in the institutions actually did to face the pandemic, such as ensuring the people follow the precautionary measures, closing the public places and transportations, and forcing the lockdown. Such a conceptual chain is illustrated in Figure 6.36:

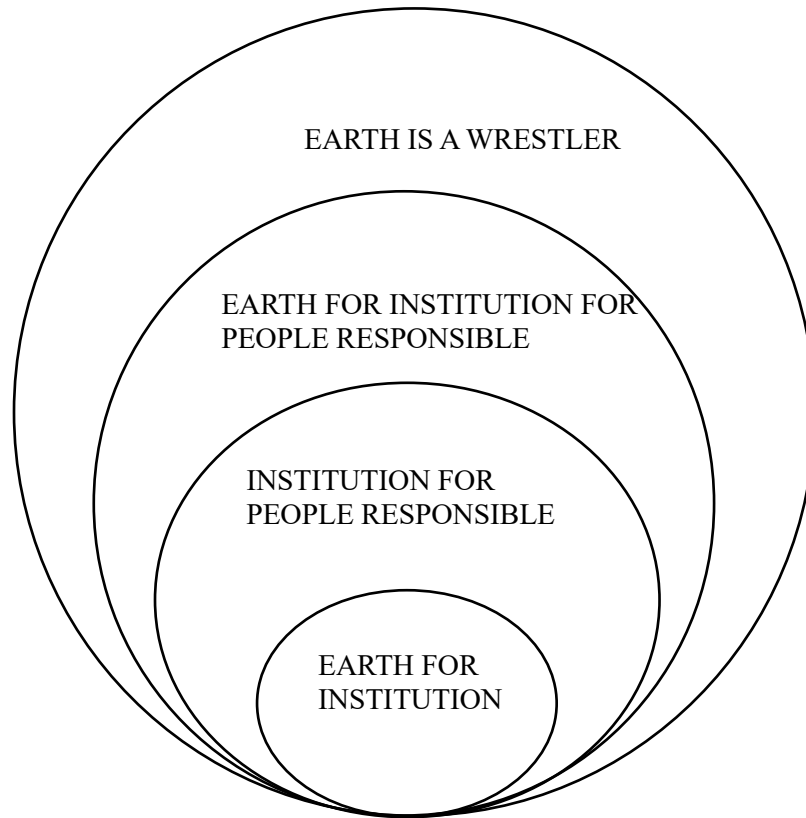


Figure 6.36: Metonymy-based contextual metaphors

Six metonymy-based contextual metaphors have emerged from the analysed data, as summarised in Table 6.36.

Metonymy-Based Contextual Visual Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
GETTING RID OF CORONA IS LIKE CUTTING THOUGH IRON	1	16%
FIRING FROM WORK IS THROWING IN THE SEA	1	16%
IGNORING THE SITUATION IS SLEEPING ON THE JACKET	1	17%
STOPPING THE AIRLINE IS BEING CAUGHT IN THE SPIDER NET	1	17%
THE HEAD IS A BALLON	1	17%
EARTH IS AN ARMWESTLER	1	17%

Table 6.36: The distribution of the metonymy-based contextual visual metaphors

The low frequency rate of the metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor is indicative of the uniqueness of this type of presentation, where cartoonists use this specialised metaphorical

strategy to portray a very specific set of interrelated themes showing their own creativity in creating the metaphor depending on their scenarios.

The third presented metonymy-based metaphor is hybrid visual metaphor, at 10%. An example is illustrated in the cartoon below in Figure 6.37.



Figure 6.37: Global economy (the red arrow); Second wave (the green wave)

A multimodal metonymy of PART FOR WHOLE is presented in this cartoon in Figure 6.37, with ARROW FOR ECONOMY FOR GLOBAL ECONOMY. The target of this metaphorical presentation ARROW is shown in the image mode, while the source GLOBAL ECONOMY is presented in the writing mode. This multimodal metonymy is the basis of the hybrid visual metaphor that shares the same target ARROW to portray that THE ARROW IS A PERSON. The characteristics of the target - ARROW -and source- PERSON- have been mixed to form one entity. This humorous metaphorical presentation intends to illustrate the decline of the global economy, as indexed by the red colour of a partially skinless personified arrow. This personified arrow is terrified of being covered by the COVID-19 second wave, as indexed by its terrified facial expression and body posture, which might result in further decline.

This conceptual chain is illustrated in Figure 6.38.

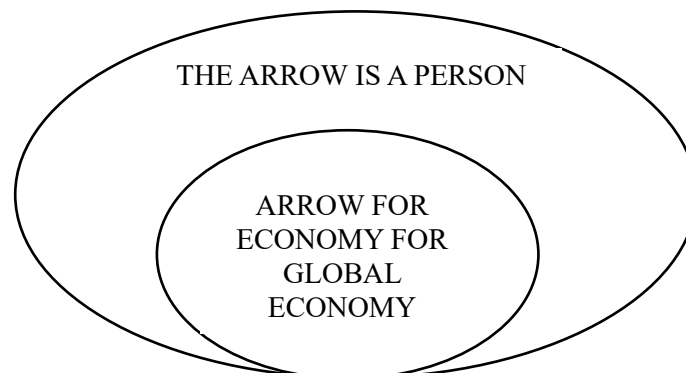


Figure 6.38: Metonymy-based hybrid visual metaphor

THE ARROW IS A PERSON is one hybrid metaphorical presentation based on metonymy that is presented in the data. However, two other metonymy-based hybrid visual metaphors have been identified in the cartoons, leading to a total of three, as illustrated in Table 6.37.

Metonymy-Based Hybrid Visual Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
EARTH IS A PERSON	1	33%
EARTH IS A GROOM	1	33%
ARROW IS A PERSON	1	33%

Table 6.37: The distribution of metonymy-based hybrid visual metaphors.

As shown in Table 6.37, the three metonymy-based hybrid visual metaphors depend solely on the personification of two targets, ARROW and EARTH, which have been metaphorically presented as HUMAN. These have been used by different cartoonists, and cover three different themes: the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, lockdown and the economic impact of COVID-19. The first two themes present EARTH as an individual identity stands for collective identities of people to represent solidarity, as the fight against the virus and the lockdowns are considered to be worldwide phenomena. Conversely, ARROW as a target is related more specifically to the economy theme. This technique of personification helps cartoonists to more efficiently convey their message so that they do not have to rely on abstract entities expressed through the written mode.

#### 6.4.2.4.3.2 Metaphor-Based Metaphor

The second subtype of the conceptual chain metaphor, metaphor-based metaphor, occurs only in one form within this data set, which is the metaphor-based multimodal metaphor. This multimodal metaphor is built on two different types of metaphor: visual and multimodal metaphors. Five examples are found in the analysed data as shown in Table 6.39. Such a finding supports the discussion above that the multimodal metaphor is the most frequent type of metaphor present in Saudi cartoons, including multimodal metaphor and metonymy-multimodal metaphor. An example of a metaphor-based multimodal metaphor is provided in the following cartoon in Figure 6.39.



Figure 6.39: My turn, boys (in the balloon); Swine flu (on the right); SARS (on the left); Corona (in the centre)

In this cartoon (Figure 6.39), three multimodal metaphors: SWINE FLU IS A MONSTER, CORONA IS A MONSTER, and SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME (SARS) IS A MONSTER are presented. The targets of these metaphors, including SWINE FLU, CORONA and SARS, are presented in the writing mode, while their source domain, MONSTER, is shown in the image mode. These three multimodal metaphors form the main metaphor DISEASES ARE MONSTERS. The humour here is created through these exaggerated and quite comic metaphorical depictions of the three diseases and their violence against the personified Earth. This conceptual chain is illustrated in Figure 6.40.

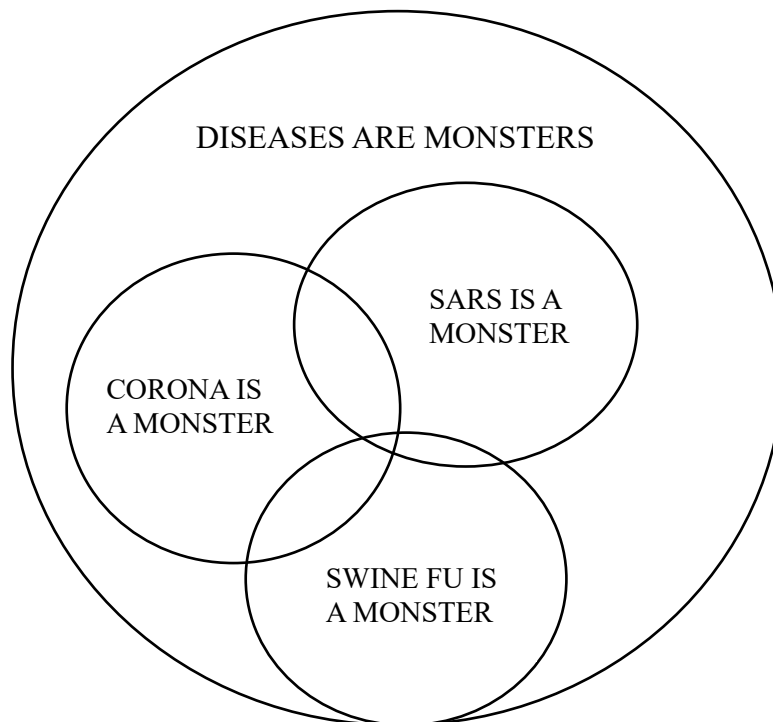


Figure 6.40: Metaphor -based multimodal metaphor

This metaphorical presentation - DISEASES ARE MONSTERS - is one of the five presented metaphors belonging to this subtype, as shown in Table 6.38.

Metaphor -Based Multimodal Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
DISEASES ARE MONSTERS	1	20%
COEXISTING WITH CORONA IS LIKE MARRIAGE	1	20%
CORONA IS A MONSTER IS A HAT	1	20%
DIFFICULTY TO REFINE LOSES OF 2020 IS DIFFICULTY TO BULL THE BIG TRUCK BY SMALL CAR	1	20%
CORONA AND EARTH ARE A MARRIED COUPLE	1	20%

Table 6.38: The distribution of metaphor-based multimodal metaphors.

The five metaphorical presentations in Table 6.38 cover four different themes: virus transmission rate, lockdown, change in social relations, and the economic impact of COVID-19, while they are also associated with four different cartoonists: Ahmad, Ramsi, Alzaydy and Alqamady. Transmorphic metaphors are the most common form, as the sources MONSTER and HUMAN are included 60% of the time. These differences in presentation signify the cartoonists' personal style in delivering their own unique messages.

#### 6.4.2.4.3.3 Metaphor and Metonymy-Based Metaphor

The Third presented subtype is metaphor and metonymy-based metaphor. This type is based on the two tropes - metaphor and metonymy- to form a multimodal metaphor, and contextual visual metaphor. The frequency of the two different metaphor and metonymy-based metaphor subtypes is presented in Table 6.39.

Types of Metaphor and Metonymy-Based Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
Metaphor and metonymy-based multimodal metaphor	11	77%
Metaphor and metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor	3	23%

Table 6.39: The distribution of the metaphor and metonymy-based metaphor types

Table 6.39 shows the frequency of the presented types. The multimodal metaphor is the most common one in the analysed data, at 77%, compared to the contextual visual metaphor, which occurs at a frequency of 23%. The differences in the presentation of these two types are illustrated in the cartoons below. The first example, cartoon in Figure 6.41, portrays the metaphor and metonymy-based multimodal metaphor.

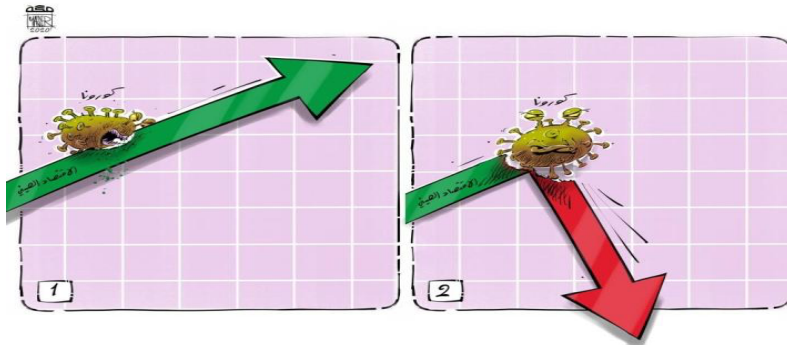


Figure 6.41: Chinese economy (the arrows); Corona (the monster)

In this cartoon, three metonymies are presented. There is the multimodal metonymy ARROW FOR CHINESE ECONOMY, and the two visual metonymies INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION, using THE GREEN ARROW FOR GROWTH and RED ARROW FOR DECLINE. These depictions are the basis of the target in the metaphor and metonymy-based multimodal metaphor, which is CORONA'S EFFECT ON THE CHINESE ECONOMY IS THE VIRUS GOBBLING UP THE ECONOMY. The source of this metaphor is the multimodal metaphor CORONA IS A SMALL MONSTER. The humour here is created by metaphorically presenting corona's economic impact on the Chinese economy as the virus literally eating away at the arrow (China's economy), causing it to rapidly decline.

Table 6.40 illustrates the different eleven presentations of this metaphor found in the data.

Metaphor and Metonymy-Based Multimodal Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
THE PANDEMIC SITUATION IS A RACING CHALLENGE	1	9%
UK FACING CORONA IS A BASEBALL GAME	1	9%
DEALING WITH CORONA IS A BATTLEFIELD	1	9%
WHO IS A WARRIOR	1	9%
VACCINE IS AN UMBERALLA	1	9%
DECREASING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IS BONELESS ARROW	1	9%
SPREADING CONSPIRACY THEORIES IS FILLING THE AIR FOR OTHERS BY PUMPING	1	9%
CORONA'S EFFECT ON THE CHINESE ECONOMY IS THE VIRUS GOBBLING UP THE ECONOMY	1	9%
THE EARTH IS A PATIENT	1	9%
CHALLENGING IS ARMWESTLER	1	9%
CORONA IS BULL IS A MATADOR	1	9%

Table 6.40: The distribution of metaphor and metonymy-based multimodal metaphors.

These eleven metaphorical presentations each have a specific function, as they are used by the cartoonists to expose different pandemic-related concerns. However, six of these presentations



fall under the recurring metaphor PANDEMIC IS WAR, which predominantly deals with the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 theme and uses the following sources: A RACING CHALLENGE, A BATTLEFIELD, WARRIOR, MATADOR and ARMWESTLER.

The other type of metaphor and metonymy-based metaphor, which is metaphor and metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor, is presented in the following example in Figure 6.42.



Figure 6.42: Corona (ball on the right); Economic crisis (ball on the left)

EARTH IS A PRISONER is the metaphor and metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor portrayed in this cartoon (Figure 6.42). This metaphor is based on two visual metonymies and two metonymy-based multimodal metaphors. The target of this metaphor EARTH is visually presented through the visual metonymy EARTH FOR COUNTRIES. On the other hand, the source PRISONER is inferred from the context based on one visual metonymy INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION (IRON BALLS FOR INPRISONMENT), and the two metonymy-based multimodal metaphors CORONA IS AN IRON BALL and ECONOMIC CRISIS IS AN IRON BALL. This metaphorical presentation creates humour by depicting Earth as a prisoner both of corona and its ensuing economic crisis. This conceptual chain is illustrated in Figure 6.43.

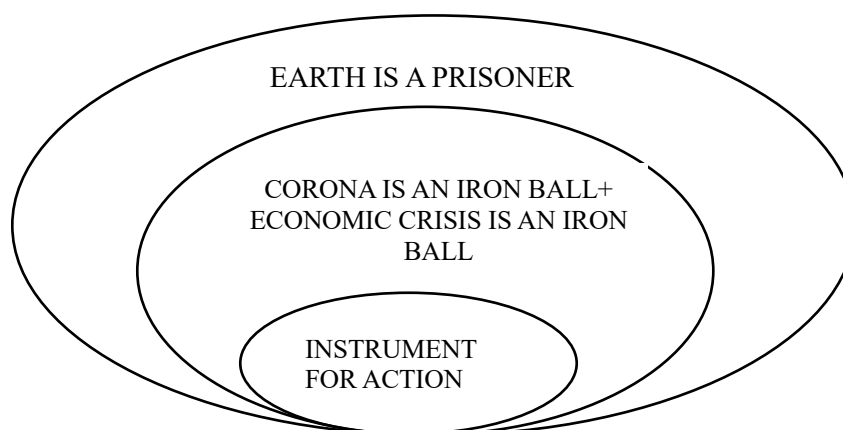


Figure 6.43: Metaphor and metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor

Along with the metaphor - EARTH IS A PRISONER - two other examples are found in the analysed data, as shown in Table 6.41.

Metaphor and Metonymy-Based Contextual Visual Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
EARTH IS A PRISONER	1	33%
EARTH IS A BULL	1	33%
LOSING IS DROWNING	1	33%

Table 6.41: The distribution of metaphor and metonymy-based contextual visual metaphors.

As shown in Table 6.41, the two main targets EARTH and LOSING are presented in this metaphor subtype; metaphor and metonymy-based contextual visual metaphor. EARTH as a target is linked predominantly to the work of Ramsi who tends to portray the themes the economic impact of COVID-19 and emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, and such a target shows his preference for presenting the individual identity as discussed earlier. This target is used with the transmorphic presentation. The other abstract target- LOSING- is more specific to the work of Jabber who predominantly deals with the lockdown theme.

All the metaphorical types mentioned above have been collected and compared based on the mode of presentation (visual and multimodal) and their correlation with cartoonists and dominant themes. Table 6.42 below outlines the two overarching metaphor types and the frequency of their occurrence across the data.

Types of Metaphor	Frequency	Percentage
Multimodal Metaphor	60	77%
Visual Metaphor	27	23%

Table 6.42: The distribution of the types of metaphor and metonymy-based metaphors.

Table 6.42 illustrates the variations in the frequency of the different types of metaphor depending on the used modes, indicating that the verbal metaphor is not presented at all, while the multimodal metaphor occurs most frequently in Saudi cartoons compared to visual metaphors. The differences in their distribution can be attributed to each cartoonist's style and the theme being portrayed, as illustrated in the following tables. Focusing on the cartoonists as an independent variable, Table 6.43 portrays the frequencies of the two metaphor presentations.

Cartoonists	Visual Metaphor	Multimodal Metaphor
Jabbar	3	4
Alzaydy	0	6
Almarzuqy	1	1
Alrabee	3	9
Almathy	2	2
Alkamasy	8	5
Hajad	2	3
Alqamady	1	11
Ramsi	6	12
Hulu	0	0
Ahmad	1	7

Table 6.43: The relation between the cartoonists and the types of the metaphors

Table 6.43 shows the relation between the metaphor types and the cartoonists. Most of the Saudi cartoonists show a preference for the multimodal metaphor, which supports Alahmadi's (2022) finding as she concluded that Saudi cartoonists prefer using this kind of metaphorical presentation to convey their critical stance, yet while communicating it through a humorous framework. Despite this, Alkamasy prefers using the visual metaphor over the multimodal one. Almarzoque and Almathy, on the other hand, use the two types of the metaphor in a similar frequency. Moreover, Hulu does not employ any metaphorical presentation, although this trend cannot be generalised and understood to be his signature style, as only one of his cartoons has been included in this data set. The other independent variable (the ten dominant cartoon themes) that affects the choice of metaphor types, is presented in Table 6.44

Themes	Visual Metaphor	Multimodal Metaphor
The change in social relations	1	6
Public protection	4	4
The impact on education and work	0	0
Lockdown	2	8
The economic impact of COVID-19	6	11
Vaccine rollout	1	4
The emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19	8	12
International political discourse	1	4
Virus transmission rate	2	6
The impact on travel and tourism	2	5

Table 6.44: The relation between the themes and the types of the metaphors

It can be noticed from Table 6.44 that in relation to most of the themes, the multimodal metaphor is predominantly used in comparison to the visual metaphor. More specifically, the metaphorical presentation is used more with emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19 where two characters are usually depicted to be in a fight. The cartoonist here is forced to

be creative in portraying the COVID-19 character as “fighting” either with humans or a personified Earth. Moreover, through the multimodal metaphor, the cartoonist usually uses the writing mode in the form of a caption to label characters, while the image mode is used to depict the caricature that participates in the fighting. Moreover, the theme- the economic impact of COVID-19- deploys the multimodal metaphor as being the second most presented theme in utilizing this type of metaphor. Such a high frequency might be attributed to the fact that the economic terms and objects are difficult to identify abstractly in the cartoon; therefore, the cartoonist is more creative in creating them metaphorically in the image mode while labelling such presentation is shown in the writing mode. However, the public protection theme almost always deploys the two metaphor types, which could be due to the fact that some protection measures can be easily identified by the readers, therefore, the visual metaphors are used. On the other hand, the multimodal metaphors used to discuss the issues related to the protection use the visual context to portray one of the domains – target or source as been easy to be identified by the readers. Moreover, one theme – impact on education and work - was found not to include any metaphorical presentation, and that could be a result of using actual characters such as students and teachers to depict the theme in the cartoons.

Table 6.45 presents the two types of metaphor and their occurrence in relation to the four incongruity classifications.

Incongruity classifications	Visual Metaphor	Multimodal Metaphor
Frame-based	38	75
Image-based	14	21
Writing-based	0	8
Writing-image	9	14

Table 6.45: The relation between the incongruity classifications and the types of the metaphors

It can be noticed in Table 6.45 that incongruity in the writing mode does not employ the visual metaphor at all. On the other hand, the multimodal metaphor occurs across all the incongruity classifications, as the two modes can stand alone (image-based incongruity and writing-based incongruity), can be combined (writing-image incongruity), or can be based on the frame.

To sum up, it is important to note that metaphor as a humor form in the analysed data shows transmorphic identifications: either personification by combining one entity with a human, zoomorphic by combining one entity with an animal, or transformation by mixing an entity with magical or mythological beings (Carbajal-Carrera, 2015). The most frequently occurring

type in the data is personification, which correlates mainly with two targets-EARTH and COVID-19. In relation to the common tendency by cartoonists to portray disease, in our case Covid-19- through personification, this “facilitates our understanding of the world and our reaction to it” (Alkhamash, 2023, p.3). Furthermore, personification is used with the two types of metaphors -visual and multimodal - illustrating that this transmorphism is not exclusively limited to multimodal metaphors (Forceville and Urios-Aparisi, 2009). Transformation is the second most widely used metaphorical transmorphism in these cartoons as Saudi cartoonists mostly depict the evilness of COVID-19 through the presence of a MONSTER, and such a depiction is also found in relation to other viruses portrayed in the data, such as SWINE FLU and SARS. Such a depiction supports Silva’s (2020) finding that the theme COVID-19 AS AN ENEMY was extensively used in news discourse during the pandemic. COVID-19 in these two dominant metaphorical depictions- personification and transformation - is presented mostly as a male caricature with only one female influence being found, which supports to some extent the gender stereotyping found in Arab cartoons. This is confirmed by Abdel-Raheem’s (2023) study and his finding that the male character in Arab cartoons is usually depicted in terms of its strength and overbearing masculinity.

The relationship between humor forms and the three independent variables of cartoonists, themes, and incongruity classifications were discussed in detail in the previous section. The following section provides a general presentation of these relations. By understanding these relations, we can gain a better understanding of how humor works and how it is used in cartoons.

## **6.5 The Relationship Between Humour Forms and the Three Independent Variables**

The chapter so far has assessed the link between the three independent variables and each type of humour. The following section will conclude the analysis and bring all the elements of the discussion together by taking a birds eye view and looking at how humour as an overall category relates to the three variables, which include: the cartoonists, the ten dominant themes, and the incongruity classifications.

The first correlation to be examined is the cartoonists and their use of the different humour forms, which is visually portrayed in the below graphs (Figure 6.44 and Figure 6.45).

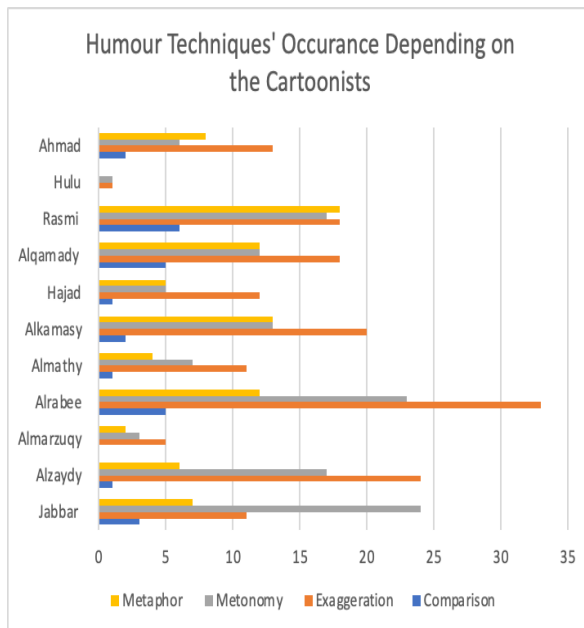


Figure 6.44: The correlation between the humour techniques and cartoonists

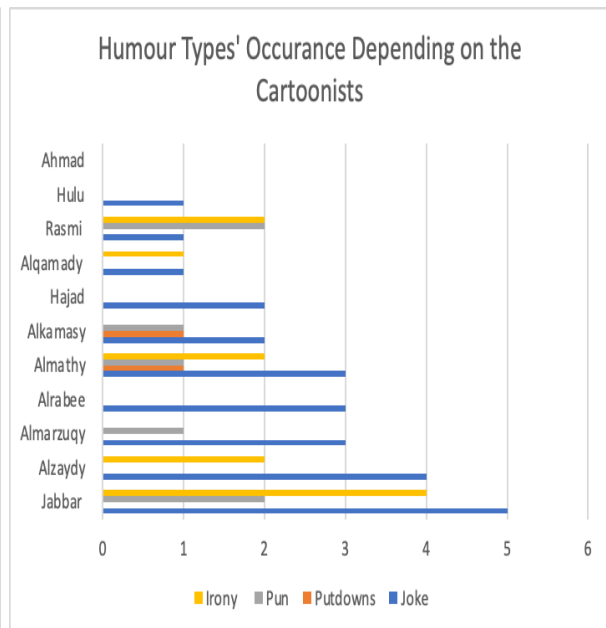


Figure 6.45: The correlation between the humour types and cartoonists

It can be noticed from Figure 6.44 that all the cartoonists use two humour techniques, exaggeration and metonymy. These two techniques are frequently used, signifying their importance as vehicles of humour in the cartoons. The other two techniques, metaphor and comparison, are used by most cartoonists, but not all. This suggests that their use is more dependent on the cartoonist's style preferences and the specific themes they cover in each cartoon. For example, Almarzuqy does not use comparison, and Hulu does not use either comparison or metaphor.

The frequency of humour types according to the cartoonists in Table 6.45 shows that they are used mainly depending on the cartoonist's preference, rather than the humour techniques, which are considered more important characteristics of the cartoons. The joke is the most common humour type used by cartoonists, but the other humour types, such as puns, putdowns, and irony, have different presentations depending on the cartoonist.

A closer look reveals that some cartoonists purposefully avoid certain humour forms. For example, Jabbar and Ramsi use all humour types except for putdowns, while Alkamasy does not use irony in his cartoons. Almarzuqy, on the other hand, does not use both in his cartoons. Additionally, Alzaydy and Alqamady have not used two humour types in their cartoons: puns and putdowns. Hajad, on the other hand, has not used three humour forms out of eight: puns, irony, and putdowns. This variation in the use of humour types suggests that cartoonists have

different preferences for how they use humour to create their cartoons. Some cartoonists may prefer to use more direct humour, such as joke and putdowns while others may prefer to use more undirect humour, such as pun and irony.

Two interesting deployments of the different humour forms are found in the work of Ahmad and Hulu, both of whom display a very specific preference for using particular humour forms that draw on their preferred modes. The former depends mainly on the image mode in his cartoons, thus focusing more on comparison, exaggeration, metonymy and metaphor humour forms. On the other hand, Hulu focuses more on the writing mode in creating meaning in his illustrations, thus preferring to use jokes, exaggeration, and metonymy. However, as mentioned above, the data includes just one example of Hulu’s work, and so any generalisation about his signature style is difficult. Moreover, while all the Saudi cartoonists use exaggeration and metonymy in their illustrations to create humour, a large number of them seem to avoid three humour forms to deliver their humorous intent, including putdowns, puns, and irony, using them only very sparingly.

The other independent variable- themes- also has an important effect on the choice of humour forms. The relationship between the two is portrayed in Figure 6.46 and Figure 6.47.

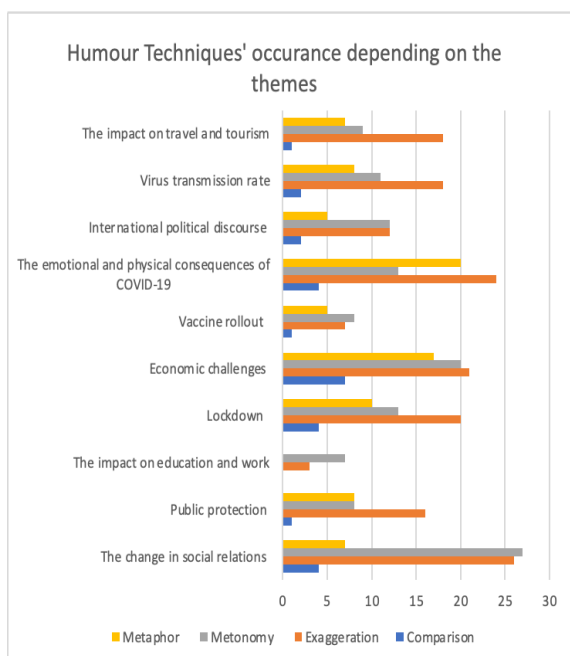


Figure 6.46: The correlation between humour techniques and themes

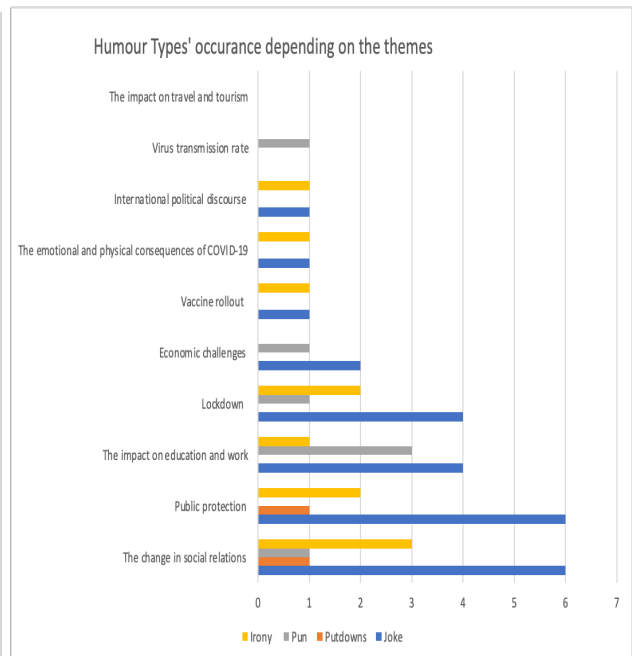


Figure 6.47: The correlation between humour types and themes

Figure 6.46 illustrates the above findings, which is that the two humour techniques- exaggeration and metonymy- are the most frequently used in the analysed data. While exaggeration and metonymy are essential in creating humour in cartoons, they also play an important role in distinguishing this genre from the other kinds of illustrations. In addition, the other humour techniques -metaphor, comparison- are also frequently used in most of the themes, except for the impact on education and work theme. This could be a result of the cartoonists' preference as there is some potential in using the metaphor in depiction, for example, a personified school, tablet, and so on. The other one is the comparison; a cartoonist could compare two entities- one related to online education and the other to the off-line education. Therefore, not using these two techniques within this theme is more attributed to the cartoonists' preferences in using the available techniques to cover a particular theme- as discussed above.

On the other hand, the humour types in Figure 6.47 show variation in their presentations as that jokes and irony are the two most presented types in most of the ten dominant themes. However, virus transmission rate of spreading is the theme that does not deploy jokes and irony as it tends to rely more on the image mode. In addition, the economic impact of COVID-19 theme does not use irony, which is most probably attributed to the cartoonists' own unique personal style as there is a potentiality in using the ironic situation of the economic changes before and during the pandemic such as the prices. Therefore, not using this type within this theme might be more attributed to the cartoonists' style.

The other humour types-pun and putdown- differ in their occurrence depending on the presented themes. Four themes in the analysed data, the public protection, vaccine rotulets, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, and international political discourse, have not used the humour form, puns. The reason for not using puns in relation to these themes could be attributed to a lack of theme-specific terminology that the cartoonists can manipulate in order to create humour. As discussed above, this is in contrast to the theme that uses puns the most – the impact on education and work - due to the new concepts and terms that emerged in Saudi popular culture once education was transferred online during the pandemic.

On the other hand, the impact on education and work theme, does not deploy the humour type putdowns, and that might be attributed to the fact of the difficulty of offending the students or the teachers who dealing with a lot of challenges during the pandemic to complete the



educational process. Although putdowns could be used to criticize COVID-19, such as in the case of vaccine roulette, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, political figures in the case of the economic impact of COVID-19 and international political discourse, and lockdown violators in the case of the lockdown theme, other forms of humour, such as jokes, irony, puns, and metaphors, are used instead. This leads to other possible reasoning which is that the type of humour used is strongly related to the cartoonists' style and preference. This reasoning supports the conclusion that the cartoonists are the most important variable in influencing the humour forms used, as this choice depends on their creativity, style of the presentation, and the theme that they cover.

The other independent variable that also has a significant correlation with the humour forms is the incongruity classifications. Figure 6.48 and Figure 6.49 present this relationship.

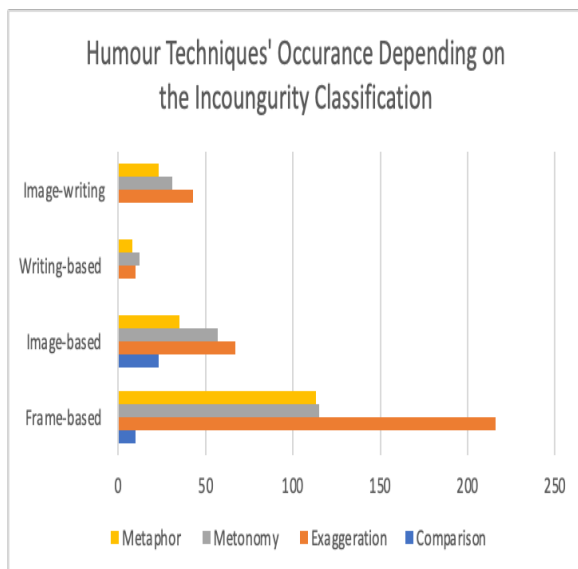


Figure 6.48: The correlation between humour techniques and incongruity classifications

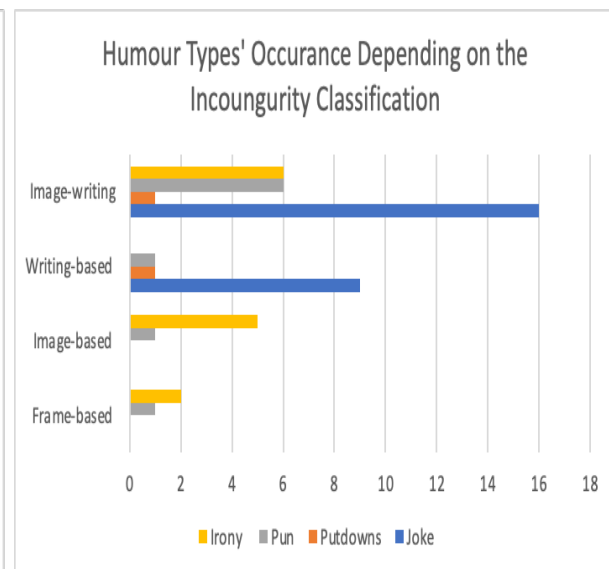


Figure 6.49: The correlation between humour types and incongruity classifications

As presented in Figure 6.48 and Figure 6.49, humour techniques and humour types differ in their correlation with the incongruity classifications. In general, humour techniques are more likely to be associated with frame-based and image-based incongruities. Humour types, on the other hand, are more likely to be associated with writing-image based and writing-based incongruities for jokes and putdowns, and image-based incongruity for pun and irony.

Despite the fact that the humour forms exaggeration, metonymy and metaphor occur across all four incongruity classifications, they occur more with the frame-based and image-based

incongruities. This pattern can be attributed to the fact that the exaggerated features are usually presented in the image mode, the most frequently occurring type of metonymy is also the visual one, while in terms of metaphors, the ones present in the data are mainly multimodal and visual forms. On the other hand, comparison, is shown to be exclusively linked to two kinds of incongruities, including frame-based and image-based. The two compared entities in the cartoon usually belong to the same category, which means that the comparison might take place through appearance, thus placing it within the image-based incongruity classification. In contrast, if the comparison is related more to the role of the character, the frame-based incongruity is the one most relevant.

On the other hand, jokes as a verbal humour form have been attributed to the two incongruity classifications: writing-based and writing-image-based incongruities. Such a correlation makes sense if it is seen in light of the joke types presented earlier in Section 6.2.1 based on Dynel's classifications. According to this, it has found in the analysed data that a joke that is based solely on writing or where the image just adds to the overall sense of humour, has the incongruity to be writing-based. On the other hand, a joke that is based on the opposition between the writing and image modes falls more into the writing-image incongruity. Although putdowns occur with a low frequency across the data, as pointed out earlier in Table 6.5, the type of putdown affects the associated incongruity. For instance, written putdown occurs with just the writing-based incongruity, whereas visual putdowns are based more on the writing-image incongruity, as the image mode plays a bigger role in creating this type of putdown.

Despite the fact that puns occur across all four incongruity classifications, they are presented more using the writing-image incongruity, which contributes to the fact that the multimodal pun is the type most widely used, as illustrated above in Figure 6.3. Multimodal puns present in the analysed data convey one meaning in the writing mode, and another in the image mode. In relation to irony, it is depicted more using both the image-based incongruity and writing-image incongruity, which is related to the fact that situational irony is the most common type in the data, as shown in Figure 6.6 that the image can show the situation clearly comparing in using the writing mode. This type of irony is presented more frequently and has been depicted in the cartoon either based on the two modes- image and writing - or just solely based on the image mode.

The above discussion has highlighted the correlation between the humour forms in general and the three presented variables: the cartoonists, the ten dominant themes, and the incongruity classifications. It can be shown that humour techniques are essential forms of humour that are often used by cartoonists to explore different themes. Three of the most common techniques are metaphor, metonymy (Genova, 2018), and exaggeration (McCloud, [1993] 2006) that are the defining characteristics of the genre-cartoons. These techniques also help to create humour either standing alone or being combined with the other humour forms. On the other hand, the presentations of the other humour types shown mainly their dependence on the style of the cartoonists and their preference in conveying a particular message about certain theme. Moreover, some certain themes show their applicability to use particular humour types more than the others, as in the case of pun. The incongruity classifications show their strong correlation with the presented humour forms, both types and techniques, depending on the presented mode- image and writing.

The following section will conclude by providing an overview of all the essential points discussed in this chapter.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented an analysis of the 61 selected cartoons in relation to the ten dominant themes and the eleven cartoonists. Yus' three incongruity-resolution classifications' system (2016,2021) has formed the underpinning of this analysis, although it has been extended within this thesis to include a fourth classification where the incongruity and the resolution are both image-based. Overall, the four resolutions and four incongruity types have been paired to reveal fifteen classification patterns in the analysed data. Two of these pairings are depicted more frequently in the Saudi cartoons analysed, including frame-based incongruity and frame-based resolution, and the frame-based incongruity and the implication-based resolution. Based on the above, it can be concluded that frame-based is the most commonly presented incongruity in the analysed data, while frame-based and implication-based are the two most frequent types of resolutions occurring throughout the data. Moreover, the data has been analysed by examining the humour forms deployed in the given cartoons, which has revealed eight humour forms, including: metaphor, metonymy, exaggeration, puns, irony, jokes, putdowns, and comparisons. These humour forms have differed in their frequency of occurrence, as puns, putdowns, and irony are the least presented forms in the analysed data. Jokes and comparisons make a moderate appearance, while the most frequently occurring ones are exaggeration, metonymy

and metaphor. These differences show that the three most common humour forms are essential to identify an artefact as a cartoon, which supports the same conclusion found by Genova (2018) that metaphor and metonymy are the essence of the cartoon genre, and by McCloud (1993) who pointed to the importance of exaggeration to create cartoon.

The mode plays essential role in the humour form classifications. Depending on the used mode, jokes, metaphor, metonymy, and puns are the four humour forms that are classified as being either verbal, visual and multimodal, although the multimodal presentation is the one used the most. Conversely, the verbal form is either not used at all, as in the case of metaphor, or is the least used, as in the case of jokes, metonymy, and puns, and that shows that the image mode overweights the writing mode due to their affordance as image mode can express the ideas easily (Machin and Mayr, 2012; Rose, 2022). Moreover, exaggeration and comparison are two humour forms that their classifications were driven from the used modal resources by the cartoonists, most of them being shown more with the image mode.

Irony is the only humour form where its classifications are based more on the whole cartoon presentation to be that dramatic, situational and verbal. Verbal irony, like other humour types, is not preferred by cartoonists, as it is present in just one example in the data. This is indicative of the fact that cartoonists prefer taking advantage of the multimodality aspect of cartoons by either using the image mode or the two modes together to create humour, and that shows the important of the modality of the cartoons and the affordance of each mode that has to convey the humorous meaning.

The eight humour forms have also been examined more specifically in relation to the three independent variables: the eleven cartoonists, the ten dominant themes, and the four incongruity classifications. The most significant result is that the cartoonists are the one that are responsible in selecting the humour forms to create humour. However, there are some certain themes that affect the selection of the humour form and the preference of one over the other. The most outstanding results about such a relation is found in the incongruity classifications and that supports Yus' claim about incongruity as a basis of the humour as that the other types of humour that were applied have a strong correlation with them depending on the selected mode.

However, metonymy is the only humour form that is shown to occur across all the incongruity classifications despite its difference in the presentation of the type. Such occurrence shows that metonymy is not the main humour type, but it is a subordinate one<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> This function of metonymy is also found in Genova's (2018) conclusion.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Research Findings and Discussion**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the interpretation and implications of the findings pertaining to the analysed data in Chapters 5 and 6, drawing upon the theoretical frameworks employed in this research. Specifically, the first Section (7.2) discusses how Saudi cartoons have represented the pandemic, focusing on the thematic presentation and participant representation. The second Section (7.3) considers how humour is produced by addressing the incongruity and humour forms, and the correlation that exists. Moreover, it discusses the relationship between the thematic presentation and humour. Then main contributions of the study are stated in Section 7.4. At the end of the chapter, the limitations and further research recommendations are provided in Section 7.4.

#### **7.2 The Saudi Cartoons Representation of COVID-19 Pandemic**

The following two sections examine the thematic presentation and participant representation within the Saudi cartoons, in an attempt to answer the first main question in this study.

*RQ1 How have Saudi cartoons portrayed the COVID-19 pandemic?*

##### **7.2.1 Thematic Presentations**

This section seeks to answer the first sub-question of the first main question. It presents the different themes developed from the analysed data. It also explains the difference in the dominance of the themes in the Covid-19 phases that Saudi Arabia went through. Moreover, the presentation of the sub-themes for each main themes are provided.

*1.a What are the main themes and sub-themes presented in the Saudi cartoons relating to the COVID-19 pandemic?*

Ten themes were extracted from the 212 Saudi cartoons: virus transmission rate, the emotional and physical consequences of COVID-19, the impact on education and work, vaccine rollout, lockdown, international political discourse, public protection, the change in social relations, the impact on travel and tourism, as well as the economic impact of COVID-19. These themes had been determined to refer to the most salient written and visual signs, along with the

presented setting in the cartoon (illustrated in detail in Section 4.2.2). Owing to similarities in adherence to the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidance during the pandemic, countries experienced similar phases at different times. These similarities resulted in the emergence of some shared themes (see Chapter 5). Lockdown, for example, is one of the primary themes in the analysed data, which was also noticed in most of the national cartoons, including Nigeria (Asiru & Bello, 2021), Jourdan (Hussein & Aljamili, 2020; Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021), and Canada (Labbé et al., 2022). The reason for such emergence is that lockdown was one of the safety measures proposed by WHO to reduce the spreading of the virus.

Although certain main themes align with findings in other studies (see Chapter 5), the analysis reveals the distinctions in their frequency and dominance. These variations are contingent on the specific timeframes within the four phases observed in Saudi Arabia during the pandemic: the spread of COVID-19, the lockdown, the curfew lifting, and the vaccine rollout and return to everyday life (see Section 5.2). The analysis of the data indicates a significant correlation between the first phase (COVID-19 spreading) and the theme of virus transmission rate, highlighting the rapid spread and high infection and death rates during the initial outbreak of the pandemic. In the second phase, which involved the lockdown, cartoons were published mostly under the specific theme of 'lockdown'. These cartoons aimed to convey the significance of the measure and underscored the importance of people adhering to such restrictions. When the curfew was lifted (third phase), various cartoonists introduced public protection as the main theme presented in this period, exhibiting their social responsibility in advising people to be careful and to be civic minded during this phase. Concerning the final phase- vaccine rollout and return back to everyday life- vaccine rollout was employed as the primary theme due to its innovation. The cartoons mainly encouraged people to take it. Moreover, these phases, along with government decisions and people's reactions, contribute significantly to deducing different sub-themes in the Saudi analysed cartoons, distinguishing them from other published studies.

The most noticeable classification of the sub-themes that followed the presented phases in Saudi Arabia are lockdown, COVID-19 impact on travel and tourism, and vaccine rollout. Taking the impact of COVID-19 on travel and tourism as an example, the alignment with the identified phases is significant, encompassing three sub-themes:

a) **Open airline travel:** associated with the first phase of the spreading of COVID-19. This sub-theme illustrates how unregulated airline travel contributed to the spread of the virus

b) **Halting airline travel:** associated with the lockdown phase demonstrates that implementing travel bans could contribute to halting the spread of the pandemic

c) **Resuming domestic airline travel:** depicted in the third phase when the curfew was lifted. This sub-theme covers the reopening of airline travel and addresses its consequences in increasing the prices of domestic tourism.

Furthermore, certain presented sub-themes differed from those identified by other researchers due to the examination of different societies, specifically Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the Saudi perspective and beliefs regarding the pandemic are strongly constructed in analysed cartoons, showing mainly government decisions and people's reactions. The authority's reaction towards the pandemic identified the significance of the lockdown that was applied to control the spread of the virus. The cartoonists made adequate references to the three stages of lockdown that Saudi Arabia went through (i.e., partial lockdown, full lockdown, and lifting the curfew) and made reference to the government campaigns encouraging people to adhere to the lockdown measures. Moreover, the authority's action towards the violators of the lockdown, dishonest traders and rumour spreaders is clearly depicted in the analysed cartoons under several sub-themes: the disobedience towards safety guidelines, the Saudi economy, and rumour and news, respectively. Such presentations in the cartoons reflect the authority's main contribution to protecting the people's health and prioritising the well-being of the populace. The cartoons also contribute to showing different sub-themes reflecting on the shared knowledge about the authorities' contribution to minimising the danger of COVID-19 and continuing education. The cartoons alluded to the innovative application of *Twakkalna* and *Madrasati*. The former app, *Twakkalna*, is shown in the cartoons differently. It is depicted with the two sub-themes, full lockdown and partial lockdown when discussing social distancing. Later, it is presented when referring to the vaccination with the sub-theme using the vaccination as a weapon to fight back against COVID-19. The other one, *Madrasati*, is the platform for continuing education and coping with the pandemic. This platform is shown in the cartoon with the sub-themes: the challenges of online education and learning from home.

Moreover, the behaviour and reaction of the Saudi citizens also help in deducing and shaping different sub-themes within different main themes. For instance, the deduced sub-themes of public protection are compliance with safety guidelines and disobedience towards safety guidelines. The former shows the followers' reactions, while the latter reflects the opponents'



reaction toward the safety measures. The other example is the sub-theme of gender roles and relations that is presented in the social relations theme, illustrated more in Section 7.2.2.2.

In general, the analysed data reflects how the cartoonists discussed the main themes in relation to the real-life events occurring globally in general and in Saudi Arabia, specifically during the pandemic. This conclusion is in keeping with El Refaie's (2009) claim that cartoons mirror the real-life experiences of the readers and depend on their knowledge and competence. Therefore, Saudi cartoons concerning COVID-19 communicate an understanding of how the pandemic was experienced in Saudi Arabia and internationally, as evidenced by their thematic presentations that strongly correlate with the events and news that unfolded across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the history of Saudi Arabia would be enriched as the cartoons recorded the pandemic from its start to nearly end with the vaccine innovation. History is clearly reflected in the four phases and the themes that mirrored the situation during that period. It shows how authorities reacted toward the pandemic to minimise its spreading and to overcome the pandemic with less damage (i.e., human life and economic losses), along with the citizens' reactions. The representation of the Saudi authority, citizens (Saudi men and women), and other participants in the cartoons will be discussed in the following section.

### **7.2.2 Pandemic-Related Represented Participants**

This section aims to discuss the representation of the represented characters shown in the analysed data to answer the following sub-question.

*1.b What types of participants related to the pandemic do these cartoons predominantly represent and how is this undertaken multimodally?*

The analysed data distinctly shows that the Saudi cartoons exhibited five main representations multimodally, including COVID-19, Earth, Saudi men and women, Saudi authorities and international countries and governments. Their representations principally drew on (1) shared beliefs and stereotypes, and (2) presented phases and themes.

#### **7.2.2.1 COVID-19**

Seeing as COVID-19 is an invisible entity that had never been portrayed previously, Saudi cartoonists became inventive in their representation of this organism. The most commonly shared representation of COVID-19 is that of a monster, following the metaphor COVID-19 IS

A MONSTER. This representation shares the same underlined cognitive metaphor DISEASE IS A MONSTER evidenced in studies on representations of other diseases, such as cancer (Forceville and Paling, 2021). Depicting COVID-19 to be a monster raised the sense of considering it as enemy that attacks people, aligning with Wasserman and Joubert's (2023) claim. Therefore, this metaphorical representation delivers a sense of the struggle that people withstand so as to remain alive, adhering to the metaphor that the PANDEMIC IS A BATTLEFIELD/WAR (see Alkhamash, 2023).

The representation of COVID-19 as being malevolent aligns with its representation in many published studies investigating COVID-19 cartoons in different contexts, for example, in South Africa (Wasserman and Joubert, 2023) and in Jordanian cartoons (Lulu, Habeeb & Abdul Racman, 2021). The degree of malevolence as regards COVID-19 generally differs depending on the presented phases and themes. During the initial phase of the pandemic, COVID-19 was depicted as a formidable organism, highlighting its strength and rapid transmission as it spread rapidly across the world. Likewise, it was pointed out that the virus would have a detrimental impact as a consequence of not following the safety guidelines, including social distancing and wearing masks. In this phase, the cartoonists primarily show the cartoons in a medium shot to promote a sense of public engagement and urgency regarding the threat associated with the coronavirus.

In turn, COVID-19 is presented as a vulnerable organism when Saudis are shown to be following the measures. This sort of presentation typically asks for reader engagement, suggesting a superior relationship between the followers' health awareness and COVID-19. Furthermore, COVID-19 was revealed to have the same strength as Earth, specifically during the two phases- lockdown, and vaccine rollout and return back to normal life- to demonstrate the potential of defeating COVID-19 by adhering to the lockdown and having the vaccination. This variation in the presentation raises readers awareness of the threat of COVID-19 and the need to follow the precautionary measures and have the vaccination.

Moreover, the metaphorical presentations of COVID-19 behave differently depending on the metaphor types in relation to the mode: multimodal and visual metaphor. The former was predominantly utilised in the first phases and therefore contributed to using multimodal metaphor to facilitate target domain recognition. In other words, the cartoonists employ this type of metaphor to enable the readers easily recognise the visual presentations associated with

COVID-19 by labelling it using the written mode. This type of metaphor was used less in the final phases compared to the visual metaphors as the cartoonists become more confident with the readers' ability to recognise the entity without using the written mode to highlight the target. This is in line with the conclusion made by El Refaie (2009) as regards the importance of the level of exposure to the cartoons to understand this genre. This can also be applied to the metaphor, as the greater exposure to the metaphorical presentation undoubtedly allows the reader to recognise the representation of COVID-19 in contrast to the early stages. This finding confirms the significance of multimodality in the presentation of the new idea, figure or concept to the readers for the first time and could be represented later in one mode.

#### **7.2.2.2 Saudi Men and Women**

Saudi men and women were the second most presented characters in the Saudi cartoons. Their representations in the cartoons are easily identified due to the traditional clothing, principally thawb for males and 'bāyh and covering for females. However, their representations in the study exhibit two distinctive stereotypical beliefs pertaining to (1) Saudi Arabia is a society that dominated by males (Giladi, 2013; Alsadi and Howard, 2021), and (2) males are the rule breakers, whereas females are more likely to adhere to the rules particularly within the context of COVID-19 (Allington et al., 2021). The following discussions illustrated both these points depending on the analysed data.

In the cartoons, specific cartoonists presented the topotypical presentation of the Saudi community to be masculine-dominant by portraying women to be responsible for carrying out the household chores while Saudi men were sat at home resting, watching television or working online. However, these roles have exchanged during the pandemic, which makes the cartoonists confident when making stair by altering the roles of Saudi men and women which is culturally unacceptable as it is seen as a violation of cultural norms (see Alsadi and Howard, 2021). Despite depicting these exchangeable roles, cartoonists deliberately create a distance for the readers by long shot to ensure that the readers would appreciate the stair, considering that some readers might not readily accept these role reversals. The presented exchanged roles in the analysed cartoons include men cooking instead women, women shaving their husband's beards, and fathers becoming more involve in educating their children than mothers.

The new trends reflect the actual changes that Saudi society experienced during the pandemic, which can be compared to other crises like World War I and World War II where the gender

roles changed between males and females. In World War I, women became more involved in the workforce, whilst in World War II, roles changed as women became more active in the war effort while men became more involved in childcare and household responsibilities as in UK, for example (see IWM, n.d; Broyles, 2022).

In certain cartoons, Saudi men and women were shown to be “covidient” by portraying them as following the guidelines in an exaggerated way; for example, living in a sanitiser bottle (see Labbé et al., 2022). However, the oblique and frontal angle with a long shot distance were utilised when depicting the positive consequence of adhering to the guidelines as being safe from COVID-19. The former made readers observers of these behaviours (detach from any personal engagement), although the frontal angle was used in a number of the cartoons to share and engage the readers of the positive impact of following the precautionary measures and exhibiting the reassuring consequences. This presentation engages the readers and makes them feel protected from the virus, akin to the characters presented in the cartoons. It might encourage the readers to follow the same measures, such as wearing a mask and getting vaccinated to feel reassured.

In other cartoons, the shared stereotypical presentation of the ruler-breakers as being male was presented in the analysed data. They describe Saudi men as “covidiot,” who are “self-centred” without a sense of solidarity or “concern for others” (Labbé et al., 2022, p.7), particularly when they failed to adhere to the lockdown, violated the precautionary measures and spread rumours.

Both written and image modes were applied to describe Saudi men in a negative manner. The written mode described them using two different referential characteristics, including negative terms, for instance ‘recklessness’, ‘stubbornness’ and ‘ignorant’ (as depicted in verbal putdowns) or positive ones, but which have negative connotations as in the case of using the two adjectives ‘hero’ and ‘cute’ meaning foolish<sup>56</sup>. Moreover, the image mode was utilised to indicate their behaviour by mocking them visually, and the consequence of such a violation, such as becoming infected with COVID-19 or being caught by the authorities. It is worth noting that the violators were presented individually, and primarily in a long shot and from an oblique angle to avoid that viewer felt involved and accused of behaving inappropriately<sup>57</sup>. However,

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<sup>56</sup> They were said to encourage the reckless individual to keep violating the social distancing measures.

<sup>57</sup> The type of violated measure has a different framing, including medium and close up shots (see 5.2.1.3). Moreover, a few cartoons were presented using a front angle to engage the readers and make them aware that the consequence of the violation was contracting COVID-19.

that was not commonly the case, as the collective identity of the male and female were presented in several of the cartoons published during the lifting of the curfew phase to confirm the abuse of social distancing measures. In this case, the cartoonists are accusing both genders of not adhering to social distancing when the curfew was lifted, which, nevertheless, could result in the spread of the virus. The study's findings indicate that the cartoons represent men as more likely to engage in rule-breaking behaviours that can be carried out individually. However, as regards violating social distancing, both men and women in cartoons were equally likely to engage in such behaviour. This observation is consistent with the stereotypical perception of women as social beings who are more likely to adhere to social expectations.

In general, both the representations and perspectives explained the social dynamics associated with the Saudi community, along with the possibility of change taking place within a community over time. The stereotyping is not exclusive to gender in the Saudi community but also to the authority as presented below.

### **7.2.2.3 Saudi Authority and People in Power**

The third representation of the participants pertains to the Saudi authorities and people in power. Saudi individuals who have power over the other citizens were identified in the analysed cartoons using a long shot. The presentation with this shot is used to distance the readers from the presumed power as this power is imposed mostly over those who violate the guidelines. The Saudi cartoonists depicted the people in power to be either (1) wearing the Bisht-cloak worn over a thawb<sup>58</sup>, or (2) were metaphorically presented as having large hands. Identifying men visually by means of the Bisht has a connotation with power as the Bisht is a traditional item of clothing typically among Saudi men, which is worn by people in power.

The other presentation (large hands) alludes to the popular phrase “يد القانون” (the hand of the law), conveying the identity of the Saudi authorities as humans - AUTHORITIES ARE HUMAN who are represented to be larger than the other depicted individuals in the cartoon to show their power. However, “hand of the law” is not exclusive phraseology that the metaphor

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<sup>58</sup> It is “[u]sually black, brown, grey, beige or white. It is the most traditional and prestigious Saudi outfits, associated with royalty, wealth and ceremony, similar to the black-tie tuxedo in the West” (Tashkandi, 2020, para 2).

depends on in the Saudi context, but it also witnessed in the other contexts in different cultures, such as Greek and Latin.

In addition to the visual presentation as regards recognising the target of the power, the cartoonists also employed the writing mode to label the people in power, for example CEO and MoH. Using such stereotypical identifications indicates that it is easy for readers to recognise those in power. Generally, the two different representations of people in power demonstrate their superiority over the others who also depicted in the cartoons<sup>59</sup>, highlighting the ‘otherness’ based on the principle of power. Consequently, these stereotypical representations enable readers to identify those in positions of power and predict how they might be interpreted in further Saudi cartoons.

#### **7.2.2.4 The Earth**

The fourth participant described in the analysed data is the Earth, which was portrayed differently in the written and image modes. In the written mode, the Earth is labelled using the singular noun "العالم" ( al-‘ālm) in Arabic, which signifies "the world". However, in the image mode, the Earth is represented as a single individual with a globe-shaped head and a human-shaped body occasionally dressed as a man and wearing western business clothes. This identification of the Earth in the Saudi cartoons is used by the cartoonists to identify the solidarity of all nations in experiencing the pandemic and struggling against it. The use of the long shot and oblique angle is primarily employed with this sort of entity to create a sense of distance for the readers, letting them witness how countries behave and react throughout each phase of the pandemic. In the first phase, the Earth is illustrated as being in a vulnerable position. Subsequently, it obtains power and is comparable with the virus during the lockdown phase, before ultimately showing that it has the potential to defeat COVID-19 during the third and fourth phases. In general, the presentation of the Earth reveals that COVID-19 is not a country-specific issue, but that it is a global matter as it is a pandemic that requires unity in the fight to defeat it.

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<sup>59</sup> They are usually presented to be wearing just the traditional thawb and not wearing a bashed over it or depicted as smaller compared with the oversized man.

### 7.2.2.5 International Countries and Governments

Different international political issues were addressed in the Saudi cartoons employing metonymic and metaphorical representations of countries to emphasise and address these issues. The representations were based on the most recognisable landmarks, such as the Great Wall of China, representing SIGHTSEEING FOR COUNTRY or important political figures, such as Al-Kadhimi of Iraq, representing PERSON FOR COUNTRY forming the metaphor COUNTRY IS A PERSON. This is a common technique used in political cartoons to identify the target without explicitly naming them (see Connors, 2010). However, various cartoons, label the figures using writing mode to assist with the identification of certain countries.

These representations were taken using long shots and oblique angles, so as to deliberately exclude the readers from any involvement and stress that they are external issues that have no connection with Saudi politics.

On the whole, it can be concluded from the discussion above that when the discussed issue related to Saudi community, a Saudi identification of the citizens and authority would be deployed to promote a more inclusive understanding of Saudi people during the pandemic by deploying the traditional clothes and also size difference. In contrast, when discussing other countries, famous political figures or sightseeing were used metonymically and metaphorically, referring to certain issues attributed to specific country. These techniques have been also evident in the studies of Akpati (2019) and Kulikova and Detinko (2014). However, when discussing other shared issues with the other communities and countries, the cartoonists would employ a representation of the Earth to show the unity and solidarity of countries during the pandemic. All of these issues are connected with COVID-19 as a main participant, which is represented as an evil creature as evident in other studies such as the work of Wasserman and Joubert (2023), and Lulu, Habeeb and Abdul Racman (2021). However, in this study, it has been also presented as a victim or a weak creature in certain phases to encourage following the safety measures and vaccination. Moreover, the representations of the participants reflect the importance of the image mode in depicting the target of most metaphorical representation, where the written mode typically plays a complementary role in identifying the target. In general, image and writing modes provide cartoonists with excellent opportunities to portray the pandemic and its consequences globally and more specifically in the Saudi context. Thus, studying the participants along with the thematic presentations in Saudi cartoons is a valuable

contribution to understanding Saudi Arabia's history during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021), and how people and authorities reacted to, battled and overcame this unprecedented challenge.

### **7.3 Humour in COVID-19 Cartoons**

The creation of humour, as one of the main research aims of the study, is examined in the following two sections, seeking to answer the second main question of this study.

*RQ2 How do Saudi cartoons produce humour pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic?*

#### **7.3.1 Humour and Multimodality**

The aim of this section is to present how humour is created multimodally in the analysed data and addresses the first sub-question.

*2.a What roles do image and writing play in producing humour?*

To answer that, the findings on incongruity-resolution classifications will be discussed. Subsequently, the findings pertaining to humour forms, i.e., humour types (Dyrel, 2009) and humour techniques (Alsadi and Howard, 2021) will be discussed. The relationship between both incongruity-resolution and humour forms, will be also addressed, showing the importance of the used mode.

##### **7.3.1.1 Humour and Incongruity**

The analysed data in Chapter 6 shows that Saudi cartoons draw principally on incongruity as the main cause of humour referring to Yus' (2016; 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications. Redefining and adjustment of the theory were proposed to some extent based on the analysed data (see Section 4.2.2.3), in order to include a fourth classification as regards incongruity and resolution. Furthermore, several of the definitions within a few of the classifications were redefined to be applicable to cartoons, including writing-based and writing-image incongruities. These classifications were originally proposed to be applied to verbal jokes in 2016 and then later to multimodal artefact memes in 2021.

The proposed fourth classification was added in the study as image-based incongruity and image-based resolution. This is in keeping with the argument raised by Samson and Huber



(2007) concerning the significance of the image mode in creating humour and the potential for the image mode to express the message (Rose, 2022; Machin and Mayr, 2012), allowing it to stand alone and create incongruity or resolve the possible incongruities. Therefore, this type was precisely defined so that it could be distinguished from the other incongruity type (frame-based incongruity). The redefinition took place to determine whether the secondary incongruity<sup>60</sup> (Carbajal-Carrera & Sanchez-Castro, 2020) occurred either in the image or frame, as illustrated in Section 4.4.1. These modified classifications resulted in 15 patterns in the data, which vary in their presentation (see Table 6.4). However, it was evidently shown that the patterns connected with frame-based, image-based and writing-image incongruities are the most common patterns compared to the writing-based patterns in the analysed Saudi cartoons.

The substantial use of frame-based classification is supported by Attardo and Raskin (1991) and Attardo (2017a), who assert that incongruity arises from the cognitive perception of an existing frame that conflicts with the logical, true and normal frame in the mind of the reader or hearer. In the context of cartoons, incongruity occurs when a cartoonist juxtaposes the illustration of a familiar frame in the reader's mind with an unexpected or unrealistic frame presented in the cartoon. This reinforces the importance of recognising the knowledge shared with the readers in establishing humour. The two image-based and writing-image based incongruities reveal an almost equal presentation in the analysed data. The frequent use of the former- image-based incongruity -shows that the principal contribution of the image mode in creating humour aligns with the argument raised by Machin and Mayr (2012), and Rose (2022) who maintain that the contribution of image in conveying complex ideas may be difficult to express in the writing. This finding shows the contribution of the proposed classification in understanding the incongruity creation in the cartoons. Moreover, the significance of writing-image is in line with the results obtained by Yus (2021) who found that writing-image is the incongruity that occurs the most in memes, as a meme is a verbal-visual artefact. Yus also added that “users will find it easier to exploit the convergence of both semiotic modes for humorous purposes” (Yus, 2021, p.148). This highlights the role of multimodality in cartoons, showing that the two modes are essential in getting the incongruity meaning that is resulted from a contradiction between image and writing. This is in accordance with Kress et al. (2001) who stated that the relationship between both modes, image and writing, in one artefact is capable of being complementary, contradictory or double each other. In contrast, the

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<sup>60</sup> The second incongruity is based on the metaphorical presentation that is constructed through zoomorphism, transformation and personification.

classifications based on writing-based were discovered in the analysed data to be less common in Saudi cartoons, denoting that cartoonists prefer to use either image mode or multimodal aspects of cartoons to create humour. This is evident in the study undertaken by Hameed and Afzal (2021) who found that the cartoonists use more the visual and multimodal aspects than the written mode to create humour.

Resolving the incongruity in the analysed data is a final stage to accomplish the humour (Yus, 2021). The cartoonists make the assumption that their readers possess familiarity with various topics, subject matters, and issues of public concern, leading them mostly to make the resolution either implication-based or frame-based, as evidenced with their high frequency compared with the other resolutions in the analysed data. The cartoonists provide written and visual hints leading readers to decode such hints in connecting them with their background knowledge (implication-based resolution), or that cartoonists rely on frames already implicit in readers' minds, often rooted in common sense or innate knowledge to solve the incongruity, forming (frame-based resolution). Owing to that, the resolutions of the presented incongruities are based on the cognitive process that depends on the given background knowledge of the readers. Moreover, the writing-based demonstrates its potentiality to address resolution compared with the image-based, as evidenced by the frequency opposing their occurrence in incongruity creation (see Table 6.3 and 6.2, respectively). It implies that writing is more preferable in the punchline to solve incongruity comparing to the preference of the image which is more likely used to represent in the set-up. This finding assumes that readers first look at the image due to its larger size, and then later read the caption, and that what the cartoonists draw their readers' mind and narrativity of the cartoon to be.

The above discussion highlights that the incongruities and their resolutions in the analysed cartoons are generally constructed by cognitive, monomodal and multimodal principle. Thus, it can be concluded that incongruity and resolution in the cartoons are not exclusively seen from the cognitive perspective as claimed by Raskin (1985) and Attardo (1998, 2001), but also considered from the monomodal and multimodality perspectives. In general, the finding of the study has provided further evidence of the importance of incongruity in creating humour, as many scholars contend (Kant, 1952; Suls, 1972; Morreall, 2009; Raskin, 1979; Attardo, 1997, 2017a). More specifically, it highlights the importance of Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classification in the study of humour in cartoons.

### 7.3.1.2 Humour and Humour Forms

The analysed data in Chapter 6 reveals eight humorous forms employed in Saudi cartoons, which can be categorised into four humour types: pun, joke, irony and putdown (see Section 6.3.1), and four humour techniques: metaphor, metonymy, comparison and exaggeration (see Section 6.3.2). These humorous forms mostly presented either monomodal (writing or image) or multimodal.

The humour types found in the data expanded upon Dynel's (2009) verbal/written humour types which were presented in the image mode, and which could also be multimodal. For instance, puns have been found in writing, image and multimodal forms, despite being traditionally associated with the linguistic format for decades. This is in line with research suggesting the potential for puns to be presented visually (e.g., Hempelmann and Samson, 2007; Willmore and Hocking, 2017) and multimodally: one meaning of the pun could be presented in the image and the other in the writing, or both modes combined to create a single meaning that contrasts with the readers' shared cognitive understanding (e.g., Bahtiar, Kadarisman & Basthomi, 2018; Kovalenko & Martynyuk, 2021). Overall, the occurrence of varying humour types throughout different modes of expression demonstrate that humour creation extends beyond traditional linguistic contexts. This highlights the significant role of modality in cartoons, in effectively conveying humour through visual imagery or a combination of writing and image modes.

Moreover, the humour techniques observed in the data show variation in relation to the mode. They occurred multimodally as found in Alsadi and Howard's (2021), and monomodally either in image mode or writing mode alone. Taking metaphor, for example, the analysed data revealed that there are three types of metaphor, including multimodal metaphor, hybrid and contextual visual metaphors (see Forceville, 1996, 2002, 2008) and conceptual-chain metaphor (see Ruiz de Mendoza & Mairal, 2007; Alousque, 2014). For the latter, the conceptual-chain metaphors observed in the data are (visual/multimodal/verbal) metonymy-based metaphors, (visual/multimodal) metaphor-based metaphor, as well as metaphor and metonymy-based metaphors, as illustrated in detail in Section 6.2.4.4. These results highlight the complexity of metaphors, a feature that is not evidenced in Alsadi and Howard (2021), which ascertained that only multimodal metaphors were associated with visual/multimodal metonymy. This finding exhibits the cartoonists' manipulation of the two existing modes to produce metaphor to create humour. Likewise, the two rhetorical figures -exaggeration and comparison- were considered

from different perspectives than those proposed by Alsadi and Howard (2021) who examined them from cognitive and contextual perspective. The proposed perspective concentrates more on the presented mode and its ability to create humour (see Sections 6.2.4.6, and 6.2.4.7). Taken as a whole, the use of rhetorical figures as humour techniques demonstrate their potential to be created monomodally (e.g., Morris, 1993; Edwards, 1997; Werner, 2004) and multimodally (e.g., Alsadi and Howard, 2021). This finding resonates with rhetorical theories that acknowledge the flexibility of rhetorical figures across various modes of communication (e.g., Tseronis and Pollaroli, 2018), together with the study of multimodality highlighting the importance of rhetoric and multimodality which both “meet in an orientation towards the practicalities of meaning making and its effects on the recipient. Combining different modes in a variety of media and genres is invariably guided by rhetorical considerations” (Pflaeging and Stöckl, 2021, p.319). It should also be stated that, generally, the flexibility of rhetorical figures across different modes of expression enriches our understanding of how rhetorical figures function in both traditional linguistic contexts and contemporary multimodal communication settings to create humour.

Although all the presented types of humour and techniques were produced both monomodally and multimodally, the majority occurred multimodally, confirming the inseparability of image and writing in creating meaning (see Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2010). The use of multimodality can enhance humour in cartoons more than using only one mode and might make them funnier (see Jones, Fine & Brust, 1979; Hempelmann and Samson, 2008), however, it is worth examining humour appreciation to assess the effect of the modality on the degree of the humour.

### **7.3.1.3 Humour Forms and Incongruities**

This significant result illustrates the potential relationship between Yus’ (2016, 2021) classifications and humour forms depending on the shared mode shown in the Figure 7.1.

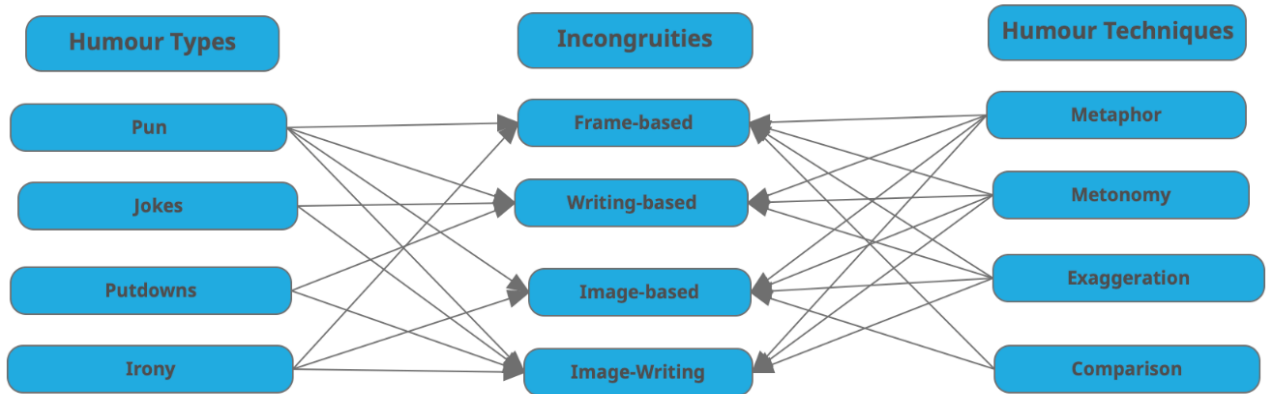


Figure 7.1: Types of humour in relation to incongruity

Figure 7.1 demonstrates that each humour form is associated with two or more incongruities. However, the relation is not arbitrary, but they shared the same presented mode. Examining Section 6.3, it was determined that, the writing-based incongruity employed joke (solely and predominantly based on writing), verbal puns and verbal putdowns to create humour; writing-image incongruity associated with jokes (based on the opposing the two modes together), multimodal puns, irony (all types) and visual putdown; image-based incongruity used the visual pun, situation irony, comparison (depends on comparing the visuals); and that frame-based incongruity based on multimodal pun, situation irony and comparison (depends on comparing entities in a way that opposes the one in the reader's mind). Thus, it can be perceived from the correlation that writing-based incongruity is based on any types of verbal humour, as expected, to create humour, image-based incongruity and writing-image incongruity is based on types of visual humour, while the latter, writing-image incongruity, is also dependent on the multimodal types. Likewise, in the case of irony and comparison, frame-based incongruity is observed to be associated more with the multimodal types and the conceptual forms. In general, the multimodality of the incongruity facilitates identifying correct humour types, including jokes, irony, pun and putdown and a humour technique (comparison) to create humour.

However, exaggeration, metonymy and metaphor were determined to occur in all four types of incongruity, although there was no noticeable connection with the used mode. These findings highlight an important conclusion pertaining to the functions of these three rhetorical figures; they not only create incongruity but also serve as a supportive factor that enables the creation of further humorous aspects. Consequently, it can be concluded that these techniques are considered as essential characteristics of the cartoons. This finding is in keeping with

Tsakona's (2009; p.1186) conclusion highlighting the fundamental roles of these techniques in creating humour in cartoons, arguing about the existence of these figures in other humorous genre, for example short stories (e.g., Müller, 2007). Moreover, it also is consistent with many research papers that highlight metonymy and metaphor (e.g., El Refaie, 2003; Forceville & Urios-Aparici, 2009; Yus, 2009; Alousque, 2014; Genova, 2018) and exaggeration (e.g., McCloud, 1993, 2006; Conners, 1998) to be the main characteristic of the cartoons.

To sum up, this section makes four main contributions according to the findings discussed above. First, the adaptation and adoption of Yus' incongruity-resolution theory shows its essence in understanding how humour is created cognitively, monomodally and multimodally and its affective application to the multimodal artefact-cartoon. Second, the findings pertaining to humour forms demonstrate the importance of multimodality as evidenced by the frequent use of the multimodal forms compared to its pair of monomodal ones, signifying the cartoonists' creativity in exploiting the used modes to transmit their message in a humorous way. Third, understanding the behaviour of the humour types with respect to incongruity contributes significantly to understanding how cognitive, monomodal and multimodal humour is created in multimodal cartoons. Fourth, humour techniques not only demonstrate their significance as the primary source of incongruity that cartoonists rely on to create humour but also support other types of humour in establishing incongruity. These findings could inspire further research into applying Yus' incongruity-resolution classifications to different cartoons and exploring the level of appreciation in multimodal humour.

### **7.3.2 Humour and Themes**

This section aims to discuss the relationship which exists between humour and theme, providing insights into the second sub-question.

#### *2.b How is humour expressed in relation to COVID-19 themes?*

As discussed in Section 6.5, certain humour forms, such as metonymy and exaggeration occur in all themes while others vary in their occurrence, notwithstanding that they could possibly appear in other themes as illustrated by the proposed scenarios. Therefore, there is no well-defined clear-cut correlation. This seems to be attributed to three different factors, including (1) cartoonists' interest; (2) cultural knowledge/property of using specific types, and (3) linguistic knowledge.

### 7.3.2.1 Cartoonists' Interest

The variations in discussing COVID-19 themes and creating humour can be applied to the cartoonists' interests presented in selecting specific mode and semiotic resources. Table 4.6 reveals that one cartoonist, Rabea covers all the presented themes. Conversely, several cartoonists exhibit a preference for specific themes. For instance, Ramsi consistently engages with international political discourses, while Almathy and Alzaydy focus on issues of public protection, which is evident in the substantial number of cartoons addressing these themes, more than the other themes. In addition to the cartoonists' propensity for discussing certain themes, they also illustrate their predilection for using one humour form rather than the other. This can be ascribed to their preference for using 1) certain mode, 2) the degree of the directness of the humour, and 3) the individual's style (signature).

It was established that several cartoonists preferred to use humour types that were primarily presented in either the writing mode (e.g., Hulu) or the image mode (e.g., Ahmad), while the majority of the cartoonists preferred to use multimodal humour types. Moreover, the cartoonist's fondness for utilising one humour type more than another depended on the cartoonist's interest in depicting such a dark topic (i.e., the COVID-19 pandemic) and how they wanted readers to perceive it. Selected Saudi cartoonists preferred to use more direct humour, such as jokes and putdowns, while others favoured more indirect humour, for instance puns and irony. For example, Jabbar and Ramsi applied all humour types except for putdowns, as they might consider them to be offensive toward the targets. Furthermore, the cartoonists' individual style influences how they select specific signs and semiotic resources, which results in their use of specific humour forms more than others. For instance, Jabbar, a cartoonist, does not use caricatures in his cartoons (see Section 6.4.2.2), instead he relies on his signature Saudi nuclear family composed of four main characters. This signature affects the frequency of his use of visual metonymy, notably in the PERSON FOR PEOPLE form, which is used more frequently in his cartoons than in the cartoons of other cartoonists who depend more on the metaphorical representations. This finding is in accordance with Kress' (2010) concept of 'interest', indicating that the selection of the signs and semiotic resources to communicate the message is based on the sign-maker's (cartoonist) interest.

### 7.3.2.2 Cultural Knowledge

It is important to mention that humour can be shaped by the cultural norms and beliefs. Saudi cartoonists use them as a base for creating and employing the humour forms. Certain cartoonists depend on common proverbs, idioms and phrasal verbs to create different types of humour, supporting Alsadi and Howard's (2021) finding of intertextual reference in metaphors, and puns. This approach is also found with published public campaigns as in the case of Figure 4.3, where the cartoonist uses a multimodal metaphor (i.e., GREETING IS EXCHANGING BY THE SIGHTS) as a translation of the actual name of the campaign 'السلام نظر' 'exchange greetings by sight'. Other cartoons make use of puns that are based on allusion or intertextual reference, as illustrated in the use of the common phrase 'an bu 'd (at distance/online) in Figure 4.6, for example. Also, others make jokes, as a humour form, based on common proverbs, such as "he who is afraid remains safe", in Figure 4.4. It has been employed differently triggering a meaning opposing the one that existed in the minds of the readers. This is due to the exaggerated use of proverbs in the cartoon that resulted in negative consequence contradicting the positive connotation associated with the proverb. Therefore, Saudi cartoonists create an 'intertextual gap' by referring to specific shared cultural idioms and proverbs that were used differently to create incongruity and subsequently resulted in humour creation (Bauman, 2008). Therefore, intertextuality acts as an umbrella which other humour forms are dependent on to create humour.

### 7.3.2.3 Linguistic Knowledge

The analysed data reveals that the underlying linguistic knowledge assists with creating humour, specifically with puns, irony and metaphors. This particular knowledge is required to manipulate certain idioms, phrasal verbs and words to create humour that can be presented either monomodally or multimodally. For example, having linguistic knowledge of certain proverbs clarifies that the cartoonists can create humour using metaphors, as they can introduce this proverb using the image mode in an exaggerated way that is contrary to its real use in society. Hence, it should be mentioned that this finding aligns with the importance of this knowledge in creating unexpected linguistic twists which resulted in the incongruity (Attardo, 1994).

To sum up, the cartoonists' interest, together with the cultural and linguistic knowledge demonstrate their contribution to creating humour in the Saudi cartoons. The significance of these three factors contributes primarily to understanding how humour is created. Thus, media



creators can advantage of these factors to reach the targeted audience (Saudi audiences), and to have their artefacts accepted and appreciated by society.

#### **7.4 Contributions of the Study**

To the best of this researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted on analysing the cartoons about COVID-19 with a substantial dataset in Saudi Arabia, focusing on the portrayal of the pandemic and the humour creation about such a disastrous topic. Investigating how the Saudi cartoons portray the pandemic is a valuable contribution to understanding the history of Saudi Arabia during the pandemic between 2020 and 2021, as it reveals how people and authorities reacted to, battled and overcame this unprecedented challenge.

This study provides a substantial contribution to the field of multimodality and humour, particularly within the context of Saudi Arabian literature, by presenting findings that demonstrate the inseparability of image and written modes in communicating the intended messages and also their role in creating and demonstrating humour. Moreover, this study makes a methodological contribution to the humour field by introducing an adaptation of Yus' incongruity-resolution theoretical approach. This study breaks new ground as the first to apply this innovative approach to cartoons. Generally, the combination of humour and multimodality contributes to the shifting tendency from focusing on pure linguistics to multimodal communication.

#### **7.5 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research**

In this research, ten themes (see Chapter 5), which show the first phase of the pandemic spreading until the vaccine was invented and that people gradually return to everyday life were identified in the data which was analysed between December 2019 and March 2021. However, further insights into the cartoons after March 2021 to explore the other themes that emerged during the phases where the precautionary measures were completely lifted and people returned to everyday life, is recommended. Moreover, it was observed that as the two most represented characters in the cartoons, the Earth and COVID-19, behave differently depending on the presented phases. It would be interesting to investigate how such representations have changed after the vaccination. Notwithstanding that the examination of interactive metafunctions made use of angle and distance to consider how the participants were represented in relation to the readers, it reveals the possibility of persuading and involving the readers in the criticism (see

Chapter 5). Nevertheless, further research is definitely required (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006).

While Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution has confirmed its effectiveness in examining the humour in Saudi cartoons, it would undoubtedly be interesting to observe this new adaption (see Section 4.3.2.2) on other cartoons produced by a variety of national cartoonists concerning different topics. As this study is more concerned with the production of humour, this theory was applied to investigate how the cartoonists create humour. Investigating humour appreciation would be a recommendation for further researcher. It would be interesting to investigate how the degree of appreciation could vary depending on the presented incongruity classifications and humour forms. With the exploration of humour during this pandemic (see Section 7.2.2), three main factors show their contributions to creating humour. As a result, it would be fascinating to examine if the same factors also make a significant contribution when discussing both social or political issues. Overall, the research on Saudi cartoons and humour during the COVID-19 pandemic remains in its embryonic stage. There are many opportunities to extend the research by collecting more data after March 2021 and applying the methodological framework to other datasets.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

This research investigated the portrayal of the COVID-19 pandemic and humour creation in Saudi cartoons. A total of 212 multimodal cartoons collected between the commencement of the pandemic in January 2020 until the introduction of the vaccine in March 2021 were investigated. These cartoons underwent two different sorts of analysis and resampling to address these two primary aims. With the first aim exploring how the COVID-19 pandemic was depicted, content analysis and multimodality were applied to 212 cartoons with the aim of answering this concern. It was established that the Saudi cartoons demonstrated ten main themes which varied in number depending on the stages that the country was experiencing. Moreover, five different representations were identified in the cartoons: COVID-19, the Earth, Saudi society, Saudi government, as well as international countries and governments. Multimodality was proven to be essential in identifying the COVID-19 themes in Saudi cartoons. Their presentations mostly differ depending on the mode and the phase presented. This goal significantly develops our knowledge of the pandemic from the perspective of Saudi Arabia, an area that has received limited academic attention. It also promotes a deeper

understanding of Saudi Arabia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021) and how individuals and authorities navigated, battled and triumphed over this unprecedented crisis.

The second aim regarding the humour creation, underwent another stratified sampling to deliver a more accurate analysis (see Section 4.3.2.1). These cartoons were comprehensively investigated to explain how the humour was created by adapting and adopting Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution classifications and forms of humour, i.e., linguistic humour by Dynel (2009) and multimodal rhetorical figures employed by Alsadi and Howard (2021). It was determined that 15 incongruity- resolution classification patterns and eight humour forms occurred in the Saudi cartoons. These results evidenced the applicability of Yus' (2016, 2021) incongruity-resolution and humour forms in cartoons (Dynel, 2009; Alsadi and Howard, 2021). The study shows the possible relationship between incongruity and humour forms, based on the used mode. Additionally, three potential factors highlight their significance in presenting the connection between the humour and themes, including the cartoonists' interest, cultural knowledge and linguistic knowledge. This aim generally contributes to humour by showing the effectiveness of the framework used when it is applied to the cartoons. Equally, it contributes considerably to multimodality as it shows evidence in the considerable use of the multimodal mode with the humour form in contrast to the other monomodal mode, and when the correlation between the two – Yus' incongruity-resolution and humour forms was identified.

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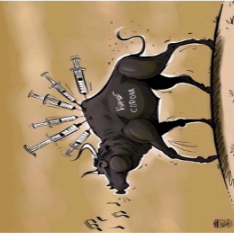


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## Appendix

Theme	Inclusion (Sub-themes)	Visual sign	Written sign	Sallience/Setting	Examples	Exclusion
COVID-19 emotional and physical sequences	<p><b>1-Worry and fear-</b> It presents how spreading results in negative emotions such as worrying and fear.</p>	<p>a-It shows panic individuals and Earth</p>	<p>a- Using statements stating the emotional status such as 'global fear'. b- Stating the sequence to be related to COVID-19 as 'the effect of the <u>pandemic</u>'</p>	Outside environment	 <p>Global worry from the second wave of corona (the title in the up middle) aaatchooooo (sneezing sound)</p>	
	<p><b>2-Fighting with covid-19</b> - It expresses the fighting phase that the Earth has against Covid-19 and how its resistant to beat the virus. It also presents the strength of Covid-19 over the Earth.</p>	<p>a- Using needles as a weapon to fight. b- Presenting the physical fight between COVID-19 and Earth/human. c- Showing Earth to be beaten up. D-Presenting COVID-19 as unbeatable animal.</p>	<p>a-Using statements presenting the fighting such as 'face to face,' 'challenge,' and 'world facing corona.'</p>	Battlefield	 <p>Corona (the ox)</p>  <p>Corona (the pink creature)</p>	<p>It excludes the fight if the needle is labelled as a vaccine; in this case, the topic is more related to vaccination and how it's a solution to end the pandemic.</p> 

Appendix 4.1: Example of Coding book scheme