



**NAMIBIA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

FACULTY OF COMPUTING AND INFORMATICS

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATICS, JOURNALISM AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGY

**A RECEPTION ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CARTOON MESSAGES ON COVID-19
BY UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL IN WINDHOEK**

BY

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Declaration

I, Faith Mundodzi hereby declare that the work contained in the thesis, entitled, “A reception analysis of selected cartoon messages on covid-19 by upper primary school learners at Highlands Christian School in Windhoek” is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university or other higher education institution for the award of a degree.

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Abstract

This study investigated how cartoon message interpretation on Covid-19 influenced learners understanding and dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and to establish learners' knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages. The study also sought to assess how Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners' perception towards observing Covid-19 protocols.

To investigate how cartoon message interpretation on Covid-19 influenced learners understanding and dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, the research used the qualitative approach. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed intending to get information from 18 learners at Highlands Christian School. Data was collected through focus group discussions and recorded with the aid of a mobile device to record primary data as voice data and was transcribed data to verbatim. The researcher used a reductionist approach in that only summaries of responses were put into text and tabulated making use of the thematic analysis approach.

The study revealed that all learners were aware of Covid-19 and what it entails through the word of mouth from parents and teachers at school, news, radio. Some learners knowledge was acquired through watching Covid-19 cartoon messages on Namibian Broadcast and Corporation and YouTube channels. The majority of learners interpreted the cartoon messages they watched as intended by the producer. They found the videos useful, informative, interesting and educational. However, a smaller number of learners found the videos to be repetitive and lack adequate information they need. The findings from the study also revealed that Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners into changing their perceptions about Covid-19 and observing Covid-19 protocol. As a result, the study then recommended that the government of Namibia need to create effective, interesting, engaging, age appropriate and culturally sensitive content that will be disseminated to all urban and village learners. The cartoon videos should also be translated into several languages.

Keywords: reception analysis, cartoon messages, Covid-19, upper primary school learners

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Dedication

In loving memory of my parents Ms Lydia Matavire and Ambrose Mundodzi. Their never ending love, encouragement and guidance made me who I am today.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) has affected all aspects of human life (Toros & Falch Eriksen, 2020). The pandemic arguably resulted in catastrophic social, economic and psychological impact on both adults and children. Research also demonstrates that the Covid-19 pandemic has indeed changed the way messages are being communicated across the globe (Marra et al., 2020). The pandemic has caused a global health predicament which resulted in huge communication consequences (Marra et al., 2020). Due to the uncertainties which occurred as a result of the pandemic, there was fear and frustration in both adults and children. Plebanek and Sloutsky (2017) state that children can focus for a very short time as they cannot handle a lot of distractions as adults do. They take in all the information communicated to them without filtering. Thus, for children to understand all aspects of the Covid-19 pandemic, various media messages need to be effective, interesting and engaging, as well as age appropriate, culturally sensitive, inclusive and positive (Plebanek & Sloutsky, 2017). The study, sought to assess how upper primary school learners at Highlands Christian School in Windhoek interpreted selected cartoon messages on Covid-19. In the study upper primary school learners are children ranging from the age of 11-13 years old (Melese, Tadesse & Asefa, 2009).

1.2 Problem statement

Communication on health matters has played a significant role in creating awareness and encouraging the adoption of protective behaviors. As such health communication has been formulated in different ways and targeting different groups of people in society. For instance, cartoons have been used to relay health messages for children given their ability to capture their interest and present information in a child friendly manner. With the outbreak of Covid-19, cartoons were also designed to reach children with messages covering different aspects of Covid-19. This is because cartoons can entertain and educate if the message is well formulated (Gray et al., 2020; Okpara et al., 2021). While this is the case, it remains unknown how effective this approach to relaying Covid-19 information to children was. Furthermore, the levels of exposure and whether or not the intended message was received by the children remains unknown. This problem is compounded by the fact that most cartoons were arguably available online, raising concerns of accessibility. The purpose of this study was to assess levels of exposure of learners to covid-19 cartoons among upper

primary learners, how they interpreted the messages and whether such messages could inform their response to covid-19. In view of that, the study sought to fulfil the following objectives.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study's main objective was to establish how cartoon message interpretation on Covid-19 influenced learners understanding and dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following sub objectives were addressed:

- To establish learners' knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages.
- To Investigate how learners interpreted the cartoon messages on Covid-19.
- To assess how the Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners' perception towards observing Covid-19 protocols.

1.4 Significance of the study

Since Covid-19 pandemic has caused a global health predicament which resulted in huge communication consequences, the serves as a future guide for other global pandemics which may follow by using the correct effective communication media that children can easily understand and interpret. The inclusion of minor children in empirical research on Covid-19 messages enhances the quality and relevance of knowledge which influences policies and programmes for Covid-19 adaptation (Seballos & Tanner, 2009). Studies such as need to be a key priority to policy makers, research funders and program designers for child centred research. Through Child-centred design, children will learn to understand the common and differences amongst themselves and learn to relate to one another and therefore contribute to more cohesive and inclusive societies. The study aids researchers to be cognisant of the needs of children so as create ways which empower child participants and allow children be involved in updating methods which involve them. Lastly, since there is little to no literature about the reception analysis of cartoon messages on Covid-19 in the Namibian context, therefore, the study will add new knowledge generated within child groups and fill the gap in academic literature.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

The delimitations within this study included the sample size as it was not a full representation of Namibia due to the fact that the study was only conducted on upper primary school learners from Highlands Christian School in Windhoek Namibia. This will affect the generalisability of the study findings.

1.6 Definitions of key concepts

1.6.1 Covid-19 is a coronavirus infection caused by a recently identified coronavirus (Chakraborty, Sharma, Bhattacharya, Sharma, & Lee, 2020).

1.6.2 Upper primary learners range from the age of 11-13 years old (Melese, Tadesse & Asefa, 2009).

1.6.3 An animated cartoon is a brief, hand-drawn film for the theatre, television, or computer screen that tells a story or has a plot (Wang, Drucker, Agrawala, & Cohen, 2006).

1.7 Study outline

Chapter 1:

Introduced the study and give a brief background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study plus definition of key concepts.

Chapter 2:

This chapter reviewed the literature and theoretical framework that informs the study.

Chapter 3:

The research paradigm, design, approach, population and sampling, data collection and analysis adopted by the researcher was looked into.

Chapter 4:

This chapter presented the study findings and the discussion thereof.

Chapter 5:

In this chapter, managerial implications and the conclusion of the study will be drawn.

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and examined the study's premise, problem statement, research aims, significance of the study, constraints of the study, and study limitations. The thesis chapters were also outlined.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature related to the study. The review focuses on radio, television, social media and its role or contribution to society. It also highlights the meanings and value that society attaches to radio and television programmes especially in rural communities. The chapter further discusses the theory guiding this study, namely; the reception theory of 1973 by Stuart Hall.

2.2 Children`s interpretation of media messages

Extensive research has been done on children`s interpretation of media messages (see Šramová and Pavelka 2017; Richert, Robb and Smith 2011; Bryant and Zillmann 2013; Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, and Brown 2014; Berdik, and Joan Ganz, 2020; Scull, Malik, and Kupersmidt 2018;). It is evident in literature that children are influenced by mass communication and are able to identify messages that can shape their behaviour (see Šramová and Pavelka 2017). This view is supported by Richert, Robb and Smith (2011) who contend that children`s influence from the television is determined by their development in understanding and comprehending information shown on the screen. Bryant and Zillmann (2013) mention, as children grow and mature, their television proficiency also develops strength and sophistication. Not only does a child gain a skill in selecting relevant central content, but a comparable skill develops for interpreting the formal features of television. No longer are television`s content events perceived as discrete and disconnected. Now the language of the medium itself provides a structure through which the content can be perceived and interpreted. there are two mental pictures of the child in front of the television set. The passive picture is that of the child as a motionless sponge, absorbing and ingesting the television stimulus indiscriminately. The active picture finds the child interacting with television attending, comprehending and responding in a selective manner. In one sense, two pictures blend together in that the passivity of an early point in development later evolves into the active selective child.

Furthermore, Silverblatt, Miller, Smith, and Brown (2014) are of the opinion that media literacy provides skills that enable individuals to comprehend the information they get

through the channels of mass communication. These keys also include a foundation for discussing media material with others, such as children, peers, and media producers. Audience members select the most pertinent information during communication process in which they store and assimilate into meaning. On the other hand, while receiving media messages audience are often engaged in competing activities, because your thoughts may be directed on other activities you may be vulnerable to subtle messages that affect your attitudes and behaviours. This results in receiving a totally different message than was originally planned by the media communicator.

Scull, Malik, and Kupersmidt (2018) based on a study conducted on evaluating the role of media message processing factors derived from the Message Interpretation Process (MIP) model in teenage sexual activity intentions, are also of the view that media message processing characteristics have a distinct influence on teenage sexual intentions that outweighs the influence of all other predictors. These views confirm that children are able to interpret media messages and are able to identify messages which can shape their behaviour.

2.3 The history of cartoons

Cartoons are found to be funny, and they usually tell a story, either in consecutive panels, as in comic strips, or by using animation techniques, as in motion-picture cartoons (Balter, 2009). The modern comic strip dates from the late 19th century, when artists such as Rudolph Dirks, inventor of the Katzenjammer Kids, began drawing them for American newspapers; and the animated cartoon was born in 1907, when French artist Émile Cohl began drawing people and other images directly onto movie film (Kantor & Maslon, 2008).

2.3.1 The use of cartoons on health or educational purposes

Cartoons give a significantly faster form of communication in oral communities where illiteracy rates are high (Obonyo, 2011). The author thought that in times of crisis, such as HIV/AIDS, this kind of communication would be seen as a key way of communicating important health problems. Further, Berdik and Joan Ganz (2020) confirm, "Sesame Street" was the first show to aim to educate young children school-readiness skills through catchy songs and entertaining Muppets, and it debuted in 1969. Aside from transforming the children's media scene, the program inspired generations of youngsters all over the world to enjoy learning. Borzekowski (2018) randomly selected participants to watch Akili and Me as opposed to other programs, aiming to investigate the impact of an animated educational

series. The exposure to Akili and Me enhanced drawing abilities, shape awareness, number identification, counting, and English skills dramatically. A locally created instructional program can help young and vulnerable youngsters. These views confirm that cartoons are used for health or educational purposes and media interventions should be encouraged since they have a positive and efficient impact on school preparation (Borzekowski, 2018).

2.3.1 Benefits of using cartoons for health or educational purposes

The large body of research has been conducted on children and their exposure to cartoons in the media (see Habib and Soliman, 2015; lamurai, 2009). Much of the research confirms that children watch cartoons more than any genre of media content (see Habib and Soliman, 2015). This view is supported by lamurai (2009) who contends that children between the age group of 5 and 15 can watch for more than 6 hours of cartoons per day. Kaula (2015), based on a study conducted on time spent by children watching cartoons, is also of the view that children can spend on average 5-6 hours watching TV. These views confirm that children have high exposure to cartoons on television.

Programs designed to involve children in the content through participation or interaction provide unique opportunities for children to learn important educational media content (see Calvert, Strong, Jacobs and Conger, 2007; Klavir and Gorodetsky, 2001; Habib and Soliman, 2015). Cartoons increase verbal problem solving skills in children (Klavir & Gorodetsky, 2001). According to Habib and Soliman (2015), our children`s day to day habits is watching cartoons. Cartoons can work in favour of kids by building a child with a good mental state. Children can learn from cartoons whilst at home, the experience they could not get from school or parents.

Challenges of using cartoons for health or educational purposes

It is evident in literature that cartoons are not a major source of communication for health or educational purposes and that when they are employed, they are not sufficient to transmit health messages (Obonyo, 2011). Habib and Soliman (2015), in their study reveal that cartoon indeed affect the childhood of an individual as it takes most of time from them. Cartoon can be a good or bad weapon as it can damage children through exposure to bad content. lamurai (2009) also argued because all children like watching cartoons, cartoon animation has a significant influence on children's minds. As the media industry has built the Reward Center in technology, cartoons have induced various disorders in youngsters. This

results in more aggressive personalities in the next generation, as well as negative thinking in social situations. Furthermore, it hampered their ability to acquire appropriate actions.

2.3.2 How cartoons on health or educational messages are perceived

Daems, Moons, and De Pelsmacker (2017) suggest that children love cartoons as they perceive them to be humorous and contains a brief message. Odukomaiya (2014) posits cartoons can be also perceived as entertainment for children, it is discovered that through cartoons kids quickly grasp information than adults, and their application of media messages is unrivalled. It is of paramount importance to check the level of influence cartoons have on children since most of their entertainment programmes are presented in form of a cartoon. Hasanah and Octaviana (2019) argue that animation movies are interesting because of their cheerful and colourful nuance, supernatural animation and interesting story features. However, parents should be worried about the Western animation movies their children watch rated as all age as some of them contain content that is child unfriendly and can negatively affect children. Similarly, Schiau, Plitea, GUSIȚĂ, Pjekny, and Iancu (2013) stressed that cartoons indeed influence to a certain level. Seemingly, children are most affected at the language level depending on the age category. Ivrendi and Özdemir (2010) suggest that mothers perceive cartoons highly in connection with the subscales of supporting learning and diverting children from real life.

2.4 Children`s perception of Covid-19

Covid-19 is a highly infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus which originated from Wuhan, China and spread around the world (Chakraborty et al., 2020; Shereen et al., 2020). There are two main theories around the origin of Covid-19, that is, it may have evolved from bats or it was bioengineered by scientists and these are just conspiracies which may pose danger to society (Bolsen et al., 2020; Shereen et al., 2020; Bloom et al., 2021). From the recent studies it is revealed that patients over the age 60 are at higher risk than children who might be less likely to become infected or, if so, may show milder symptoms or even asymptomatic infection (Velavan & Meyer 2020).

UNICEF (2020) also emphasize that parents and teachers have an important job of teaching correct information which has been tested and approved about Covid-19. Amesho et al. (2020) point that everyone had access to information about Covid-19 through local media such as television, radio, print and electronics. Mansur et al. (2021) study elementary school

children's knowledge and attitudes about Covid-19, signs and symptoms, how it is transmitted, how to prevent, and attitudes towards Covid-19. The results show that school aged children have insufficient knowledge about Covid-19, from how it is transmitted, its signs and symptoms, how to prevent it and protective attitudes against Covid-19. The results indicate that most children were informed about Covid-19 through social media platforms and their parents. Kritz (2020) similarly adds, a movie named Contagion was released to raise awareness about Covid-19 as it has some similarities to the current coronavirus outbreak (Kritz, 2020). Provenzi et al. (2020) suggest that as Covid-19 is rapidly spreading worldwide, children are trying to make meaning of the worldwide trending issue by integrating information they are getting from different sources like verbal messages and the emotional expressions of their parents as well as delivered by the media and other adults.

2.5 Effects of Covid-19 on children

To date, several scholars have done research of the psychological effects of Covid-19 on children (see Giménez-Dasí et al. 2020; Serlachius, Badawy, and Thabrew 2020; Idoiaga, Berasategi, Eiguren and Picaza 2020; Spinelli, Lionetti, Pastore and Fasolo 2020; Passanisi et al. 2020; Salzano, et al. 2021; Ferrara et al. 2020; Ashikalli, Carroll, and Johnson 2020; Loades et al. 2020). Much of the research confirms that the most effects of isolation are impulsivity, attentional difficulties emotional regulation difficulties, and hyperactivity (see Giménez-Dasí et al. 2020). Serlachius, Badawy, and Thabrew (2020) add that the shutting down of schools, limited access to medical care and economic stress in times of the pandemic had a huge effect on the physical and mental well-being of the children globally. Domestic violence and abuse increased due to high levels of stress related to the shutting down of schools. Reduced access to physical and psychosocial support were experienced.

In support, Idoiaga, Berasategi, Eiguren and Picaza (2020) mention that children perceive Covid-19 as a challenge that doctors are trying to conquer and the lockdown gave mixed emotions to children. They felt frightened, anxious, secluded, miserable, tired, and annoyed, but at the same time feeling happy and safe with their families. This is backed by Spinelli, Lionetti, Pastore and Fasolo (2020) who find that self-isolation effect on youngsters' behavioural and psychological difficulties is facilitated by the stress of the parents. This lack of support children get in these difficult circumstances may result in their psychological symptoms. Passanisi et al. (2020) conducted a web-based survey to investigate the behavioural responses during quarantine due to the Covid-19 outbreak in a cohort of paediatric patients with type 1 diabetes and the results also show that they have a risk of acute stress disorder and adjustment disorder. In addition, they are too exposed to

manifesting dangerous feelings like distraction, irritability, and fear. This is further seen in Salzano, et al. (2021) who find that most adolescents experienced feelings of fear, discouragement, and anxiety which strongly affected the approach to their daily lifestyles.

Furthermore, Ferrara et al. (2020) views that Covid-19 pandemic resulted in exceptional changes in people's life due to social distancing and confinement. Many were pushed to adjust by making use of the internet, digital media and social media thus being exposed to its dangers. Ashikalli, Carroll, and Johnson (2020) agree that Covid-19 pandemic has more risks that may exacerbate the widespread of obesity in children due to prolonged school holidays and eating junk food. Besides obesity, other children suffered malnourishment as they depend on healthy school meals. Loades et al. (2020) confirm that during and after compulsory isolation children and adolescents possibly experienced high rates of depression and most likely anxiety.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Osanloo and Grant (2016) define theoretical framework as the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed for a research study. The theoretical framework provides a grounding base, or an anchor, for the literature review, and most importantly, the methods and analysis. The theory guiding this study is the reception theory of 1973 by Stuart Hall a cultural theorist who used it for media and communication studies.

The model states that disseminated messages mostly have common interpretation with the receiver. Hall (1980) states, the disseminator shapes how the receiver thinks or perceive the message. Messages that the receiver gets and interpret with the same meaning of the encoder are considered to be effective. The disseminated spoken or written messages are sometimes decoded differently, therefore, conveying a totally different meaning and interpretation to the message sent. This therefore means that the audience only accepts a text like a novel, film or paintings based on what they have gone through in life as well as their cultural background (Hall, 1980).

According to Thompson (1993), a text can be perceived in one of three ways; dominant readers can be regarded as the audiences who perceive and interpret the message with the same meaning the encoder has when disseminating it. Negotiated readers fall in the category of the audiences who consider the acts made in the film are not good, but sees it fine to accept them as there is a reason behind it. Thus, accepting the author's message even though it goes against the audiences' personal convictions. Oppositional readers do not accept the encoder's text and also have totally different views on how the text has been

shaped and disseminated. Oppositional readers might see the text as immoral, sensitive, adult contents of violence and blood gore thus leading to the text rejection (Thompson,1993).

Morley (1980) argues that people receive media texts differently depending on their different social backgrounds, occupations and surroundings. These social factors can affect the way the audience receive the intended media texts from the producer. He conducted a qualitative media audience research project called the Nationwide Project with many diverse individuals from different scholastic and occupational upbringings. In order to see whether they would receive it with dominant, oppositional or negotiated readings he observed different responses to a clip of its budget special. The Media Group at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) chose the BBC television current events show Nationwide to explore Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding paradigm, which is part of reception theory. The data show that numerous socioeconomic variables, such as class, gender, race, and age, have a strong influence. The findings appear to re-establish the role of socioeconomic class in the interpretative process, which has been shifted and overlooked in many modern media studies.

Ang (1985) investigates the discourses that accompanied the reception of the US soap opera Dallas, which was at its peak in global appeal, particularly in Europe, in the early 1980s. She analyzed letters submitted largely by female viewers in response to her invitation for people to express their thoughts about the show in the research. She put the ad in a women's magazine's classified section. The majority of her answers were passionate defenses or assaults on the show, revealing the extremely personal but culturally inflected ways in which the letter writers connected with and made meaning of it. In this manner, viewing Dallas was an attempt to grasp the show's widespread acceptance in terms of the broad enunciation of isolated yearning and communal defense, as well as the adaptation of a new popular cultural phenomena, a lavishly produced US soap opera. According to the conclusions of the study, media producers have an imagined creature in mind before creating a media product. According to Ang (1991), audience hood is becoming a more multidimensional, fractured, and diverse repertory of activities and experiences. Media producers must provide information about their intended audience's socioeconomic demography (gender, age, ethnicity, social class). She argues that media forms do not accurately reflect people's opinions and solely serve to benefit producers.

Muhdi (2020) investigates how the public perceives Moana's persona as a representative of women's leadership. Stuart Hall's audience reception theory was used in this study to observe multiple data sets. Furthermore, utilizing Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding paradigm,

the results demonstrate three distinct groups, such as dominant, negotiated, and oppositional perspectives. The data demonstrate that the majority of respondents are in dominating positions; they agree with the movie's worldview about Moana's leadership representation.

As the theory suggests, messages encoded by the media may have different meanings to the audience. The study will thus, focus on different meanings interpreted by primary school learners and whether their interpretation could inform their response to covid-19.

Lategan (1994) complains, reception theory is not prepared to face the full consequences of its starting point. Reception theory does not have present day examination of audience reception. Modern audience is pretty aware of the construction of media messages. Reception theory uses qualitative research methods which prevent important detail. Some reception analysis just moves from the list of audience answers to justify the conclusion that everyone see and understand things differently. That perception is not enough. There are questions which need to be answered such as why do individuals have different opinions on certain things, what causes people to view things in a different manner and what are the social impacts of perceiving things differently. These criticisms point to the unresolved tension in reception theory between the constraints of the text and the freedom of the reader. The real reason for this tension is to be found in the dialectic nature of the reading process itself, where the text can function both as a closed system of signs and as a gateway to new possibilities of meaning (Lategan, 1994).

2.7 Chapter summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused a global health predicament which resulted in huge communication consequences (Marra, et al., 2020). Stuart hall's reception theory of 1973, suggest that it is difficult to come up with a message which is going to have the same impact and meaning to the audience. Every individual can decode the message received dominantly, oppositional or be a negotiated reader. Therefore, qualitative research is needed to establish how cartoon message interpretation on Covid-19 influenced learners understanding and dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. In depth interviews such as focus groups are required to establish the nature of Covid-19 related cartoon messages that the learners were exposed to. Also to investigate how learners interpret the cartoon messages on Covid-19 and to assess how the Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced the learners behaviour towards observing Covid-19 protocols. To date this recommendation has not yet been taken up, with research continuing to investigate social and psychological effects experienced by children as a result of self-isolation during Covid-19 pandemic. The current

study aims to conduct a reception analysis of selected cartoon messages on Covid-19 by upper primary school learners at Highlands Christian School in Windhoek.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter delves into the methodology the researcher opted for in the study. It provides a narrative on the research paradigm, design, approach, the population, the sampling, data collection, data analysis and research ethics implemented in the study. Also the measures to ensure data integrity in the study was be deliberated upon.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The term research paradigm is defined by Guba and Lincoln, (1994) as a set of common beliefs, assumptions and agreements within a research community on how challenges should be understood and addressed. The point of departure is that all human knowledge, all scientific inquiry, should start with a set of assumptions, a set of beliefs or a paradigm. Research paradigms consist of three components, namely the ontological assumption which according to Guba (1990) focuses on the researcher's view reality. The second component focuses on epistemological questions which are based on how one acquires knowledge of reality. The third component focuses on methodology which describes methods that are used to solve a problem (Guba, 1990). In any traditional sense, a paradigm is not open to evidence Guba and Lincoln (1994). This argument implies that, while research should make apparent the paradigmatic assumptions upon which it is based, and these assumptions may not be universally accepted, there is no valid foundation for critiquing research solely on the basis of its assumptions.

The current study is underpinned by the interpretive philosophy which assumes that there is no single reality or truth, and therefore reality needs to be interpreted. The epistemological position of interpretivism holds that the world does not exist apart from ones understanding of it, but knowledge has the trait of being culturally derived and historically situated (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Dworkin (1982) states that humans gain knowledge through interpreting and understanding the meanings that are attached to actions. This means that individuals themselves shape their environment and not the other way around. Goldkuhl (2012) argues that interpretivists believe that the world cannot be seen in an objective way as all individuals' experience and go through life differently. According to interpretivists, there is no

single reality or truth, and hence reality must be interpreted. Interpretivists believe that in order to truly understand the world, one has to get the subjective views from the individuals that are going through the situation (Goldkuhl, 2012). They believe that individual interactions shape an individual's identity which in turn shapes their whole environment. Humans have rich and different inner worlds and perceive situations differently (Goldkuhl, 2012). Interpretivism believes that more information and detail can be derived from individual assessments which can provide empathetic understanding as opposed to quantitative methods that are objective (Weber, 2009).

This paradigm is relevant for this study which sought to establish how selected high school learners in Namibia interpreted Covid-19 cartoon messages and how their interpretation could have influenced understanding and response to Covid-19. The use of the interpretivism paradigm supported the use of methods that allowed the researcher to understand reality as constructed by the participants.

3.3 Research design

A research design, according to Burns and Bush (2010), is a precise sequence of methods performed in research to fulfil the defined aims and objectives. According to Yin (2014), a research design is a plan of how the researcher intends to conduct their research. There are three common research designs namely: exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory.

According to Burns and Groove (2001) exploratory research is conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon. Exploratory investigations are generally more suitable in studying an area where there is limited information available about an issue (Akthar, 2016). Furthermore, Creswell (2015) believes that exploratory research is a powerful tool for determining what has happened, seeking new ideas, asking questions, and evaluating occurrences in a new light.

The exploratory research design is key to gather background information and establish the study problem's parameters. It is valuable when we define research problems and set research priorities. Exploratory research is adaptable and lays the framework for future study. Exploratory research necessitates the researcher's investigation of a variety of sources, including public secondary data, data from other surveys, observation of research objects, and opinions about a firm, product, or service.

The use of an exploratory design was relevant in that it supported the use of methods that align with a child-centered approach to conducting research. Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) are of the view that children are inspiring but difficult to study, thus, the research needs to be

designed in a natural and authentic setting using the methods in which children can easily understand and freely participate in. Child-centered research is commonly described as research in which children are active participants and the most important source of knowledge about their life (Mayeza, 2017). Lagensted (1994) defines child-focused research as research that positions children at the centre around which key research questions, descriptions, interpretations and analyses are made. Seballos and Tanner (2009) state that in a child centred research, there are five principles that must be adhered to by the researcher, namely:

Relevance:

Group participation must be handled in a way that the young can relate to and find meaningful.

Creativity:

Children are driven by creative ways, which allow them to openly express themselves about subjects that are important to them.

Participation:

Child feedback on researchers' knowledge and methodologies allows children to influence and shape the research process, which is vital for their empowerment and ownership of the outcomes.

Flexibility:

Children's needs and interests must be addressed through research approaches that are open and responsive.

Sustainability:

The study of upper primary students' interpretations of selected cartoon messages on Covid-19 must contribute to the long-term development of children's knowledge and ability to act through research on reception analysis.

According to Seballos and Tanner (2009), in child-centered research, children are free to conduct their own analysis of the local reality. They can connect Covid-19 messages to real-world concerns in their own lives and communities. These analyses raise participants' awareness and comprehension by detecting risks and proposing solutions that match their requirements. Reflective research procedures assist children in bringing together new knowledge and comprehending the meaning within their groups, building confidence in their ability to act, reinforcing self-belief, and strengthening their capacity for further action on

Covid-19. Children have diverse ways of comprehending, seeing, and expressing Covid-19 information, resulting in varying adaptation priorities and response capacities. Meaningful involvement with children necessitates that all parties assist children in taking control of the process, allowing children to express their concerns, and acting on their own priorities (Seballos & Tanner, 2009).

3.4 Research approach

According to Creswell (2014), a research approach describes the plans and procedures taken when conducting research. The procedures involved include data collection methods, data analysis and interpretation procedures. There are three different approaches a researcher might use in conducting a study namely; quantitative, qualitative or mixed method approach (Omona, 2013). This study falls within the qualitative research approach which emphasizes understanding a phenomenon when there is little knowledge about it through exploration.

Qualitative research is the process of collecting data through case studies, interviews, focus groups, ethnographic research and observations which typically means that it is a method of collecting data through open-ended and conversational communication (Silverman, 2020). Qualitative research has many advantages. It provides more insight on specific areas, it incorporates a more personal experience for both the researcher and the respondent which in turn also ensure more accurate responses (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The qualitative approach gives participants an opportunity to share, feelings perceptions, experiences and how events occurred in their lives (Constantino, Crane, Noll, Doswell & Braxter, 2007). The aim is to understand human experience as it is essential as compared to predicting, control and explain. This method provides reflexivity as participants have space and time to reflect on their stories (James, 2007). Bradley (1993) justifies the qualitative experience as an attempt to understand others experience.

In qualitative research, the respondent's reality can be understood by revealing values of the people, interpretative schemes, mind maps, belief systems and rules of living (Omona, 2013). The qualitative approach was therefore relevant for this study as it helped in establishing how learners interpreted Covid-19 cartoon messages they were exposed to. The approach provided an opportunity to obtain participants knowledge of Covid-19 and how Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners' perception towards observing Covid-19 protocols.

3.5 Population and sampling

Population within a study can be defined as a set of people with specialised characteristics that are needed in order for a researcher to carry out a study (Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2021). Gay and Mills (2016) define the research population as the complete group of individuals, events, or things that have shared observable features, or any group who is the subject of research interest. In this study, the population consisted of 57 upper primary learners at Highlands Christian School in Windhoek. These learners were in between grade 4 and they were selected because it was assumed that they could better comprehend cartoons and provide their thoughts on them as compared to the lower primary learners. Of all the schools with upper primary grades in Windhoek, and which could have been potential research participants, Highlands Christian School was selected because of their willingness to participate. The principal granted permission for the study to be conducted, hence becoming the focus of the study.

According to Gay and Mills (2016), it is impractical or impossible to investigate the complete population; instead, the researcher can establish the average of a group to consider for the study and draw general conclusions based on the findings from the sample. Sekaran and Bougie (2013) describe sampling as the process of selecting an acceptable number of participants from the population; the participants selected must share similar characteristics with other elements in the population. This will allow for generalisations of findings to the entire population. Therefore, a sample, as defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2010), is the total number of units drawn from a population. To identify a sample, different sampling methods can be employed.

There are two types of sampling methods: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. The sample for this study was drawn through the use of non-probability sampling. The non-probability sampling method draws the sample using non-randomized methods and relies heavily on the researcher's judgment. Instead of random selection, individuals are chosen because they possess knowledge and have some experience with the phenomenon under investigation. It is on this basis that do Carmo, Infante, and Mendes (2014) contend that non-probability sampling focus on convenience, purpose, and self-selection rather than random selection.

In this study, convenience sampling was employed. According to Etikan, (2016) it is a deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. It is a non-random technique that does not need underlying theories or a set number of participants. The approach was used to identify participants since emphasis was not placed on whether they have seen or not seen Covid-19 cartoons. This is because they would be exposed to

selected cartoons which they would then give their interpretation. Their interpretation was based on the Covid-19 cartoons the researcher exposed them to.

The researcher conveniently selected a sum of 18 upper primary school learners to form the sample for this study so that the researcher can gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013). It is fundamental in qualitative research to use smaller samples so as to get more accurate information from participants. In grade 4, only 9 learners were sampled and out of that number 6 were boys and 3 girls due to availability at the time of the interview. In grade 6 and 7, the sample size was 9 learners and consisting of 6 boys and 3 girls because there are more boys than girls in those classes.

3.6 Data collection

Bryman et al. (2014) define data collection as the process used by the researcher to gather the basic information that he will use to draw conclusions from. According to Rabiee (2004), data is typically acquired in a natural context in qualitative research. Focus group discussions were used in this study. Sekaran and Bougie (2016), explain focus group as a certain sort of group interview in which the topic is explicitly stated and the emphasis is on promoting debate among members. Focus group discussions are often comprised of eight to ten individuals, with a moderator facilitating conversations on a certain topic, concept, or product (Bryman et al. 2014). Members are typically recruited based on their familiarity with the subject matter for which information is sought. The goal of the focus group sessions is to gather respondents' impressions, interpretations, and opinions while members discuss the event, concept, product, or service (Sekaran & Bougie 2016). The moderator is critical in leading the discussions in a way that elicits the information needed. Focus groups are generally cheap and can produce reasonably reliable data in a relatively short period of time.

In this study, there were 2 focus groups and each consisting of 9 learners and the time frame for each focus group was roughly 30-45minutes. In-between the discussions there were 2 interactive (games) to encourage learners to participate. Lagensted (1994) posits, grouping learners who are good communicators into smaller groups enables the researcher to manage the learners and also enhances all learners to participate. The researcher facilitated and moderated the discussions creating a relaxed environment so that learners could freely express their ideas, feelings and views about selected cartoon messages on Covid-19. The discussions were recorded using a cell phone so as to pick up on any missing information by the researcher. The researcher took notes and observed non-verbal interactions in order to obtain thicker descriptions and interpretations compared to the sole use of verbal data. The

discussions were conducted at Highlands Christian School as learners are familiar with the environment. The researcher, supervisor and the appointed teacher from Highlands Christian School approved the Covid-19 cartoons before there were shown to the learners. The appointed teacher was also present in the discussions to make the learners feel at ease. Prior to the discussions, the researcher played three Covid-19 cartoons consecutively. After exposing learners to the selected cartoons, they were asked what meanings were they deriving from the cartoons. The three animated videos were not longer than 3 minutes each and were comprised of a text with some illustration of the scientific advice. The voice narration in the adopted videos had a child voice-over. The videos also consisted of some child friendly music.

Focus group discussions were beneficial in getting information from a small sample of respondents on how cartoon message interpretation on Covid-19 influenced learners understanding and dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, focus group discussions were chosen to enable the researcher to access information on the learners' knowledge of Covid-19 and their exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages. This was therefore, achieved by allowing participants to create meaning among themselves.

The present epidemic proved to be a stumbling obstacle in the study's operationalization. As a result, in order to account for any gaps in the data acquired from the focus group, the researcher adopted the Covid-19 protocols for when people are meeting face to face. Circumstances compelled the researcher to use this strategy so as to get the experiences of the pupils.

3.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is defined as a process through which data collected by the researcher is made sense of by organising, sifting, cataloguing, selecting thus determining themes (Holliday, 2002). This study used thematic analysis to make sense of the data collected. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data (Braun, Clarke & Terry, 2014). It involves the process of familiarizing ourselves with our data, assigning preliminary codes to data in order to describe the content, searching for patterns or themes in the codes across the different interviews, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The initial step taken in the study, was for the researcher to familiarize herself with her data documenting thoughts about potential codes/themes. After the researcher has read and familiarise herself with data, she then started generating initial codes by making use of a

coding framework. When all data was initially coded and collated, the researcher then began searching for themes by keeping detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes. Once a set of themes has been devised and now require refinement, the researcher started reviewing themes by vetting themes and subthemes. The fifth phase was defining and naming themes by documentation of theme naming. Once the researcher has fully established the themes, she produced the report describing the process of coding and analysis in sufficient details.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics within research are extremely important. Ethics can be defined as a broad set of written and unwritten rules that direct one's behaviour as well as those of others (McKenna & Gray, 2018). Within research, ethics guide researchers in acquiring scientific data in an ethical manner and ensures that researchers are held accountable for their conduct (Resnik, 2018). Ethics within research ensures that confidence and trust can be held and maintained by everyone involved in the study, it ensures that ethical practices are held, especially when research is done on human or animals (Gillan & Pickerill, 2012). It also ensures that funds from funded research are used appropriately.

There are typically five broad ethical areas that are considered when conducting research. The first area is informed consent. Informed consent can be defined as a participant knowingly and voluntarily giving their permission for their data to be used for a study (McKenna & Gray, 2018). The second area is anonymity, which is to protect the identity of the participant (Resnik, 2018). If anonymity cannot be maintained, then confidentiality is used. Confidentiality means that the researcher should ensure that the collected data cannot be traced back to the respondent (Resnik, 2018). The fourth area is the respect to privacy which ensures that the participant has every right to decide how, when and what information of theirs will or will not be shared (McKenna & Gray, 2018). The last area is the protection of vulnerable groups. Vulnerable groups can be defined as individuals within society who are unable to protect their rights and wellbeing (Gillan & Pickerill, 2012).

For this study, firstly ethical clearance was obtained from the Namibia University of Science and Technology's Ethics Committee (Ethical Clearance Number: S007/2021). As stipulated by the research code of ethics it is essential that the study should have been conducted on a voluntary basis and therefore participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study and that their refusal to be part of the study would entail no consequences. The purpose of the research was explained to the parents of the learners who then gave informed consent on behalf of their children. Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy was

strictly adhered to (Arifin, 2018). The researcher sought permission from Highlands Christian School to use their premises and their learners to conduct research. In addition, some parents did not give consent or were not comfortable with their children participating in the study; such children were not included in the study. The collected data is protected and stored in encrypted devices with a password only known by the researcher and the supervisor (Arifin, 2018). This data will be kept for a period of five years after which the information will be erased and no traces of it shall be found. Covid-19 protocol was carried out, that is, correct wearing of masks, thoroughly disinfect hands with alcohol based hand rub, maintain at least one metre distance from one another, used a well ventilated classroom with open windows, covering of mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing, Participants with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever were encouraged to stay at home and not participate. Data was collected at a time which did not interfere with the schoolings program.

3.9 Credibility and trustworthiness

In qualitative research, validity and reliability is measured through trustworthiness. Trustworthiness of a study refers to how reliable is the information gathered, its findings and the process used (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). Qualitative researchers constitute trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was achieved by ensuring that there was alignment between upper primary school learners 'opinions and how the researcher interpreted them (Nowell et al. 2017). To achieve credibility, peer debriefing was done to provide an external check (Lincoln and Guba, 1989) on whether researchers interpretations were a correct reflection of the participants views

3.9.1 Dependability

It involves participants' evaluation of the findings, interpretation and recommendations of the study such that all are supported by the data as received from participants of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The study ensured dependability by outlining the procedures followed to collect and analyse data. During the process of focus group discussions notes were made as well as an audio record to check them against each other.

3.9.2 Confirmability

It is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but clearly derived from the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The findings must reflect the participants' voice and conditions of the inquiry, and not the researcher's biases, motivations, or perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012). To ensure

conformability in this study, the researcher presented representative quotations from transcribed text to demonstrate a connection between data collected and the result thereof.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter looked at the research paradigm and design, approach, population, sample, research instruments, data collection, data analysis and research ethics, validity and reliability that were considered within the study. It gave a brief introduction of each and a detailed description of each sections role within the study. The data was collected using the stipulated methods and the analysis of the results will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Data presentation and analysis

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the methodology adopted in this study. This chapter presents and discusses findings from the focus groups discussions with upper primary learners at Highlands Christian School in Windhoek, Namibia. The aim of this study was to establish how cartoon message interpretation on Covid-19 influenced learners understanding and response to Covid-19 pandemic. The presentation and discussion of findings is informed by the objectives of the study. This chapter is divided into four sections: section one examines the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second section presents result of objective one of the study, namely “to establish learners` knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages”. The third section of this chapter addresses the second objective which investigate how learners interpret the cartoon messages on Covid-19. The Analyses, presentation and discussion of findings for objective three, namely “to assess how the Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners’ perception towards observing Covid-19 protocols” are presented in the fourth section of this chapter.

4.2 Participant profile

There were eighteen (18) participants in total who participated in the focus group discussions. The gender of participants was 6 girls and 12 boys. The age of all the participants was approximately between 10 and 13 years of age. The participants were from Highlands Christian School in Windhoek. The coding of participants is listed as follows:

L1- L9 Focus group discussion (FGD) 1 27 September 2021

L10- L18 Focus group discussion (FGD) 2 29 September 2021

Table 4.1 Participant Profile

Code number	Gender	Age	Grade level
1			
L1	Girl	10	4
L2	Boy	10	4
L3	Boy	10	4
L4	Boy	10	4
L5	Boy	10	4
L6	Boy	10	4
L7	Boy	10	4
L8	Girl	10	4
L9	Girl	10	4
L10	Boy	13	7
L11	Boy	13	7
L12	Girl	13	7
L13	Boy	13	7
L14	Girl	13	7
L15	Boy	12	6
L16	Boy	13	7
L17	Girl	12	6
L18	Boy	12	6

From the above table 4.1 it can be observed that most of the participants in the focus groups were boys (n=12). In respect to age, most of the participants were 10 years old and were in grade 4.

4.3 Findings

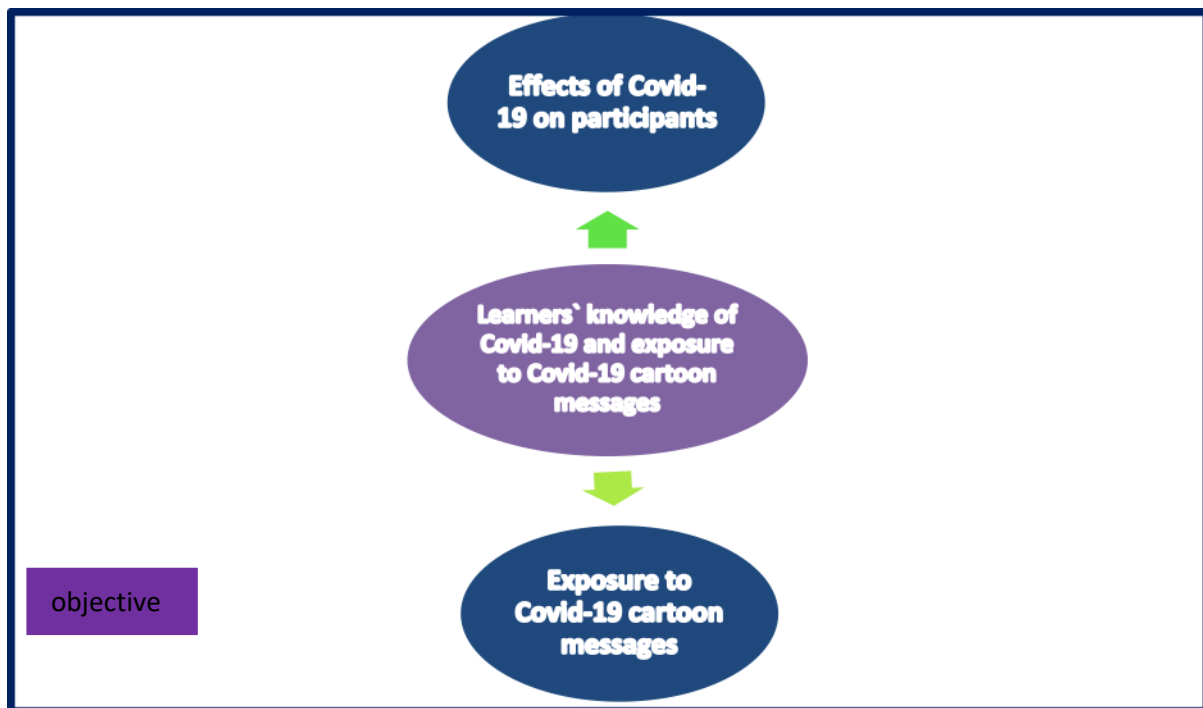


Figure 4.1 Knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon Messages

Figure 4.1 above shows the first objective of establishing the learners' knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages. The themes below summarise the study's observations.

4.3.1 Learners' knowledge of Covid-19

The narratives below, as emerging from the participants, show the levels of knowledge and understanding of Covid-19. Covid-19 is understood by participants as an airborne disease that spreads fast and can kill. Participants explain:

It is an airborne disease (L16).

It can spread very easily and it is also very contagious" (L6).

For participant L4, Covid-19 is a disease that kills. He explains how “*people have died from Covid-19*”. Similarly, L13, believes that Covid-19 kills and opines that:

When the virus came to Namibia several of my family members died of it and I was so scared. Some days I would not even go school because I wanted to keep myself safe by staying at home.

Participant’s views above speak to the dominant narrative of what Covid-19 is and its effects. Covid-19, according to Chakraborty et al. (2020), is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus that can transmit swiftly from person to person. This is consistent with the views of participants on what Covid-19 is. Toros and Eriksen (2020) assert that Covid-19 has had an effect on all facets of human life, as evidenced by the inability of one participant to attend school in order to protect themselves from a virus that could kill them.

While others consider the virus as a killer disease, others reflected on the role of medical practitioners in dealing with Covid-19. Participants such as L4 believes:

Lots of people are trying hard to make things better like doctors and nurses. They can make you feel better when you are sick”

While participant’s view may show their vulnerability, they are confident in assistance they can find in medical practitioners. Idoiaga et al. (2020) comment that children appear to believe that Covid-19 is a challenge that doctors can defeat.

Some participants also revealed knowledge of Covid-19 through their understanding of the origins of Covid-19. Covid-19 was described as a virus which started in Wuhan, China and then spread to other countries all over the world. Participants also revealed two theories about the origins of the disease. The disease was created in a lab by the Chinese and also that it came from bats. Participants comment:

One of the theories is that it was created by scientists in China and the other is that it was created from bats (L11).

Covid-19 is like a pee in the toilet some days when I see Chinese people in the shops I get annoyed and I am also angry at the batman because he brought Covid-19. Chinese were eating bats and if I see them I feel like calling city police on them. They do not deserve to be in the shops, they caused the whole world to be unhappy (laughs) (L4).

I got this theory from the movie that I have watched. It was mixture from bat saliva. The bat ate a rotten banana and then it fell down into a pig sty and then the pig ate it. That same day it was slaughtered and the chef cooked it in a restaurant that's how it spread (L18).

While some participants believe that the virus originated from China, others believed the disease could have come from somewhere else. L15 maintains that “*these are just theories; we should not blame everything on the Chinese*”.

Chakraborty et al. (2020) study findings correspond with the view of participants stated above on the origins of Covid-19. The issue of its origin brought about interesting views explaining how it really started. Some of these theories posed danger to the society as they appear to fall under fake news, as yet the origins are yet to be empirically determined. Bloom et al. (2020) affirms that there are two theories about the origin which are: Covid-19 may have evolved from bats or it was bioengineered by scientists. These conspiracies may lead to stigmatisation in society here seems to be hatred towards the Chinese community. One of the participants mentioned that whenever he sees them in shops he become frustrated. Other participants argue that not everything about Covid-19 should be blamed on Chinese. This statement mean that some people do not believe in these theories but believe in natural transmission. Bolsen et.al. (2020) support the point that there are people who believe the virus originated naturally from zoonotic transmission.

4.3.2 Effects of Covid-19 on the participants

Participants also spoke about the effects of Covid-19 in their lives. The main effect alluded to by most participants is the lockdown measures. L13 saw a positive effect, “*what is interesting is that you can still communicate with your family and friends even if you cannot see them face to face through phone calls on WhatsApp and Zoom meetings*”, while other participants lamented the negative effects:

During lockdown my mum could not go to work and we have no enough money so started to buy things that were on the budget only. Things that were needed the most. during that time, it was very hard and difficult (L4).

Sundays we used to go out with my family and have fun but now we couldn't anymore and that left me bored and sad (L15).

Covid-19 is bad and boring and cannot play with my friends” (L3).

Passani et al. 2020 and Idoiaga et al. (2020) ` research about the psychological effects of lockdown due to Covid-19 concurs with the experiences of participants. The children felt fear, discouragement, and worry, which had a significant impact on how they approached activities in their daily lives. Additionally, Marra et al. (2020) stated that the pandemic arguably resulted in great social, economic and psychological impact. Parents' loss of income and mental well-being of the children were some of the effects of Covid-19 (Serlachius, Badawy, and Thabrew, 2020).

Participant's views reveal a dominant decoding/reading of messages on Covid-19. Dominant reading, according to Hall (1980) means that an individual has understood the message encoded by the disseminator. Messages that the receiver gets and interpret with the same meaning of the encoder are considered to be effective. Much of the Covid-19 information communicated via different media platform align to the views of the participants. This supports the dominant reading view.

4.3.3 Exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages

Some participants had some exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages prior to the videos they watched as a group before the discussion. The nature of cartoon messages they were exposed to are Covid-19 animated videos. Some of them had watched the videos on Namibia Broadcasting Corporation (NBC); YouTube channel among other platforms. The various videos they watched explained everything about Covid-19 in detail from what it is, how it is spread and prevented.

“Yes, I watched a cartoon on NBC before. It was about why we should stay home so that we do not contract the virus and spread it around” (L16).

“I watched something similar to this on YouTube except that it explained how the virus enters the human body and how it slowly destroys their system” (L17).

While some participants had exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages through animated videos, all participants from focus group 1 admit that they never watched any Covid-19 cartoon videos before. L3 states, *“it is my first time to watch cartoon videos on Covid-19”*. Similarly, L10 adds he never watched any cartoon videos before but justify his knowledge through other means:

“No I have not watched anything but I listened on Radio FM 100 last year 2020. It was about a child and a father. The father asked the child questions about Covid-19

and then the child replies wash your hands, keep safe, stay at home don't go around, keep social distance, wear your mask wherever you go".

For participant L12 exposure to Covid-19 was through the word of mouth. Participant attests:

"I have not watched any videos before but I hear about Covid-19 from school and from my parents sometimes".

While other participants were exposed through news and word of mouth, L18 explain his exposure through a movie:

"I watched something on Netflix but it was not a cartoon. It was a movie named Contagion, explaining how Covid-19 has been going around and a theory about how it was created".

Okpara et al. (2021) prove online cartoons and comics were created to disseminate messages about Covid-19 to children and some were translated into several languages. Gray et al. (2020) agree that a series of Covid-19 videos with local content have been disseminated worldwide through YouTube channels. Okpara et al. (2021) believe that social media and YouTube are useful channels for health promotion, and that health promotion professionals can creatively make use of animated cartoons during public health emergencies to educate the general public on health issues. This further illustrates the existence of Covid-19 cartoon videos. Findings from the study concur with Amesho et al. (2020), who posits that social mobilization and awareness raising were carried out through local media (TV, radio, print, and electronics), ensuring that everyone would have access to this information. UNICEF (2020) seem to agree that parents and teachers have a vital role to play of distributing unbiased information and science based 'truth' about Covid-19. The statement above that knowledge was through the movie named Contagion seem to corroborate with Kritz (2020) who confirms the existence of a movie called Contagion by Gwyneth Paltrow's 2011 film about a global virus pandemic that begins in Hong Kong and bears some resemblance to the current coronavirus outbreak. The movie, like the novel coronavirus that causes the sickness now known as Covid-19, transferred from animals to humans.

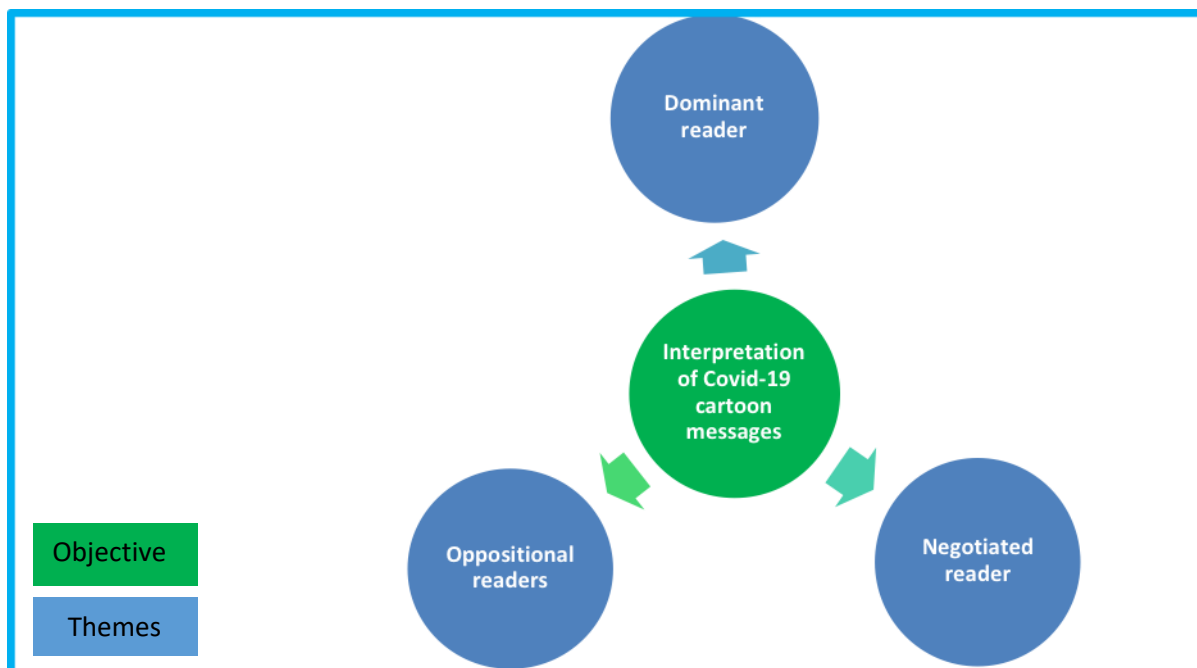


Figure 4.2 Interpretation of Covid-19 cartoon messages

Figure 4.2 above shows the results on how participants interpreted Covid-19 cartoon messages. From the results, it is clear that participants perceived the disseminated messages differently thus, conveying a totally different meaning and interpretation to the message sent. The themes that derived were: dominant reader, negotiated reader and oppositional reader.

4.4.1 Learners' interpretation of the covid-19 cartoon messages

Most of the participants agree that the videos are quite educative and helpful. The participants' stance is that:

"I think that the messages are really helpful especially for younger children because they are really not interested in real people talking because they are boring. but they can find it more fun and listen more attentively if it's a cartoon character talking to them" (L10).

"It's helpful not only to children but for adults who don't really watch the news and that don't follow the regulations of Covid-19" (L16).

For participant L10, the people and organisations that created the videos should be appreciated as the videos are very informative. He asserts:

“For the people that made the videos, they put very hard work for children and people to learn”.

L16 is of the opinion that the government of Namibia should make these interesting videos accessible to village children so that they can also be aware of Covid-19. Participant recommends:

“I find the videos very interesting and helpful. I think the government should make a plan of going to the villages to spread the awareness about the virus. what it is, how it spread and how to stay safe”.

Hall (1980) provides evidence that the disseminator shapes how the receiver thinks or perceive the message. The language of the medium itself provides a structure through which the content can be perceived and interpreted (Bryant & Zillmann 2013). The use of cartoon characters interested and drove participants to accept the message. According to lamurai (2009), cartoon animation has a significant impact on children's minds because most kids enjoy watching cartoons. Participants found the videos to be educative, helpful and informative. From the short review above the majority of the participants can be regarded as dominant readers. Bryant and Zillmann (2013) mention that children develop a comparable skill for interpreting the formal features of television, thus, interacting with television attending, comprehending and responding in a selective manner. Šramová and Pavelka (2017) reported similar observations in their experiments that children are influenced by mass communication and are able to identify the messages that can shape their behaviour.

The participants agree that the videos repeat same information about Covid-19, but they reason that the videos have different theories about the origins of the disease, how it spreads and how to prevent it. Therefore, they are worth watching and not be taken for granted.

“It’s true that they repeat the staff over and over again but a lot of them have different theories about where corona virus came from, how it is spreading, and how to cure yourself when you have corona” (L14).

“I feel like most people will take them for granted and say it’s something that we hear every day but it’s very important and we should listen to it because we are just like taking it for granted” (L11).

The above is consistent with the findings of Hall (1980) which suggest that when the message is disseminated the audience may receive it with some reservations. These are called negotiated readers as they agree that the information in the videos is repetitive but sees it fine to accept because it provides different theories of Covid-19. As a result, adopting the author's message even if it contradicts the audience's personal convictions Muhdi (2020) agrees that recipients in this position do not necessarily operate from a hegemonic standpoint. However, they are enough acquainted with the dominant community to be able to decode sufficient texts in an abstract sense. In his research, negotiated respondents at first, they had an internal doubt at Moana's character, but they managed to change their minds towards the end of the movie.

4.4.2 Oppositional reader

Participants establish that the videos are not really helpful especially to people who already know about Covid-19. L13 claims that the cartoon messages are repetitive as they provide the same information about Covid-19.

"I get that the videos are helpful but almost every video they keep telling us the same things over and over again about washing hands and wearing masks but I would really want them to make a video telling us about the vaccine and what it does in your body, how it is helping to prevent Covid-19. Some people are scared because they do not know what the vaccine is doing".

Similarly, L12 questions about Covid-19 vaccine and asks:

"Why are we accepting vaccine from China where the virus started? Why not as Africa develop our own vaccine? No one is telling us about Johnson and Johnson vaccine which is causing blood clots and many people died from it. That is why many people are afraid of taking the vaccine they don't know what it's going to do"

Thompson (1993) is of the same opinion with Hall (1980) that the audience that does not accept the encoder's text and also have a totally different views on how the text can be shaped or disseminated are considered oppositional readers. Oppositional readers reject a text cause of various reasons like seeing it as immoral or sensitive but in this instance it was rejected because participants felt the videos were repetitive and lack adequate information about the virus which they deem to be important. Muhdi (2020) proves oppositional position

audience rejects the message in the favoured code to perceive the decoded message inside some elective structure of reference.

Other participants dispute the cartoon messages due to the misinterpretation of the whole videos. L5 was interested in the action of the characters. Participant comments:

“They said we can be super heroes too (laugh) but I can’t even fly like a batman”.

L5 disputes being asked to be superheroes and wonders why *“They said we can be super heroes too (laugh) but I can’t even fly like a batman”*. L6 also marvels at how can Panda help and query:

“When Panda said he can help me but he is on the video so how is he going to help (laughs)”.

From the quotes above, participants oppose the videos on the basis of them being unrealistic. Muhdi (2020) reports similar observations in his research when some of the respondents claim that the movie does not necessarily depict women's leadership because they think that it is unrealistic and cliché for a girl of Moana`s age to go on a journey and save the whole village by herself.



Figure 4.3 The influence of Covid-19 cartoon messages

Children can be positively or negatively impacted by media messages as shown in Figure 4.3 above. Few participants revealed that they were exposed to Covid-19 cartoon messages prior to the animated videos that were shown before the discussion started. Their answers were mostly influenced by what they watched before and being cemented by the current videos they watched together as a group. The majority of the participants were not exposed to any type of Covid-19 cartoon messages and their answers were based on the animated videos they watched just prior to the discussion. Previous and recent exposure to the related covid-19 cartoon messages through animated videos led participants to air their different understandings of the messages which determine how their perception and attitude towards the pandemic was influenced. Most participants were influenced positively as they learnt to observe Covid-19 protocol and be more precautionous. The following theme emerged:

4.5.1 Positive influence

At first participants report that they were more precautionous because they feared to contract the virus. This resulted in them staying indoors most of the time. After understanding more about Covid-19 it changed their perception and attitude as they were no longer scared of contracting the disease. L11 attest:

“In the beginning I took much precaution because I was afraid I might contract the virus or my family members will contract the virus so I mostly stayed in the house but now that I know more about the virus and how it spreads and how to avoid it, I am no longer scared of contracting the virus and I am taking precaution properly”.

While some participants were scared for their life at first, other participants state they had no fear at all as they thought it is just a regular disease that will go away quickly. Participants admit:

“At first when I heard about Covid-19 I thought it’s just a regular disease that will go but after I watched the videos I realised that it was serious and when lockdown came I became a lot more precautionous about how I live my daily life. I started steaming, taking lemon tea” (L14).

“At first I was not really scared and my mother was forcing me to steam and to drink lemon tea. I couldn’t go play outside. That made me sad but after I see people dying of Covid-19 then I started getting scared” (L12).

Participants posit, after exposure to cartoon messages they understood that the disease can affect anyone despite your background or anything. Covid-19 related cartoon messages helped to understand the measures one has to take in order to be safe around people. This made participants to feel at ease and not be scared anymore. Participants ascertain:

I felt like it came to kill old people because their immune system is low and the virus will kill them very fast. For adults I thought it will just come and go since their immune system is stronger and it can fight. It was not the case and I was very afraid of it.

Such findings are congruent with the findings of Calvert et al. (2007), who examined how young Hispanic and Caucasian children viewed an animated instructional television program under conditions that altered the level of involvement necessary. The findings imply that programs designed to engage children in the content through participation or interaction give children with unique possibilities to learn vital educational media content. Daems, et al. (2017) also concur that children are best approached through traditional media. Children prefer cartoons. Borzekowski (2018) maintains, educational media can positively impact young children. A locally produced instructional program can help young and vulnerable pupils. According to Habib and Soliman (2015), a cartoon could serve as a home school, teaching a child life experiences that they would not have received from their parents or from school due to facilities that are not available in the traditional academic setting or at the request of their parents. To corroborate the findings, Obonyo (2011) adds that cartoons provide a far faster form of communication, particularly in oral communities with high illiteracy rates. This mode of communication would be seen as crucial for communicating major health issues.

Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners to take care of themselves during the pandemic. To stay active participants, urge:

“If you eat healthy food your immune system will be stronger and fight Covid-19” (L8).

“We should eat healthy by eating a lot of fruits and vegetables. Also to drink lots of water” (L5).

Some participants revealed that Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced their approach towards observing Covid-19 regulations. The participants affirm that the videos they watched have detailed information about Covid-19 protocol. This is confirmed in L4 who asserts:

“I learnt that we should keep a one metre distancing and that when you are sick you should stay at home or go to the hospital”

Participants admit it is everyone’s responsibility to help stop the spread of the virus by always follow Covid-19 protocol. These protocols include avoiding overcrowded places and gatherings, not sharing food at school, maintain one metre distancing, stay at home when you are sick or visit the hospital and correct wearing of masks. L2 accept:

“To be safe around people, not to go to lot of crowds, not to share food, wear your mask, wash your hands”.

Other participants reveal, they learnt for the first time to always sanitize their hands and surfaces using a specific alcohol based gels. They accept that before watching the videos they thought all gels are the same and work the same. Participants observe:

“I like how they said we should use a specific gel with alcohol. I thought all gels are the same” (L14).

According to Onuora et al. (2021) Covid-19 YouTube animated cartoon videos are effective on the health behaviour of social media users. To attest to the findings Wiliyanarti et al. (2021) add, learning using video media can increase the knowledge of elementary school students in implementing health protocols. Therefore, health promotion programs for school age children are needed as an effort to implement health protocols so that they can reduce the prevalence of Covid-19 in school age children. Gray et al. (2020) state that there is a crucial need to put in place specialized Covid-19 prevention messaging for schoolchildren using an entertainment education strategy, with a discrete, engaging, and highly informative story line emphasizing correct hand washing practices and the concept of social distance.

4.5.2 Negative Influence

While some participants appreciate learning more about observing Covid-19 protocol, others complain wearing masks all the time as they cannot breathe properly especially in hot weather. Some participants mention that they watched videos on YouTube about masks having layers with worms are afraid they might enter their body and get sick. L6 confirms:

“I hate wearing mask because I cannot breathe properly when it’s hot. I saw on YouTube that some masks they have worms inside (laughs). What if those worms get into my body and get sick?”

Lazzarino et al. (2020) support the participant's assertion that face masks make breathing more difficult. Furthermore, at each respiratory cycle, a portion of the carbon dioxide that was previously exhaled is inhaled. These features enhance the frequency and depth of

breathing, and they may worsen the covid-19 burden if sick people using masks diffuse more contaminated air. If the increased breathing pushes the viral load down into the lungs, this may aggravate the clinical condition of infected persons. Cheng (2020) adds that it difficult for most people including health professionals to wear mask all day especially in summer. Furthermore, sweat moisture may render the mask ineffective and create a favourable environment for the infection.

L10 concur, some Covid-19 protocols left them confused as they were opposing their cultural norms.

“Also when I went to the village I did not know how to greet my grandmother because usually we shake hands but now I didn’t and was worried that she thinks I am now rude but she knew and said its fine”

Macoloo (2020) relate to the preceding Forcing individuals to stop shaking hands is a more difficult problem because it is a deeply ingrained and significant cultural behaviour. For Africa, a hand shake complemented by eye contact is the norm. It is a deeply ingrained cultural practice in traditional societies. Refusing to shake hands, especially when offered by the other side, is regarded as disrespect for both the culture and the other person. This is especially true if a younger person avoids shaking the hand of an older person.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter presented and discussed the study findings. Gaps in literature and the managerial implications recommendations to be drawn for future studies will be discussed in the proceeding chapter.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to establish how selected Covid-19 cartoon messages were interpreted by participants and whether such messages could inform their response towards Covid-19. On that note, the first chapter provided an overview of the study, chapter 2 highlighted the literature review of the study and discussed the theoretical framework that underpins it. Chapter 3 looked at the methodology adopted in this study and chapter 4 presented the findings and analysis. This chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study. Conclusions are drawn from the research findings.

5.2 Summary of the findings

The summary of the findings is presented as per the objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Objective 1: To establish learners' knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages

Findings show that learners have general knowledge of Covid-19. It is known as a killer and highly infectious disease which originated from Wuhan China and resulted in economic and social disruption. Participants were exposed to Covid-19 cartoon messages through animated videos they watched on NBC and YouTube channel.

The various videos they watched explained everything about Covid-19 in detail from what it is, how it is spread and prevented. However, the findings show that all learners from focus group 1 admitted that they were never exposed to any Covid-19 cartoon messages before. They stated that the animated videos shown prior to focus group discussion were their first. Then from focus group 2, the majority mention that they were never exposed to any type of Covid-19 cartoon messages before but indicated they had exposure were exposed through other means like news from different radio stations and from television channel NBC1, word of mouth from parents and teachers and from watching a Netflix movie. These findings place much importance on the importance of choosing the right format and right channel of communication.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To Investigate how learners interpreted the cartoon messages on Covid-19

From the findings, it is clear that learners interpreted Covid-19 cartoon messages differently. Most learners decoded the messages with the same meaning as the encoder. They found the videos to be educative, helpful and informative. Some participants assert that the videos are repetitive but still remain relevant because the videos have different information about the origins of the disease, how it spreads and how to prevent it. Lastly, there are participants who challenges the view that the videos are useful. They found the videos irrelevant as they claim they are repetitive and lack some more information about Covid-19.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To assess how the Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced learners' perception towards observing Covid-19 protocols

After the exposure to the related covid-19 cartoon messages participants shared their different understandings of the messages. Most participants learnt to observe Covid-19 protocol and be more precautionous.

The findings of the study reveal that learners were more precautionous at first because they feared to contract the virus and lose their lives as well as of their parents, thus, staying indoors most of the time. However, this changed after they learnt and understood more about Covid-19 through Covid-19 related cartoon messages. They were no longer scared or afraid of getting the virus. For some learners, they were not really scared at first as they thought it is just a regular disease that will go away quickly as it is targeting older people with a weaker immune system and it will not be fatal to children and adults with a strong immune system. Nevertheless, after exposure to cartoon messages participants understood that the disease can affect anyone despite your background or anything.

From the results it is clear that Covid-19 cartoon messages influenced participants' approach on observing Covid-19 regulations. The videos watched by learners have detailed information about Covid-19 protocol such as regularly washing hands with soap or use alcohol based gels. Before watching the videos learners thought all gels are the same and work the same. Participants admitted, it is everyone's responsibility to help stop the spread of the virus by always follow all Covid-19 protocols like masking up, self-isolate if you are

sick or visit the hospital, maintain one metre social distancing and avoid overcrowded places and gatherings. Learners added, it is important not to touch the front of your mask or to rub your nose and eyes. The learners expressed worry in masking up all the time as they claim it leads to difficulties in breathing and some believe those masks contain worms which will penetrate into your body and make you sick. For some participants Covid-19 protocol left them confused as some regulations were opposing their cultural norms such as not shaking hands. In their African culture they believe shaking hands is a sign of respecting elders.

5.3 Conclusions based on findings

From the results, it is clear that participants have knowledge of what Covid-19 is and what it entails. Participants attest Covid-19 originated from Wuhan, China. Additionally, participants state the pandemic resulted in great social, economic and psychological impact as they felt fear and worry. Online cartoons were used to create awareness to children about Covid-19 pandemic. Most learners were not exposed to any Covid-19 cartoon messages before but however learnt through other means such as news, parents, school and movies. After watching Covid-19 cartoon messages prior to the discussions, learners found them to be useful, educative and very helpful. Covid-19 cartoon messages were interpreted with the same meaning of the encoder and thus, we can say the videos were effective. Learning more about the pandemic eliminated the feeling of fear. Also it resulted in the learners learning to observe Covid-19 protocols all the time. Some messages were received with mixed feelings as they were accepted with some reservations. The other text was disregarded due to being repetitive, lack adequate information and have total different views on how the message should have been shaped and disseminated, like the issue of vaccination being omitted in the video and this had a negative impact on other learners.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested to improve Covid-19 awareness amongst upper primary learners through cartoon messages in Namibia.

There is a need to use multiple child friendly channels in order to increase their access to health messages.

Message designers must establish the needs of the children so that they design and use the right format for messages such as Covid-19 messages.

The involvement of children in the design of health messages is highly recommended.

5.5 Limitations to the study

The main drawback of the study was that the labour-intensive process required for the methodology approach was time-consuming. As the data was collected during the pandemic, scheduling an appointment was cumbersome, some parents expressed discomfort over a stranger meeting their children. The sample size did not fully represent Namibia as the study was carried out in Windhoek at a selected school due to financial strains. Interpretation was based on cartoons watched once and this could have influenced their thoughts. Audience studies are largely based on participant perceptions which may have limitations in terms of honesty of information provided. There is very little or no prior research on reception analysis of selected cartoon messages on Covid-19 by upper primary learners in the Namibian context thus, the researcher might need to develop an entirely new research typology. However, this can be an opportunity for the researcher to identify new gaps in the prior literature and to present the need for further development in the area of study. The limitations mentioned above did not compromise the findings of the study because the researcher used detailed descriptions of learners' experiences, feelings and perceptions and open-ended responses from learners mean that the researcher uncovered novel problems or opportunities that she wouldn't have thought of otherwise. Thus, giving credibility to the study.

5.6 Areas of future studies

This research needs to be reproduced at the national level, with prominent officials such as the ministers of education and health serving as key informants in order to influence policy and gain a holistic perspective on how Covid-19 messaging may be improved and implemented.

5.7 Conclusion

This study established how selected Covid-19 cartoon messages were interpreted by participants and whether such messages could inform their response towards Covid-19. The results indicated that participants find Covid-19 cartoon message to be interesting, informative and educative. After watching Covid-19 cartoon messages, participants confess

that they will change their attitude and perceptions towards the pandemic. Participants add, they will now fully observe Covid-19 protocol as they learnt in the cartoons. Additionally, this study discussed learners` knowledge of Covid-19 and exposure to Covid-19 cartoon messages. Results indicated, for some participants, exposure to Covid-19 messages was through other formats of messages other than cartoons. Hence, from the findings it is important to choose the right format and right channel of communication. The limited exposure to Covid-19 cartoons among participants could arguably be linked to the chosen channels of communication. The format of the message could also contribute towards limited exposure.

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Annexure1



FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (F-REC)

DECISION: ETHICS APPROVAL

Ref: S007/2021
Student / Staff no.: 220014841

Issue Date: 26 August 2021

RESEARCH TOPIC

Title: A reception analysis of selected cartoon messages on Covid-19 by upper primary learners at Highlands Christian School in Windhoek, Namibia

Researcher: Faith Mundodzi
Tel: +264 85 706 1370 / +264 81 216 7644
E-mail: fayidi@gmail.com

Supervisor: Dr Hatikanganwi Mapudzi
E-mail: hmapudzi@nust.na

Dear Ms Mundodzi,

The Faculty of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (F-REC) of the Namibia University of Science and Technology reviewed your application for the above-mentioned research. The research as set out in the application has been approved.

We would like to point out that you, as principal investigator, are obliged to:

- maintain the ethical integrity of your research,
- adhere to the Research policy and ethical guidelines of NUST, and
- remain within the scope of your research proposal and supporting evidence as submitted to the F-REC.


Should any aspect of your research change from the information as presented to the F-REC, which could have an effect on the possibility of harm to any research subject, you are under the obligation to report it immediately to F-REC as applicable in writing.

We wish you success with your research, and trust that it will make a positive contribution to the quest for knowledge at NUST.

Sincerely,



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Annexure 2

30 July 2021


Namibia University of Science and Technology
Research Ethics Committee
Windhoek

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

This letter serve to inform you that Mrs. Faith Mundodzi student number 220014841 will carry out her research titled "A reception analysis of selected cartoon messages on Covid-19 by upper primary learners at Highlands Christian school in Windhoek Namibia" at our premises.

For any further enquiries do not hesitate to consult us.

Yours Faithfully



Ms. Paulina Shimanya

Acting Principal
HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL
P.O. Box 98505, Police Square
Windhoek 2018
Namibia 061-254235

Christo Primo | Christ First

Our Vision: To be the Leading Educational Institution of choice in Namibia

Research Final
by Faith Mundodzi

Submission date: 31-Jan-2022 11:23AM (UTC+0200)

Submission ID: 1751850149

File name: Mundodzi_F_220014841_Full_research_document_final.docx_2.docx (1.35M)

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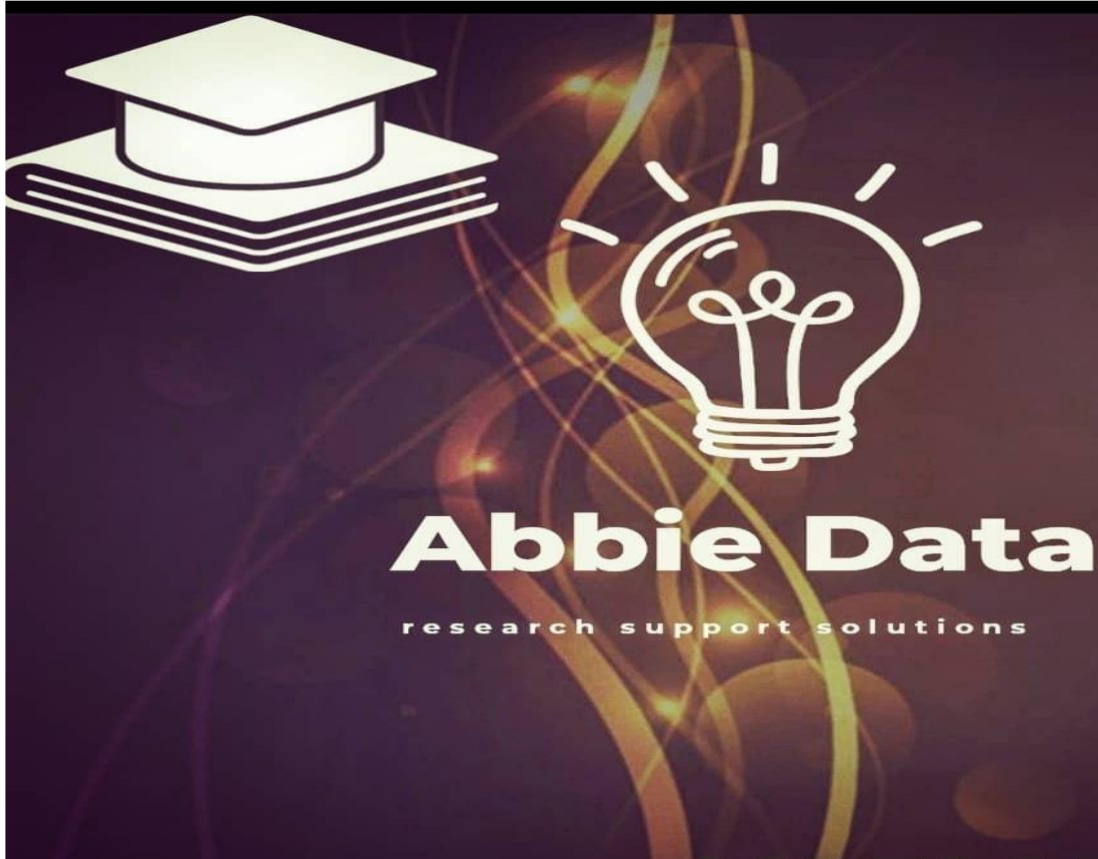
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EDITING CERTIFICATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I Clifford K Hlatywayo Acknowledge that I did the language editing of the study by Faith Mundodzi entitled:

A RECEPTION ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CARTOON MESSAGES ON COVID-19 BY UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS AT HIGHLANDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL IN WINDHOEK

THE QUALITY OF THE FINAL DOCUMENT IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE, FORMATTING AND REFERENCES REMAIN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHOR

**Clifford K
Hlatywayo**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clifford K Hlatywayo', written in a cursive style.

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31/01/2022

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