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Interpretation of Ethnic Stereotypes in Churchill Show among University Students in Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine how university students in Kenya interpret and react to ethnic stereotype messages in the popular comedy Churchill Show, which aired on television for more than a decade. While a lot of studies have been done on the prevalence and proliferation of ethnic stereotypes in the show, little has been done on the audience and the interpretation of the stereotypes. This was a qualitative study using the case study method. It involved holding Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with 27 students from four universities in Kenya, with diverse backgrounds, aimed at representing the general audience of the show. The participants first watched an episode of Churchill Show, Season 7 Episode 6, which aired on television in October 2017, which set the tone for the discussion. The findings reveal that most of the audience members disapprove of the use of ethnic stereotypes in comedy. Participants expressed concern that negative stereotypes could affect self-esteem for the communities stereotyped. The audience uses a variety of cues and tools to identify and interpret the stereotypes. Most of the students acquired stereotypes and ethnic stereotypes about other communities early on in life from their parents and close social interactions as they were growing up, indicating that comedy mostly plays a reinforcing role. The findings suggest the current generation of young people, commonly called the 'Generation Z' or 'Gen Z', disapprove of the use of ethnic stereotypes in television content and are moving away from tribe and ethnicity as an identity, and so for them, ethnic stereotypes are no longer relevant. This study recommends the exclusion of ethnic stereotypes in content meant for mass consumption by media houses and other content creators.

Key words: Audience, ethnic stereotypes, interpretation, stand-up comedy, students.



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INTRODUCTION

Stand-up comedy shows have been popular on television in Kenya for many years, and the form of content is also increasingly getting popular on social media platforms. From the early days of Redykulass, Public Noise Makers and Red Corner, which, as part of humour, critiquing the social and political life made use of accents and ethnic stereotypes, to the Churchill Show, the comedy shows have offered entertainment to TV audiences in Kenya (Mbeke, 2009).

To make the audience laugh, stand-up comedians create their humour out of everyday topics such as politics, governance, corruption, social evils in society and sports. The shows have come under criticism for their use of ethnic stereotypes, with concerns that they could be contributing to the entrenchment of the stereotypes and affecting ethnic relations.

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) has expressed concern that the “existence and use of stereotypes and coded language by members of various Kenyan ethnic communities (inner) to advance hate speech against other communities (target) is common” (NCIC, 2022, p.4). The ethnic stereotypes and coded language are often used politically to rally support of members of particular ethnic communities against other communities. Studies have also suggested that comedies perpetuate ethnic stereotypes, but little has been done to look at how the ethnic stereotypes in the comedies could be impacting audiences.

This study looks at how the audience perceives and interprets ethnic stereotypes featured in the Churchill Show through university students participating in Focus Group Discussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnic stereotyping, where members of various ethnic communities hold and apply general beliefs, which are often oversimplified, about behaviours and attributes of members of other communities, is common in Kenya (McLeod, 2023). Messages rich in ethnic stereotypes are aired through different platforms, be it political gatherings, social gatherings, social media or through the mainstream media, including radio and television. But this has always been controversial. The Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission report recognised that ethnic stereotyping was rampant during the violence, and

thus it was a key contributor to the post-election violence of 2007/2008 (Ndonye et al., 2015a).

Scholars have studied television comedy shows in Kenya, but most have focused on the prevalence and proliferation of ethnic stereotypes in the comedy shows. Little has been done to look at audiences, a key part of the consumption of the entertainment content on television, and how the comedy messages are interpreted.

Prevalence of Ethnic Stereotypes

Mbogo (2015) looks at Vioja Mahakamani (Drama in Court), a humorous programme which parodies court sessions in Kenya. The programme made use of stereotypes through, among others, deliberate use of characters with identifiable accents based on Kenyan ethnic communities. The names of characters also play along with well-known stereotypes. This use of ethnic stereotypes has essentially been replicated by other shows that have come after it. The article only looks at the perspective of the audience through the author.

Ndonye et al. (2015a), in their study *Ethnicity as Discursive Construct in Kenyan Televised Comedy: Humorous Harm?* Have raised a debate on the value of the comedies and highlighted the proliferation of ethnic jokes in television comedies. The study looked at over a dozen examples of content from two comedy shows aired on Nation Television (NTV) and Kenya Television Network (KTN) on Sundays to show the prevalence of ethnic stereotypes in the shows. They contend that “there are better jokes than ethnic jokes, thus, the media should not rely on ethnic jokes or exploit its comic relief” (Ndonye et al., 2015a, p. 58). They believe the media are allowing the use of stereotypes in comedy “because it is not taken as serious, but as a comic relief” (Ndonye et al., 2015a, p. 48). The authors, however, believe the stereotypes in the comedies are affecting how communities in Kenya socialise and interact. But they have not explained how the ethnic jokes could or could not be impacting ethnic relations in the country.

A study by the NCIC also raised an alarm over a proliferation of stereotypes in entertainment programs in general (NCIC, 2013). The study didn’t, however, expound on which part of entertainment was at fault, and neither did it explain the impact of the stereotypes.

Audience Interpretation of Stereotypes in Comedy

Ndonye et al. (2015b), who interviewed members of the audience who attended a Churchill Live Show recording in Nakuru, in the Rift Valley region, are one of the few studies that have sought to look at the audiences. They concluded that many people form their opinions about other ethnic groups from portrayals in the show, and they believe those representations. They noticed a trend whereby the audience tended to believe the depictions of out-groups as accurate but viewed the portrayals of their ethnic group, the in-group, as inaccurate.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the case study method and was qualitative in nature, with the aim of getting a deeper understanding of the interpretation and impact of ethnic stereotypes in the Churchill Show on university students. The university population, which is diverse and with representation from across the country, is a good representative of the general audience of the show. Purposive sampling was used to arrive at the universities and the students to be focused on for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), focusing on regional representation and diversity.

Universities in Kenya fall broadly under two main categories, public universities and private universities. For public universities, the study focused on the University of Nairobi, the oldest university in Kenya and located in the capital Nairobi, and the South Eastern Kenya University, a relatively new university located in a rural area. For private universities, the study focused on the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), which is religious-based and the United States International University-Africa (USIU), a value-free university which mostly has students from families with higher income. A total of 27 students took part in the FGDs.

Participants in the FGDs were promised anonymity to allow free flow of the discussions and to elicit honest responses due to the sensitive nature of ethnicity and identity in Kenya. Multi-stage sampling was used to arrive at the Churchill Show episode, which was used as the subject of discussion. The researcher first purposively chose Churchill Show episodes aired on television and uploaded on YouTube within a period of one year, between 1 July, 2017 and 30th June, 2018, a period when the show was at its peak. Simple random sampling was then used to arrive at six shows from which one, Season 07 Episode 06, which featured a variety of stereotypes on

different communities, was eventually selected through non-probability purposive sampling for analysis. Coding and analysis of the data were inductive and manually done, with the presentation of the data done thematically.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that most of the students acquire ethnic stereotypes early on in life from social interactions with family members, close relatives, and friends, although a few do acquire them from the consumption of media content. The encounter of ethnic stereotypes in stand-up comedy shows could be reinforcing ethnic stereotypes among the audience.

Jokes with ethnic stereotypes have been popular with the Kenyan audience for many years, but the findings from this study indicate that this may no longer be the case for long, as a younger generation with little attachment to ethnic identity matures and forms the main part of the audience.

Formation of the Stereotypes

Most of the participants mentioned having learned about and picked up ethnic stereotypes about other communities, mainly from their parents and close relatives, as they were growing up. This also shaped their perception of other ethnic communities. Others mentioned social interactions with other children in school.

And for some, social interactions with members from the various ethnic groups as grown-ups have also played a part in them forming the stereotypes about those ethnic communities.

Participant S2, a Kamba student at the USIU, talked about getting to know about the stereotypes from her parents. Her father, she recalled, would always talk about Kikuyus and money and for the Luos about their pride. From this, she grew up knowing that Kikuyus love money, and Luo people are proud.

For her, encountering the stereotypes in the media or comedy shows was just a reinforcement of what she had acquired from her parents.

Another participant, S3, also talked about the parents being the main source of her knowledge about stereotypes on other ethnic communities, during normal conversations inside the house.

Participant S1 also mentioned the home as being the place where she picked up most of the stereotypes that she knows about. She comes from a mixed family, a Kikuyu father and an Embu mother, but was raised and socialised as a Kikuyu, an identity her mother also took after getting married. But the mother would often critique the community, through quipping now and then and talking about ‘hawa Wakikuyu’ (these Kikuyus).

Two participants from USIU, one from the University of Nairobi and one from CUEA mentioned their parents having gone a step further as to advise them against marrying from some ethnic communities because of their perceived inherent attributes.

Participant R2 said parents are “probably the primary propagators” of most of the stereotypes.

Part of the reason for this, he said, could be the fact that some of the parents might have lived through some of the prejudices that exist, which is something different from the younger generations.

For the parents, the stereotypes and prejudices are probably a reality that they are convinced about and believe in.

Participant R7, however, did mention having learnt stereotypes about other communities from watching TV, although during that time she never knew they were stereotypes. The parents, however, still played a part.

So, some of these things you are not told, you are not sat down and told like A B C D, learn, learn, learn. As a child, they see things, and they behave as they will see other people behaving. Personally, the first time I interacted with, now I didn't, I don't think I knew it was a stereotype, but I was exposed to how different communities do different things, I think it was on TV, and I think it is just the way I was brought up.

While watching TV, the reference point for checking what she was watching would be the parents, to whom she would ask questions. An affirmation would mean she ends up believing in what they told her.

Later in life, her encounters with people from other communities would mean she would check whether they

are exhibiting the traits and behaviours she had learned when she was young.

Participant R4 says TV and the media play a part in forming ethnic stereotypes, and in her case, she feels that was the only source of the stereotypes. She talked about some families making conscious attempts to make sure their children don't pick up the stereotypes and prejudices already circulating in society.

But they end up encountering what they are trying to run away from in media content and comedy shows on television.

Identifying Tribes Featured in Jokes on Churchill Show

Participants mentioned several ways through which they are able to tell which ethnic community is being portrayed in the jokes aired on Churchill Show, as they commented on the Season 07 Episode 06 show they had watched.

These include direct mention of the specific tribe being portrayed, mention of regions synonymous with certain communities or where the majority of residents are from the target community and accents.

Participant R6 mentioned the accents, mention of regions and description of some of the well-known stereotypes about the communities as some of the cues and reasons which made him conclude which tribe was being portrayed.

He quoted the example of the joke by Rib Krakaz, where they delivered a sketch around how men from the Kikuyu and Luo communities introduce their family members. One is introduced as ‘a man from Nyanza’ and the other as ‘a guy from Kiambu’ (Churchill Television, 2017).

By looking at Nyanza, the most dominant culture and norms that are main is the Luo culture, so someone saying [someone] from Nyanza, what basically runs into your mind is the Luo. And then the comedian goes ahead and adopts the Luo accent, which in turn confirms that he is talking about the Luo community.

Participant B5, from SEKU, also mentioned being able to infer the communities being portrayed through looking at

the dominant ethnic community within the said region you get the Luo, and for Kiambu, you get the Kikuyu.

He also used the dress code and the accent to identify the community.

Although other ethnic communities, for example, inhabit the Nyanza region, participants generally agreed that the Luo community, the majority in the region, was the one represented when the comedy group talked about ‘a man from Nyanza’.

Participant S5 said

There's a distinct way that I think Kenyans can pick out when someone is trying to impersonate the way someone from a particular tribe speaks. Typically, how they spoke was how we, you know, we know how Luo people will speak. So also how 'the man of the family' showed off his wife, that is also you know typical behavior of Luo people and how they were able to like really puff up all the other family members, you know, SC, senior council or you know, I don't know what the other person was, but it was something for NASA [can mean the US space agency, but also the National Super Alliance, one of the political alliances during the 2017 elections].

Participant R1, a Kikuyu studying at the University of Nairobi, said he was also able to identify the tribes in the Rib Krakaz jokes because of vernacular words and some contextual words.

For the man from Kiambu, the use of the word minji minji, which in current usage means a young lady in Kikuyu, when he is describing his wife, is a pointer that the family being introduced is a Kikuyu one.

The man also called one of the sons Njoroge, which is a common Kikuyu name, so basically Njoroge is a Kikuyu together with his father.

One of the sons is also introduced as Githeriman, drawing a connection to a voter who turned up to vote during the 2017 elections with a polythene bag carrying githeri, a popular meal among the Kikuyu prepared using boiled maize and beans (Chege, 2017).

“Githeri is a major meal for the Kikuyu,” participant R1 says.

Participant K2, from CUEA, also mentioned specific words and products associated with certain ethnic communities as cues to the community being portrayed by the comedians. An example is Omera, meaning ‘my brother’ in Luo or someone talking about omena, Luo for sardines. Mention of mangoes will imply Kambas or Kikuyus.

Participant R2 also mentioned body language and gestures, whereby the comedian imitates the body posture and gestures that people will attribute to the community he is portraying. Churchill does this when he is describing the differences in ‘business communities’, including wearing a serious face and attempting to pick up what will automatically be interpreted as a stone. Jasper also takes a different posture of someone very inquisitive when he is imitating the Maasai and showing how they are always inquisitive.

Participant S3, from the USIU university, also noted that when Jasper, the comedian, was portraying the Maasai man, he stood the same way people associate with the Maasai, and the same for the Kamba. For Participant K4, a Maasai from CUEA University, there were references to traditions or livelihoods of communities that give more pointers about the communities being portrayed. For the Maasai, for example, there is a mention about them moving around with cattle along the streets of Nairobi.

Participant K6, a Kamba at CUEA University, pointed out the playing of music from particular communities to introduce comedians or when some jokes are being delivered as an important cue towards identifying the community being portrayed.

Assessing the Accuracy of Ethnic Stereotypes Portrayed in Churchill Show

Some participants felt some of the ethnic stereotypes portrayed were true, and some weren't accurate or had been greatly exaggerated. In most cases, most of the participants were hugely critical of the portrayal of their own ethnic communities as opposed to the portrayal of other ethnic. This matches with the findings by Ndonye et al. (2015b), who found members of the show audience tended to believe the depictions of other groups as accurate but described the representation of the other

ethnic communities, other than their own, often called the in-group, as not accurate.

Participants were also in acceptance that the stereotypes don't apply universally, there will always be exceptions, which they explained as arising from people belonging to the ethnic communities being raised in far off places or in urban towns which are cosmopolitan.

Participant K5, a Luhya student at CUEA, felt the portrayals were an accurate reflection of the various communities. Participant S1, a Kikuyu from the USIU University, felt the portrayal of the Luo people in the joke by the Rib Krakaz about how Kikuyu and Luo men introduce their families was accurate.

But for the Kikuyu, not so. She felt the portrayal of the Kikuyu had been tweaked to make it a bit more interesting for the audience. It didn't have the actual awkwardness that she said occurs during introductions among the Kikuyu community.

Participant S2, from the Kamba community, also felt that although the portrayal of the Kamba and the dancing was accurate, it had been exaggerated.

I'm a Kamba so for the dance it's true but I feel it's a bit exaggerated. When the song ends, we don't continue dancing [laughter], please, it's exaggerated so I feel for the Kamba that's inaccurate.

She also took issue with the joke about Kambas always filming music videos next to swimming pools due to the scarcity of water back home, where they come from.

They are not true, it is like one or two music videos, she said. The other ones are just anywhere in a very nice place. So I felt like they were over exaggerating, she added.

And Participant B1 from SEKU also said he believes it is not all the Kambas who are lazy.

Participant S1 also felt the joke about the Kamba dancing near water had become more of a played-out joke and wasn't funny anymore.

Participant R4 believes the stereotypes aren't true and should not be used to define the characteristics or behaviours of a particular community.

She points out, for example, the stereotypes about Kikuyus and their love for money. She says there are many people from other communities who would do anything for money, but that doesn't make them Kikuyus. And there are also many Kikuyus who are not well-off.

There are a lot of people in this country who will do anything for money. It doesn't necessarily mean that they are Kikuyus; there are a lot of people in this country.

Participant S6, from USIU University, says the comedians normally go for generalisations about traits that people will think can be pushed as content or as a joke, which is not always accurate.

But the comedians aren't really looking for accuracy in the portrayals, but rather what is relatable, what will people find funny, like the Kamba dancing and shooting music videos next to swimming pools.

Her view is that the comedians were just trying to find something to make a joke out of it, in which "they failed and still succeeded at the same time."

Activation and Application of Ethnic Stereotypes

Participants discussed whether they would expect the stereotypes they had encountered in the Churchill Show to apply in real life, to someone they meet.

Some said they would totally expect that, while others said they would expect some exceptions.

Some said they wouldn't expect any of the stereotypes to apply and would expect to judge the person they meet according to individual characteristics. Some, however, indicated they would expect exceptions.

For Participant K3, she wouldn't expect the behaviours portrayed to manifest in people she meets. She says nowadays, due to the impact of technology and modernisation, many people have dropped their traditions and behaviours associated with specific communities.

Participant S3, from the USIU University, said it is possible to find people who don't follow the expected stereotypes, and among the Gen Z, it would also be difficult to tell someone's ethnicity.

Feelings About the Use of Ethnic Stereotypes in the Churchill Show

Most of the participants were strongly against having negative stereotypes at all within comedy shows, while in favour of positive stereotypes. They felt that negative stereotypes are harmful and end up demeaning, marginalising, and demoralising the communities being portrayed negatively.

Positive stereotypes, on the other hand, become a source of pride for the communities being portrayed and increase self-esteem.

There were some, however, who said they were okay with having both the negative and positive stereotypes within the comedy shows, arguing that the audience is able to tell that it is all for entertainment and wouldn't take the messages seriously.

Participant B1 from SEKU said he was okay with both stereotypes in comedy because they showcase cultures, attributes about various communities and how they live in their societies, and their languages.

Participant B5, although okay with the stereotypes being used in comedy, said it would be better if most of them were positive, a position also supported by Participant S1, who said most people want "to be associated with something good, say if something is, you know, building up your sense of self."

While Participant S3 also supported having positive ethnic stereotypes as opposed to the negative ones, she felt the jokes should focus on aspects about communities that would be informative and that are facts, not just stereotypes.

I wouldn't want it to be a stereotype; I would like it to be an educational aspect, like "this is actually what they do."

Participant B4 would rather not have any stereotypes at all in comedy shows. The comedians should "just do comedy, without mentioning any community."

She believes negative stereotypes will have members from the communities featured wondering "why them", and when you feature positive stereotypes, it will not be possible to feature all the communities. This makes those left out feel neglected.

A number of participants in the Focus Group Discussions belonged to minority ethnic communities, which were not featured in the comedy show watched, and rarely feature in comedy shows.

For some, it made them feel safe as they weren't subject to stereotyping. But for others, it affected their feelings about identity and self-esteem.

Participant R3, from the Kuria community, a minority in Nyanza, said he has never come across his community being featured. He felt that leaving out the minority communities makes them feel more marginalised. He said not featuring the communities in mainstream comedy also denies the members of those communities a chance of learning about themselves through the media. "I come from a community where if I ask any of you to mention 20 communities off the top of your head, I probably won't fall in any of them," he said. For him, that meant that there is zero representation of his community in the media and in the comedy shows. He was able to learn about other communities but not about his own.

So over the years, you just know how other communities behave, but you don't know how yours behaves, because you aren't represented or talked about by others in some way it fuels the stereotypes and fuels the negative energy and spreads it onto other people and to you also as a person, without necessarily being part of it.

He said it is particularly more challenging for people from the minority communities growing up in urban areas or faraway places where they have no direct links to the communities they belong to.

This erodes their sense of identity, and the only way to reconnect with their communities would be to go back to where their communities live.

Participant R4, from a minority community from coastal Kenya, also felt that the domination of jokes and content around the main ethnic communities has an effect on people from minority communities who are rarely featured. This is both in terms of confidence in their identity and how other people understand them. To her, the focus on the large communities, for example, the Luo, Kamba, Luhya and Kikuyu, means that she feels left out. It also becomes a challenge for her friends to understand her community since they aren't exposed to it in the comedy shows.

Because when you start explaining where you come from, you have to start explaining mtu aimbe ile wimbo ya social studies, unwambie oh hapa ndio penye natoka [like singing a song from Social studies, a subject in primary school, and tell them, this is where I come from]. So, it really affects the sense of belonging in a way, because media represents some communities, and maybe not funny things don't happen in other communities, or something, but just the media representation again, or lack thereof, still plays a very important part when it comes to self-identity.

She felt that this could be one of the reasons why people from minority communities don't feel comfortable or are not quick to identify with their communities, because it is not something that other people will easily understand. They will always need to do some explaining.

Participant R2 was of the view that comedians will tend to go with jokes that will resonate with most of the audience, which explains why comedians will shy away from featuring minorities or little-known communities.

Gen-Z and Changing Concept of Social Identity

An emerging theme was the fact that most of the participants in the FGDs were young, belonging to the Gen Z generation, and most expressed the feeling that they are divorced from the traditional divisions along ethnic lines.

They don't associate with the ethnic communities as we know them, and to them, the stereotypes associated with ethnicity are no longer relevant.

Participant R4 from the University of Nairobi, commenting on the Churchill Show S07 Episode 06, the group had just watched, mentioned that she didn't find the show funny. She said part of why she wasn't able to relate to the jokes is belonging to Gen Z, which she says doesn't identify with tribes anymore.

I think as Gen Z and maybe living in Nairobi also has had the kind of impact where we don't really divide our persons in terms of communities, as Gen Zs living in Nairobi, we don't really divide ourselves as communities, so then hearing a joke or someone imitating an accent from someone from another community may not come out as funny... If you look at the generation before millennials and maybe some millennials as well, these are people who, aside from the ones who live and grew up in Nairobi, a lot of the people you will talk to, their stories are about how they grew up in the village, and then they came to Nairobi. They grew up sijui [I don't know] where, and then they came back to Nairobi. See, that was an environment for such jokes and such stereotypes to thrive.

She says the current stereotypes were amplified during the colonial period as a way of dividing communities and making it easier for the colonial administration to rule.

This is no longer relevant at present.

And I like Gen Z because it won't be funny to us, like you can make your joke, but who's gonna [going to] laugh? Who's gonna laugh?" she said. Like, tell your joke, yes, but no one is going to laugh, she added.

She believes such ethnic jokes only resonate with older generations, and part of the millennials, who mostly grew up in homogenous communities, often in rural parts of Kenya.

Participant S3 felt stereotyping was something that was entrenched in older generations, but doesn't happen a lot with Gen Z.

I think the generation that really had all these stereotypes really cemented in

them are like Boomers and then I think it's gone trickling down, she said.

Participant R1 from the University from Nairobi, also felt the coming to age of a younger generation means ethnic stereotypes in comedy will no longer resonate with majority of the audience.

I think the joke, then it was funny, but right now I don't think it would be that funny, or it would relate to lots of people because things are changing, we are Gen Z, now we want jokes based on, do dry jokes, do dud jokes, do jokes that are in our time, not the community jokes.

Participant R6 felt ethnic jokes in the current period would make a comedian appear old-fashioned and it won't make sense.

The changes in demographics also affects the expectations on the manifestation of ethnic stereotypes among people.

For Participant R1, pointed out that the generation someone belongs to would determine whether he would expect some ethnic stereotypes from a person.

He would expect the stereotypes to conform mostly to millennials as opposed to people belonging to the Gen Z generation, because of how they were raised.

For the Gen Z unapata [you will find] he has only been raised in Nairobi, so they only know about Nairobi, he says. So the jokes zenye anajua [they know], about a community are from the millennials, you understand. So probably I eat a lot, but I am not a Luhya, he adds.

For Participant S1, from the USIU University, she would also only expect that to apply to older generations, because of how they were raised, and not to younger generations.

I think it would only be, you know, relevant when you're dealing with older generations because they didn't have the privilege of growing up with all the other different kinds

of influences that we do right now. So, the media, you get your, you know, sense of identity or personality from the way we all are interconnected, like in this room right now, we already aren't all Kenyans, and if I say I'm friends with one of them, it's bound to impact my identity and how I show up.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: Most of the participants in the Focus Group Discussions took issue with the use of ethnic stereotypes in stand-up comedy. However, some were okay with having positive ethnic stereotypes. There was a general feeling that the ethnic jokes could work better as informational and educational jokes, offering details and information about other communities, not just making fun of or critiquing other ethnic communities. There was concern that negative stereotypes could affect self-esteem for the communities stereotyped.

The participants also raised the issue that most of them, comprising the younger generation of Kenyans, no longer align themselves according to tribes and no longer take that as their identity. You also have a huge number of people growing up in families formed from mixed marriages, with parents coming from different ethnic communities, where the children don't take up either of their parents' ethnic identities. To them, the ethnic jokes will not resonate.

Findings from the FGDs, however, also suggested a good number of the students would take the stereotypes in the comedy seriously and even expected people from the referenced communities to show the portrayed behaviours and characteristics, with minor exceptions, which were explained as people who were raised differently or brought up in a different environment.

But there were some participants who felt that, naturally, not everyone conforms to the stereotypes, and so using the stereotypes to judge what to expect in people is misleading. A few do learn about stereotypes about ethnic communities through the show. The presence of ethnic stereotypes in television comedy would therefore work against efforts to do away with ethnic stereotypes, and especially the negative ones.

Recommendations: Media outlets and online platforms intent on attracting the youth through entertainment should bear in mind the changing demographics towards

an audience with little affiliation to ethnic identity and knowledge about ethnic stereotypes. Over time, ethnic stereotypes will no longer resonate with the majority of the audience, which makes a case for not featuring content with ethnic stereotypes in their programming and content offering.

This study was limited to a small group of students. It would be good for more research to be done to establish whether there could be an actual relationship between ethnic stereotypes in stand-up comedy shows in Kenya and the change of ethnic perceptions among the audience.

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