

**A PRAGMA-SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
IN VACCINATION CAMPAIGNS AGAINST MPOX IN KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language
and Linguistics of Chuka University.**


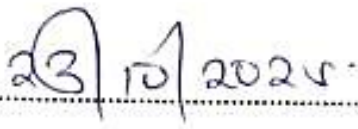
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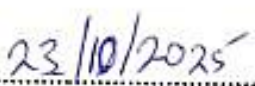
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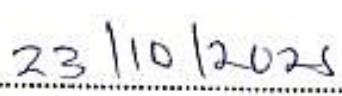
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my lovely daughter Blessing Chebichi, whose presence in my life has been a constant source of inspiration, strength and purpose. Your prayers, love and laughter have pulled me through the most challenging moments of this journey. I hope that this work one day reminds you that passion and determination can do anything. To my parents Mr and Mrs Chemiati, my siblings Mary, Andrew and Solomon; your unwavering support, encouragement, prayers and sacrifice made my educational path possible. Your belief in the transformative power of education has been the greatest gift and the reason why I am standing here today.

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To my family-you are the source of my strength. Thank you for your prayers, guidance and immense support. I am truly indebted. May the Lord God Almighty richly bless you?

ABSTRACT

The success of any public health campaign is dependent on its ability to strategically utilize various modes of communication to effectively convey complex health messages. Meaning-making in public health campaigns is dependent on the strategic integration of language and other modes of communication. Integration of these two linguistics fields provides a comprehensive understanding of how public health campaigns navigate through the complexities of effective communication in a multi-cultural society. The motivation behind this study is based on the need to understand how semiotic and pragmatic elements collaboratively work to create meaning. The study focused on analysis of meanings and the functionality of speech acts in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. This study adopted a descriptive research design guided by the Multimodal Theory by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen and John Searle's Theory of Speech Act. The study population comprised all publicly available communicative materials used in the vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. Purposive sampling was used to identify campaign materials that possess linguistic elements only relevant to the study. A total of thirty campaign materials were sampled. However, the final sample size was dependent on the point of saturation. The data was sourced from official websites of institutions of public health and digital media platforms. An integrated pragma-semiotic approach was utilized during data analysis where visuals were classified as icons, indexes and symbols to examine their communicative functions while speech acts were analysed according to Searle (1976). This document is made up of six chapters; chapter one, two and three comprise the introduction, literature review and research methodology respectively. Chapter four highlights meanings in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. The study finds that the campaigns made use of various semiotic resources such as icons, indexes, symbols, spatial arrangements, layouts and colour schemes which carried multiple meanings. The icon of a vaccine bottle for instance connotes hope through the administration of the vaccine which is a lifesaving substance. This reinforces the idea that the relevant authorities are concerned with the protection and preservation of life. Symbolically, this icon is a representation of defence and immunity. Chapter five engages speech acts in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. The findings of the pragmatic analysis reveal the use of five types of speech acts as categorized by Searle (1976) and hierarchical structuring which operate as complex illocutionary arrangements. Chapter six contains the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. This study has validated that the union of pragmatic and semiotic elements in the campaigns against Mpox generated an integrative communicative power which not only informed the population regarding Mpox pandemic but also advocated certain preventive methods, primarily vaccination among high-risk groups. The study demonstrates how verbal and visual elements interact dynamically to produce persuasive messages that impact behaviour change. This study advances the theoretical frameworks utilized by demonstrating how various illocutionary acts are reinforced and modulated through semiotic resources to inform, create awareness and promote vaccination uptake. It bridges the gap between theory and applied communication practices. The integration thus provides a comprehensive understanding of the process of meaning-making. It offers insight on the role of communication strategies in the design of more effective public health campaigns.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Africa CDC	Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
COVID-19	Coronavirus
KEMRI	Kenya Medical Research Institute
MOH	Ministry of Health
Mpox	Previously known as Monkeypox, a viral illness caused by Orthopoxvirus.
PHECS	Public Health Emergency of Continental Significance
PHEIC	Public Health Emergency of International Concern
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
U.S.A	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Public health campaigns are organized communication efforts to inform and alert the public about a health crisis and encourage healthy lifestyles among a population. Public health campaigns play a crucial role in encouraging healthy lifestyles and disease prevention through raising awareness, shaping attitudes, and advocating for change in behaviour. Overall, public health campaigns are effective in encouraging positive behaviour change and awareness of the consequences of unhealthy lifestyles. According to Ward (2019), the statistics by CDC (2019) highlight that around 53.3% of U.S.A adults met aerobic physical activity guidelines in 2019, showing modest progress and the success of health campaigns that promote physical activity. Public health initiatives such as Change4Life have been key to encouraging healthier consumption and improved public health outcomes (Willia, Scarborough & Townsend, 2020).

Public health practice in the majority of African countries is motivated by the desire to manage infectious disease. HIV infections in Uganda decreased from 7.3% of the population in 2011 to 5.8% in 2019 due to expanded antiretroviral therapy and condom distribution programs (Uganda AIDS Commission, 2019). These findings show effective strategies and high community participation in promoting safe sexual practices (Nanyonjo, Makumbi & Kabwama, 2019). Similarly, in Nigeria, prolonged government and international interventions led to the total elimination of polio cases by 2020, indicating the success of vaccination and sensitization campaigns in disease prevention (Omoleke & Tadesse, 2020)

Noar (2006) asserts that communication is the central tool that is used to promote positive behaviour change. Campaigns are not merely systems of delivery but theoretically driven interventions that are structured to shape attitude. This study employed a meta-analytical mixed method approach to review content in relation to health communication. The study highlights that the road to success in health communication is dependent on the design of the communication message and segmentation of the audience. Dissemination of health across multiple channels reinforces messages pragmatically and semantically thus increasing the likelihood of message acceptance and adoption of certain behaviours. Visuals have become

increasingly prominent in public health communication for enhancing message clarity and accessibility. They simplify complex information, making it easier for audiences with varying literacy levels to understand and recall key messages. Visual communication is especially valuable in conveying scientific and health-related content that words alone may not effectively express. As King and Lazard (2020) note, visual elements enable audiences to comprehend public health messages more easily since humans process visual information faster than written text. During the COVID-19 pandemic, visuals such as images, animations, and infographics were widely used to curb misinformation and promote preventive behaviours like handwashing, mask-wearing, and sanitizing (King & Lazard, 2020). These strategies accelerated information dissemination and improved public understanding of health guidelines.

Kenya is a multicultural society characterized by people of diverse ethnic communities, language and religious practices. The complex linguistic environment requires strategic communicative approaches to disseminate health information. This calls for linguistic sensitivity and cultural situating as advocated by (Ndolo, 2015). Language is not just a device for transmitting information but a device for constructing meaning through various ideological and cultural structures as proposed by Fairclough (1992). Use of linguistic heterogeneity and semiotic resources in public health communication must be considered. The majority of public health messages are built in hegemonic languages such as English and Swahili. With this, there comes the assumption of exclusion of part of the population (Ong'ondo & Janks, 2017). The organization of the health interventions is meant to communicate and bridge linguistic segmented but at the same time produce change in behavior (Waisbord, 2014).

Use of culturally adaptive strategies such as those that align global health talk with local linguistic frameworks is crucial for effective communication. The *Eradicate Polio Campaign* and *Beyond Zero Campaign* are proof of the success that emerges as a result of the mixing of local visual and linguistic semiotics, which enhances trust and message internalization (Muturi & Mwangi, 2016). These campaigns employed slogans, visual and stories from local indigenous languages which had profound pragmatic and emotional connotation. The result of this application was the strengthening of the campaign messages' persuasive power. The success of any public health communication relies not just on linguistic accommodation but also semiotic value and

ability to resonate with various members of society. Multilingualism ensures code switching, pragmatic framing and contextual adaptation. This ensures campaign messages are culturally relevant and understandable.

Management of the spread of infectious disease such as Mpox during crisis largely depends on effective public health communication mechanisms. Emerging infectious diseases such as Mpox, continue to pose notable health threats. The role of effective communication thus becomes progressively vital where language and visual resources play a key role in creating awareness and encouraging compliance of the health stated guidelines. Various governmental and non-governmental public health institutions heavily rely on mass media through creation of campaigns during crises to inform and educate the public about the pandemic on the need to change behaviour and adopt various preventive measures such as vaccination uptake.

Public health campaigns are inherently multimodal. They make use of linguistic messages together with semiotic resources to craft campaigns that are effective in transmission of critical health messages. Therefore, while these campaigns play informative functions, they are also persuasive tools that shape the public behaviour during crises. According to the World Health Organization (2022), timely and precise information is crucial for controlling outbreaks and preventing disease transmission. Therefore, the importance of understanding strategic communication in health campaigns lies in determining whether messages achieve their communicative intent. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics focuses on how context influences the understanding of meaning and is therefore essential in the analysis of health communication. The Speech Act Theory by Searle (1976) provides insight into understanding how verbal messages in public health campaigns can be analysed. The use of speech acts in isolation is not effective in campaigns of such nature. They are often embedded within semiotic tools in which they work together to ensure that they co-create meaningful messages. Eco (1976) highlights that semiotic analysis permits researchers to examine the meanings incorporated in imagery and symbolism. It entails analysing signs and symbols which then offer valuable perspectives into how visual elements strengthen the communicative power of health campaigns. This is particularly appropriate for public health messaging, where visual elements can stimulate emotional responses and aid in understanding. Harrison (2003) posits that the efficiency of visual

symbols, such as icons, logos and colours, can meaningfully influence the engagement of the audience.

It is important to note that in Kenya, vaccination efforts against diseases such as Covid 19 and Cervical cancer have been met with varying success levels due to differences in the structure of campaign messaging among other issues. Linguistic and semiotic strategies are very significant in the persuasion of the public towards vaccination and other interventions. This brings in the fundamental function played by pragma-semiotics in public health discourse. In recognition of the interplay between pragmatics and semiotics, this study seeks to find out how meaning is created through language and other sign systems and how these two unique fields work together to create campaigns that ultimately create awareness, counter misinformation and persuade the public into procuring certain interventions such as vaccination uptake.

The discovery of Mpox dates back to 1958 in Denmark. The first reported human case of Mpox was in Democratic Republic of the Congo (1970). Since then, Mpox has appeared sporadically in Central, East and West Africa. Since 2005, several cases are reported each year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mpox re-emerged in Nigeria in 2017 and continues to be transmitted from person to person across the nation and in people traveling to other nations. In 2022, WHO renamed the disease from Monkeypox to Mpox in line with new disease naming guidelines. Mpox, was first reported in Kenya in July 2024 (World Health Organization, 2022). The resurgence of Mpox, characterized by outbreaks in non-endemic areas like those in many parts of Kenya, calls for the re-evaluation of strategies for public health messaging. This therefore puts forward the necessity of using both pragmatic and semiotic analyses in an attempt to come up with strategies that inform the public about Mpox. Multimodal communicative tools play very significant roles in the construction of public health initiatives. In order to ensure that the public considers vaccination and other preventive measures against any infection such as Mpox, then various communicative resources must be used. According to Eco (1976) signs are very important tools that carry multiple layers of meanings. These meanings could have significant impact on how health messages are received and interpreted by the audience. In the United States of America, the *Truth Initiative Anti-Smoking Campaign* (2000) was initiated and aimed at ensuring reduction of tobacco intake among the youth. This initiative was characterized by use

of assertives such as “Smoking kills 1,200 people every day” and signs of vivid graphic images of blackened lungs that were damaged by smoking. These images resulted in increase in awareness among the general public, creating a sense of emotional response from viewers, achieving the intended perlocutionary effect. The campaign’s truth logo was characterized by boldness and striking colours which created a brand identity that was easily recognizable by the audience ensuring that the message was visually striking and very impactful.

The *Malaria Control Campaign*, initiated by the Ministry of Health in Kenya also clearly explains the role of semiotics in public health messaging. In the course of their study, Kalonge, Sanya and Ochieng’ (2019) employed a qualitative descriptive research design to conduct a semiotic analysis of various campaign materials that included images, posters, and relevant informational brochures containing symbols such as mosquitoes, bed nets, mosquitoes, and affected individuals. The study findings revealed that the semiotic elements employed in the campaign actually managed to connote the fact that malaria is preventable and treatable. This campaign worked in promoting community action against malaria because, among other semiotic elements used in the social advert, familiar symbols as well as culturally relevant images were well utilized. While this study concentrated on semiotics in Malaria campaigns, the current study employs an integrated approach to scrutinize verbal and semiotic communicative modes utilized with the ultimate goal of preventing spread of Mpox.

Ingolo and Ong’onda (2024) analysed multimodal features in the Kenyan Covid 19 posters. This study adopted a descriptive research design and utilized the Semiotic Theory to describe the multimodal structure of Covid 19 posters with a key focus on visual elements as components of multimodality. This study examined how visual rhetorics in Covid 19 posters communicated messages of urgency and need of immediacy for prevention of its spread. The study established that the posters used bold colours and icons of masks, social distancing pictorials and hand-washing images to capture the attention of the public, which complemented the Ministry of Health’s verbal health directives. This study outlined the need to integrate plain language with simple visual elements in order to effectively convey critical information regarding a particular health concern. This study is very significant in Semiotics, examining in details the sign systems in Covid 19 posters. It however did not address the functionality of pragmatic

elements that accompanied those posters bearing in mind the magnitude of the pandemic. The present study addresses this.

The *Family Health Campaign* established in 2008 in Kenya sought to improve maternal health care, providing comprehensive family planning and primary care to marginalized communities in Kenya. Omondi (2017) explored how this campaign initiative utilized various pragmatic strategies such as directives, politeness strategies, implicature and framing so as to communicate various complex health information about maternal care and child nutrition to the targeted audience. The campaign sort to build a relationship with the audience by exercising politeness through phrases such as-together we can secure a brighter future for our children. It also encouraged the public to take actions such as visiting the nearest health facilities for family planning services. These directive speech acts facilitated the effectiveness of audience turnout. The campaign utilized informative speech acts through various media channels and posters to give detailed explanations regarding the use of contraceptives and child immunization, thus educating the public on health risks and preventive measures.

Numerous public health campaigns have been conducted globally and locally. Language plays a very critical role in shaping how the masses perceive and act upon health messages. However, communication is not linguistically limited. Semiotic resources play a huge role in reinforcing and shaping intended meanings. Effective communication in public health campaigns calls for integration of both pragmatic and semiotic strategies. These two elements are inseparable and indispensable for achieving success. Existence of studies that tackle pragmatics or semiotics in isolation is a testament of a fragmented approach that creates a critical research gap that the current study intends to fill. This gap in literature points to the need for an integrated analysis of how semiotic and pragmatic elements interact to strengthen message delivery and audience interpretation. This linguistic study on Mpox is very unique and of a particular significance because most of the studies around it is epidemiological in nature. Mpox is an emerging disease that is still marked by low levels of community awareness. This is unlike previous health cases such as Covid 19 and HIV/Aids. The need to create awareness through campaign initiatives is therefore high. This calls for proper restructuring of communicative elements. This study comes in at a critical time not only

because of its novelty but because its ability to interrogate how the process of meaning-making, how speech acts and semiotic resources integrate to create meaning.

The study contributes to theory by expanding the application of Speech Act Theory and Multimodal Theory in public health discourse. It further contributes to practice by revealing how strategic integration of linguistic and visual signs contributes useful input to health communicators, policymakers, and campaign designers. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative pragma-semiotic analysis, offering a framework for evaluating the communicative efficacy of multimodal public health campaigns.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The success of public health campaigns depends not only on medical intervention but also on the effectiveness of the linguistic and semiotic strategies used. While several studies have examined language of health campaigns, most of these have treated pragmatics or semiotics as individual entities. Such separation limits a holistic understanding of how these two dimensions work together to construct meaning. The existence of studies that tackle pragmatics or semiotics in isolation reflects a fragmented analytical approach that creates a critical research gap that the current study intends to fill. This study therefore seeks to bridge this gap by examining how speech acts and semiotic resources such as imagery, colour, layouts and spatial arrangements collectively contribute to meaning-making and persuasion in Mpox campaign communication. The motivation behind this study arises from the need to understand how meaning is encoded, interpreted and acted upon in the context of a relatively new and health concern. By performing this analysis, the study contributes to the broader understanding of how multimodal discourse enhances or constrains message interpretation and behavioural response in health communication.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study sought to conduct a pragma-semiotic analysis of communication strategies in Mpox vaccination campaigns in Kenya with a focus on how speech acts and semiotic elements collaborate to produce meaning.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study was guided by the following set of objectives;

- i. To critically analyze the semiotic resources that create meanings in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya.
- ii. To examine the use of speech acts in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya.

1.5 Research Questions

The research was guided by the following questions;

- i. How do semiotic resources create meanings in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya?
- ii. How have speech acts been utilized in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will contribute significantly to the existing knowledge on Pragma-semiotics. It offers a hybrid pragma-semiotic approach which accounts for both linguistic and visual meaning construction in campaign discourse. The research extends the scope of pragmatics analysis beyond speech acts. This study also illustrates ways in which semiotic resources are not independent units but meaningful elements in meaning-making through which the illocutionary force of campaigns is strengthened alongside various linguistic components. This study advances the theoretical frameworks utilized by demonstrating how various illocutionary acts are reinforced and modulated through semiotic resources to inform, create awareness and promote vaccination uptake. Practically, this study contributes useful input to health communicators, policymakers, and campaign designers. The findings therefore inform the development of more effective public health campaign messages that effectively utilize pragmatic and semiotic resources to ensure persuasive messages that impact behaviour change.

1.7 Justification of the Study

The selection of Mpox as the subject for study was based on its unique presentation of communicative and linguistic situation in comparison to other health concerns. Its status as a new and emerging disease requires creation of new communicative strategies to inform, warn and persuade the public into behaviour change. Its lack of established

framework calls for creation of linguistic expressions, pragmatic and semiotic strategies.

Unlike other familiar health concerns such as HIV/Aids, Malaria and the recent COVID 19, campaigns against Mpox need to construct meaning and public understanding from the ground, negotiating between scientific terminology, emotional response and cultural interpretation. This therefore makes it an ideal subject for a pragma- semiotic study. Mpox allows the researcher to examine how novel speech acts and semiotic tools such as symbols, colour schemes and images interact to create meaning, manage fear and promote vaccination as a measure to mitigate spread. Performing a study on Mpox therefore provides a good opportunity to be able to document how language evolves and functions in emerging health discourse. This enriches both linguistic study and health communication practice.

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study solely focused on the pragma-semiotic analysis of communication strategies in vaccination campaigns against Mpox. It investigated how speech acts and semiotic communication techniques work collaboratively to convey important health messages and influence vaccination. While there may be other concerns in the health sector, the study limited itself to Mpox in Kenya which restricted the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or health issues. This study pragmatically examined how campaign language employs speech acts according to Searle (1976). Semiotic analysis focused on the use of signs and symbols in campaign materials, analysing how these elements work together to create meaning and enhance understanding. The researcher examined campaign materials produced from July 2024 to present. The study specifically utilized data downloaded from WHO, CDC, official press release statements from Kenya's Ministry of Health and other relevant government bodies, campaign videos on YouTube and other media platforms. This study did not dwell on opinions or reception from the audience, rather on linguistic and semiotic strategies employed. The findings of this study hold potential applicability to other public health vaccination campaigns. The identified integrated approach utilized is a reflection of communicative strategies employed in the health discourse. This study provides a transferable framework through which analysis of meanings can be done.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The study solely focused on Mpox in Kenya. The study did not also incorporate narratives from the creators of the campaigns and audiences which could have been more resourceful in investigating the success levels of the campaign messages. However, the study was able to meet its objectives, providing comprehensive insights into how meanings are constructed through various modes of communication.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

The following were the assumptions of the study:

- i. Semiotic resources play key roles in the construction of meanings in vaccination campaigns against Mpox.
- ii. Speech acts serve various communicative functions in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya.

1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

Felicity conditions:	A set of situational and contextual criteria which must be met for a speech act such as a directive to be successful during crisis.
Intertextuality:	A key concept in discourse analysis that describes how a text's meaning is influenced by other texts or previous health concerns such as COVID-19.
Multimodality:	The use of multiple modes of communication such as colour schemes, spatial arrangements and signs in campaign materials to create meaning.
Pragma-semiotics:	An interdisciplinary approach that integrates pragmatics and semiotics to analyse how meanings are created, conveyed and interpreted in public health campaigns.
Public Health Campaigns:	Strategic communication efforts designed to educate and inform the public about Mpox and encourage healthy behaviours within a population.
Representational meta function:	The content or basically what is depicted in the visual image associated with Mpox.
Signified:	The meaning that is represented by visual and verbal signifiers.
Signifier:	Visual and verbal elements that appear in public health campaigns and carry meaning.
Speech Acts:	A statement or utterance that serves a specific purpose through language in vaccination campaigns against Mpox.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Role of Communication in Public Health Campaigns

Health communication entails making use of multiple modes of communication strategies to convey critical messages that empower the population to promote positive behavioural changes in attitudes and behaviour. The ultimate goal of public health interventions is often, although not always, behaviour change. For this reason, campaign objectives often represent a systematic understanding of how behaviour change is supposed to happen within the target population. To develop deep insights into the potential pathways of behaviour change, however, additional research is often needed to assess the audiences' current knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, their readiness for change, their communication preferences and habits, as well as relevant social, political and policy environments that may facilitate or hinder behaviour change.

According to Hornik (2002), communication is a significant aspect that cannot be ignored. It is an instrument through which one can mould health behaviour. The study used a mixed method to analyze public health communication. Linguistic and symbolic framing of the message decides the success of the campaigns. The study identifies that public health communication in the campaigns is based on two related stages. Informative level is concerned with how the messages are structured to give factual information while symbolic level is concerned with how semiotic resources such as images create social meaning. The current research is concerned with the importance of purposeful communication strategies in order to be effective health campaigns.

Campaign learning is sifted to guide campaign goals, which may be directed at a change in behaviour, or any of its precursors in the conceptual framework of the campaign. Carefully selected campaign goals are aware of the limits of time, budget, and milieu and will aim to generate maximum public health returns within these limits. Campaign message strategies consist of two broad classes: content strategies and executional strategies. Content strategies have nothing to do with what information content the campaign messages must prioritize. To know which particular beliefs are relevant to the campaign-targeted behaviour change is an extremely important step towards developing content strategies. Generally known as target beliefs, they are ideas or beliefs to which the health behaviour or intention to act in question is most strongly

related. Conversely, it ought also to be a requirement that such beliefs should have room for modification and be susceptible to the creation of effective messages. Depending on the target beliefs, a campaign can seek to inculcate, repress, or change such beliefs in an effort to impact intention and/or behavioural change in the future.

A descriptive study by Ngigi and Busolo (2018) focused on the way mass media employs persuasive language as a powerful tool in reaching and persuading people into adopting new and healthier lifestyles. Their research demonstrates how language does count in prevention of drug abuse and in other unwanted behaviour. Their research recognizes that messages from campaigns such as *Cocaine: The Big Lie* by the National Institute on Drug Abuse in collaboration with *Drug-free America*, an anti-drug campaign, created a big impact on behaviour change with regard prevention, treatment and even halt the use of drug. This study took into consideration how language and communication can be a hindrance as well as prevent drug abuse. The suggested research took into consideration language on usage of multimodal approaches in influencing masses in terms of poster-based behaviour change.

Chou and Budenz (2020) state that there is need to explore the work of language as a principal determinant of health communication. Language allows for patients and carers to express their intentions and language is of paramount importance in the critical process of defining a problem, asking how long it has existed, investigating what importance this problem will carry, and launching a plan for treatment. Besides, the study acknowledged that in the case where linguistic encoding issues interfere with this process, there may be far-reaching consequences. Therefore, language is at the heart of health communication and, as such, serious consideration needs to be given to the manner in which language impacts the delivery of health services in Kenya.

2.1.1 Language and Semiotic Resources in Health Communication

Meaning-making in public health is based on language and semiotic tools. These two are responsible for construction, transmission and interpretation of public health messages. Language is a tool through which verbal and textual messages are communicated. Semiotics on the other hand look at communication beyond words through signs systems. Finnegan and Viswanath (2008) in their content analysis on the interpretive evaluation of how various communication patterns in influence health

outcomes highlight that language is a tool utilized in public health campaigns which play critical communicative functions. It is a deliberate structured tool that influences behaviour change. Communication is social and depends on context. For the targeted audience to understand the message. Various cultural and social factors must be considered. Effective communication entails adopting language and symbols that resonate well with the local meanings. The framing of information should be a reflection of what is being communicated. This study highlights that the framing of a health campaign influences the perception of the audience. Various semiotic tools reinforce linguistic frames, emotional and the interpretive power of linguistic acts.

Tambiah (2017) on Semiotic choices adopted in COVID 19 posters asserts that words are very powerful when it comes to influencing, altering and transforming the world we live in because language helps us to initiate, maintain and terminate our interpersonal relationships. The language enables us to communicate what we feel about ourselves and others. He adds that we use language to develop labels that enable us describe the world and our experiences and that the power of language in expressing our identities varies depending on the origin of the label and the topic of discussion. He goes further to report that human beings are more comfortable with the labels they use to describe their own identities but raised issues with labels placed on them by other people in the community especially if those other people give them labels that have negative connotations and are intentionally using such labels intentionally to twist meanings.

van Leeuwen (2015) viewed Multimodality as a phenomenon rather than a theory. He argues that all kinds of discourse are said to be multimodal. Spoken discourse for instance characterizes the combination of language, intonation, voice quality, gestures, facial expressions and posture in addition to some aspects of self-representation such as dress and hairstyle. Written discourse on the other hand includes the combination of language, typographic expressions, illustration, layout and colour. van Leeuwen further argues that intensive scrutiny on multimodality is motivated by the belief that investigating different types of semiotic modes that occur in a given piece of discourse and looking at how these modes combine has the promise of deploying different ideologies and hidden beliefs.

2.2 Semiotics

Saussure's work laid a foundation for Peirce (1931) who further developed Semiotic Theory. He introduces a triadic model of signs which he categorizes them into three. These include icons, indexes and symbols. He defines icons as signs that bear a physical resemblance to their objects for instance a photograph of the Mpox virus, indexes as signs that have a direct causal or physical connection to their objects for instance a thermometer showing low or high temperature and symbols as arbitrary signs that depend on social conventions for meaning rather than any inherent connection for instance the red cross usually represents medical assistance, humanitarian relief neutrality and protection. Understanding different types of signs is very crucial in public health campaigns.

Utilization of different signs enhances the clarity and reception of messages by the audience. For example, a visual representation of Mpox rash on a patient's back serves as an iconic sign that resembles the symptoms of the disease. Such visual signs anchor the message in reality thereby ensuring that the public recognizes the disease well. Symbols such as gloves in Mpox campaign messages provide actionable steps that the public should take to ensure it is protected. Therefore, the integration of an icon and a symbol create a powerful and effective public health message that can positively influence behavioural change. In the construction of health messages, semiotics is a very critical ingredient. This is because signs normally convey intricate emotions and ideas more effectively than the use of words only. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) it is important to use visual elements to convey meaning. This is because visuals normally influence the engagement and understanding of the audience. They are used to evoke emotions and enhance a sense of community, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the message in public health campaigns.

According to Goffman (1979), visual representations are very critical in shaping public perceptions. In his analysis of representation of gender and health in media, He highlights that the use of visuals in health communication is a mirror of inclusivity and diversity. This strategy is crucial because it enhances relatability and trust among different groups of people in the society. A campaign may be structured in a way to depict people from different ethnic backgrounds in some sort of medical process for instance in the process of undergoing vaccination or some certain health intervention.

This scenario will help in creating narratives of inclusivity thereby reducing feelings of isolation among people who come from marginalized communities. Factors such as stereotyping, exclusionary and unfair representation alienates some groups of people. This therefore brings up the issue on the need to be strategic on visual semiotic choices when constructing health messages. In the context of diseases such as Mpox, where misinformation and stigma heighten public fear, proper choice of visual resources is very critical.

A campaign that features views from people within the community such as local leaders like village elders and chiefs for instance may help decentralize health messages. By doing this, trust in public health programs is improved across board. Several advancements have already been made in the field of semiotics. However, despite these advancements particularly in semiotic analysis within health communication, various challenges still exist. According to Bennett, Field and Gordon (2019) various factors such as proliferation of misinformation and different levels of health literacy normally complicate the interpretation of health messages. The public is often confused and tend to lose trust due to misinformation which spreads rapidly. The clarity and coherence of semiotic choices is crucial in the context of public health campaign messages on Mpox, to ensure that public messages are well structured and effectively conveyed making it easy for the audience to understand.

According to Farhall, Wright, Lukamto and Gibbons (2019) the social media can lead to rapid dissemination of information which in turn leads to fragmentation of messages which then dilute the intended meaning thus causing, misinformation. A television message that has a positive reception may really not necessarily imply that the same reception will be accorded on social media. This is due to the diverse patterns of engagement and audience expectations. In an attempt to counter such sophistications, therefore, then public health campaigns must ensure that the semiotic strategies are effectively applied and be effective across diverse medias and web platforms.

Emotion forms an integral element in semiotics of health communication. They are not feelings but are socially constructed through the use of signs. From texts, public health

messages that evoke emotion are extremely significant in the formation of behaviour and audience attitude towards the disease. For instance, personal accounts by patients with the disease evoke empathy. This can, in turn, enhance vaccination coverage and behaviour change to maintain the disease at bay. Feelings can be utilized as potent spur to action. The technological advancements witnessed around the globe offers a good ground for health campaigns computerized. Various online media such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok are useful for distributing health messages. Use of semiotic material such as emojis in WhatsApp and TikTok provide potential for audience engagement. The use of certain emojis like hearts and various icons of wellness create a supportive environment, appeal to younger generations and foster community support and advocacy for mental wellness. Icons, indexes, symbols, use of specific colours and images reveal underlying strategies in public health messages.

2.2.1 Studies on Semiotics in Public Health Communication

According to Machin (2013), semiotic choices visible in campaigns are never neutral. This is because these modes encode various ideological and emotional meanings which act as emotional triggers that motivate positive behaviour. Meaning-making is based on social factors. Machin (2013) utilizes qualitative multimodal discourse analysis approach in his study and highlights that meaning is not restricted and need not be confined to verbal language. He asserts that meaning is something distributed across a number of communicative modes. What is left for the audience is to decode what they mean. The approach utilized in this study applies to the current study where various semiotic resources such as signs, spatial arrangements and colour schemes are essential aspects in visual communication. Several semiotic tools combine to form persuasive meanings that impact interpretation. For instance, an icon of a virus with a red background and bolded slogan could create a semiotic ensemble of presence of a threat and need to act immediately. This is clearly an indication that perceptions are shaped and amplified by semiotic tools.

Messages in public health campaigns are not only transmitted verbally but also through various semiotic tools. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), these elements work collaboratively ensuring that persuasive and informative messages which shape public perceptions, understanding and behaviour are created. Messaris (1997) highlights that visuals are very powerful tools often more effective than words alone

since they create immediate reaction in a way that words cannot. For instance, a graphic image that shows a person experiencing pain as a result of drug abuse can quickly convey the consequences of careless living thus triggering a sense of urgency in behaviour change. Language, images and media shape the perception of the public on mental and communicable diseases. In her studies, Messaris focused on how messages aimed at improving health are structured and received by different people in the society. The study highlights that semiotic and visual elements are crucial in shaping public health campaign as they shape the public's behaviour, perceptions and societal responses.

This study highlighted the role of language and visual images in framing health messages that resonate or marginalize certain groups of people in the community. The choice of symbols, images and language is crucial since health messages are very crucial and sensitive culturally. These elements need to be utilized sensitively to avoid reinforcing existing health disparities. The semiotic elements such as icons, symbol, linguistic and other visual rhetorics create a mental frame that individuals hold. This framework is more likely to influence the audience attitudes, perceptions and behaviour. The study emphasizes the need for public health campaigns to be aware of the social and cultural meanings of various signs and symbols especially when the campaign is targeting a large number of varied audiences. The semiotic alignment of campaign messages impact on the behaviour of the audience. The way workers in health care are portrayed in visual images can reinforce their integrity thereby positioning them as professional and trustworthy. Images of people with various medical conditions can also reinforce or enhance stigmatization. Messaris (1997) asserts that the success of health campaign messages is based on its utilization of proper semiotic elements to enhance meaning.

Adopting a critical discourse and cultural semiotic approach, King (2010) on the study by the Breast Cancer Awareness Month campaigns focused on the iconic pink ribbon that is mainly utilized in the month of October. This symbol is not only as a symbol of awareness and advocacy of breast cancer but also a tool that shapes the peoples' perceptions and attitudes towards the disease. According to the analysis, the pink symbol transcended mere visual representation, it embodies notions of hope, solidarity, and empowerment. The pink ribbon in breast cancer awareness campaigns also has a

semiotic implication. This symbol has for a long time had a long-lasting implication on the public perceptions on breast cancer. Members within the community are mobilized to participate in various breast cancer preventative measures such as self-examinations and medical screenings. Performing analysis of semiotic elements utilized in various campaign materials aligns with semiotic theories which suggest that signs and symbols can really have impact on the perceptions of the public and their responses to various matters of health.

The semiotic analysis of the pink ribbon revealed that symbols are not just significant tools for awareness. They are also cultural signifiers and agents that reinforce particular beliefs about feminine health. The study reveals that strategic a combination of visuals and linguistic tools such as the use of soft colours such as pink and nurturing language support the broader understanding of issues on breast cancer. While this work primarily focused on semiotic resources, the current study bridges this gap by bringing in an integrated approach where meanings created through various semiotic resources are analysed alongside speech acts to assess their communicative functions.

According to Lewis, Waston and White (2007) on the role of fear-based messaging in health, fear appeals may work well in certain but not all contexts. While this may achieve a positive result, persons in charge should be cautious not to overuse this strategy as it may lead to anxiety more so if the audience feels he might not be able to control the outcomes of his behaviour. Often, in public health campaigns that address health risks such as in anti-smoking campaigns, utilization of visuals and language that evoke feelings of fear is evident. Various factors such as speech acts, cultural norms and contextual relevance must be considered when designing public health messages with fear appeals. This is to ensure that the messages resonate well with the target audience.

Kandel's (2023) research on the kinds of linguistic and semiotic resources used in UNICEF posters in the year 2020 Covid 19 pandemic illustrates the need to use different modes of communication. With a descriptive approach, the research focused on examining if visual messages have more or less impact upon the viewers in comparison to the verbal elements. The findings of this research study indicated successful use of visual and verbal cues. A number of visual aids such as signs made

reading and interpretation of the message being communicated easy. Posters had been specifically prepared with visual images which were accompanied by verbal notes. The symbol of Corona Virus was depicted in purple and dark green. Use of purple colour scheme was tactical and intentional to evoke the sentiments of pessimism, frustration and sorrow. In the context of the campaign, green symbolized rot and hold-up which served as a caution that the virus was dangerous to everyone. The study findings after visual inspection highlight that posters utilized study images of Covid 19 virus instead of utilizing messages warning the public about the pandemic.

The posters were able to easily resonate with the audience and this led to positive behavioural influence. The study by Karanja and Sanya in (2018) on semiotic attributes used in HIV/Aids Awareness Campaign in Kenya was designed to explore semiotic approaches which, when utilized, could eliminate stigma and disinformation. The said study highlights encouraging wordings and positive images as are situations under which there exists facilitation of positive changes in perception. It has been found that there is diligent selection of semiotic features leading to empowerment of communities thereby reducing stigma regarding some illnesses. This allows a very facilitating environment to be created for HIV/Aids individuals. While this study dwelt on posters, the current study offers a wider scope by integrating digital signs, symbols, icons, indexes and other semiotic tools together with verbal and written utterances utilized during the campaigns. The findings are thus resourceful in understanding how these two fields collaboratively work to create meanings.

Dewi (2023) sought to analyze the innovative tactics employed in posters designed for World Kidney Day campaigns. This study used Saussure's Semiotic Analysis to examine the way various semiotic attributes such as form, colour, spatial structure and linguistic signs added to the persuasiveness of the campaign. The study revealed use of several visual strategies in the campaign. There was use of colours such as maroon used on the background of the poster and a kidney-shaped icon that denotatively represented the kidney. A slogan language sign *Run for them, they'll run for you* was deliberately written to communicate important messages that emphasized staying healthy and fit. Such modes of communication were utilized to communicate strong messages thereby creating awareness on kidney health and healthy living. A World Kidney Day logo was inscribed in the poster. The Fortis logo too was intentionally utilized as a signal of

authority. It also provided identity of the partners involved in the whole campaign exercise. The findings of the study revealed that the semiotic resources utilized effectively complemented the verbal messages. This reveals a very effective communicative approach. By combining various semiotic elements in the campaign posters, the delivery of powerful messages was enhanced. This therefore created public awareness and impacted behaviour change in relation to kidney health. This signifies the success of the campaign initiative

2.3 Analysis of Meanings

Morris (1938) defines meaning is the relationship between a sign, its object and the interpreter. This definition forms part of the triadic model of the sign comprising three key elements. These are the sign itself, the object, and the interpretant. Meaning is also not intrinsic within a sign but is shaped by factors such as context and audience” interpretation of the sign in question. Barthes (1977) asserts that meaning is not static or fixed since it keeps on evolving as time goes within different contexts. Meaning is shaped by several factors such as the urgency of the message, cultural norms, beliefs and audience demographics. Foundational work done by various scholars in pragmatics and semiotics provides a solid framework for analysis of meaning in the field of public health communication which has attracted much scholarly attention integrating pragmatics, semiotic and sociocultural perspectives to understand how relevant authorities create public health messages and how these messages are interpreted.

Pragmatics provides critical insights into ways in which context influences meaning. The Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975) stresses that in order to understand how health messages achieve their goals, the conversational maxims remain fundamental. These maxims shape the how messages are communicated and understood by listeners. Public health campaigns frequently depend on the implied or inferred meanings whereby the context fills the gap that is left by the explicit message. Grice (1975) in his theory of Conversational Implicature distinguishes between explicit or literal and implied meaning which is derived through inference. Levinson (1983) on theories of Pragmatics explains the role played by inference in meaning-making. This concept is very crucial in interpretation of the complex messages of public health campaigns since. In the Mpox public health campaigns, messages do not only provide direct information but also seek to influence the behaviour and attitudes of the public. This requires an

understanding of the inferred meanings beyond the normal surface-level message of the campaign.

The study at hand is further enriched by semiotic dimension of meaning. Saussure (2011) asserts that in order to understand how semiotic elements such as visuals, symbols and texts work to create meaning, then it is crucial to understand the role played by the signifier and the signified which are fundamental in denotation. He asserts that the denotative meaning is typically fixed and requires little interpretation. Communication of clear and factual information is critical in public health. In this study on Mpox public health campaigns, a statement such as “Ensure you get vaccinated to prevent the Mpox” denotes that vaccination is indeed essential to prevent Mpox. Thus, the public is expected to understand and interpret this message without any the need for complex interpretation. Barthes (1977) in his work-Image-Music-Text, he highlights that denotation and connotation operate within semiotic visual and textual elements to create deeper layers of meaning in communication. Connotation is a more subjective level that is influenced by various factors such as societal beliefs and norms. The Red Cross symbol in many health campaigns does not only denotes medical care but also connotes urgency, compassion humanity and authority.

Peirce’s (1931) triadic model revolves around three components-the representamen, interpretant and the object which work together to form a sign. For instance, in the Mpox campaign, visual images of healthcare professionals working to administering vaccines serve as the representamen, the act of administering vaccination implies the immediate object while the mental effect or the interpretation generated by the viewer is the interpretant. This image might carry connotations such as responsibility, compassion and care. According to Peirce, there are three types of signs which include icons, indexes and symbols. Icons are signs that resemble their objects, indexes are signs that have direct connection to their objects while symbols are signs that carry arbitrary meaning. An image of a syringe may be iconic in nature since it resembles the act of vaccination, indexical because it directly points to the concept of a health intervention and symbolic at the same time because it’s meaning as a tool for prevention of disease is something that is learned through norms in the society. This model is very crucial in analysis of signs in relation to cultural and social contexts; this is very relevant

in the study at hand where categorization is based on iconic, indexical and symbolic interpretations of the signifier.

In order to understand how meaning is constructed, the context in which messages are constructed should not be isolated. According to Yule (1996) pragmatics entails the study of contextual meaning. It is about correct interpretation of what the speaker means in the particular context and how context influences what the speaker says. This implies that textual content should be interpreted in consideration to social, cultural and political factors. Often, public health messages are influenced by the urgency of the crisis at hand, the prevailing cultural norms and political ideologies. This implies that analysis of meanings must account for the temporal and situational factors of the message. Health messages that concern public vaccination during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic may connote urgency than the same message during a time when there is no crisis. Therefore, interpretation of such a message may be influenced by several factors such as the public's perception of the health risk and their trust in the health authorities. By putting into consideration, the interaction between connotative, denotative and pragmatic meanings, then we can gain valuable insights into how language is manipulated in public health campaigns to motivate the public into considering vaccination procedures to mitigate the spread of disease.

2.3.1 Meaning in Social Semiotics Study

Social semiotics concerns itself with how various signs and symbols within specific social and cultural contexts communicate meaning. Social semiotics emphasizes the fundamental role played by daily human interactions and norms in shaping communication. In social semiotics, signs, symbols and images are viewed as flexible and not fixed entities. This means that meanings carried by these semiotic elements vary depending on the context. A symbol or visual image might imply a different meaning when utilized in a different cultural environment. In public health campaigns. In social semiotics, Multimodality is a critical concept. It is concerned with how different modes of communication are used in order to create meaning.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) explore on the grammar of visual design. They provide a framework for analysis of visual elements and how they shape communication in social contexts. They come up with visual grammar framework that explains how

various semiotic elements such as colour and visual images create meaning. Their approach is based on the assumption that just like grammar which can be analysed linguistically, visual images are also governed by a set of socially constructed conventions that can also be analysed. They highlight that visual communication is structured by three metafunctions that help us to understand how visual images enhance communication, convey meaning and guide the interpretation of images.

The representational metafunction puts into consideration how different participants or elements such as people or objects are represented and the relationships that exist between them. For example, an advertisement on an alcoholic product depicts someone using the specific product with a feeling of enjoyment and satisfaction. This metafunction is a reflection of the real world and helps the viewer to understand the depicted scenario on the media on a basic level. The interactive metafunction entails the interaction created by the visual image with the viewer. This metafunction entails analysing various elements such as gaze, distance and perspective. Accordingly, these elements bring about connection with the viewers. For instance, there is a sense of interpersonal relationship, engagement and interaction that is created in a photograph where the person in the image seems to look directly at the viewer of the image. The compositional metafunction is the third metafunction that is concerned with the arrangement of elements within an image. This deals with positioning of elements in the image such as whether the image is on the top, bottom or centred and visual prominence where viewers are drawn to specific parts of the images through elements such as colour, size, contrast and framing.

These three aspects guide the interpretation of the image by the viewers, providing structures on how to read the image just like how grammar shapes the reading of a text. In public health campaigns such as campaigns against tobacco these principles are used to explain how images evoke emotional response from the audience and facilitate change in behaviour. The analysis of various semiotic tools in the current study borrows from this perspective. Analysis of textual, interpersonal and ideational metafunctions in campaigns against Mpox is a testament that these resources just like language can only be analysed by breaking down the building components in order to identify their multiple meanings.

Hodge and Kress (1988) explore how cultural and social contexts shape creation of meaning through signs and symbols. For one to understand semiotics, he must be particular in terms of social and cultural contexts since semiotics is not just an abstract system of signs and symbols. He highlights that meaning is not fixed, rather dynamic and socially constructed. He integrates semiotics with sociology by analysing signs and symbols to demonstrate that meaning-making is a reflection of ideologies and social hierarchies. He outlines that semiotic signs and symbols in the media; news items and advertisements, normally uphold stereotyping or reinforce norms in the society often serving the interests of particular dominant societal groups. This representations in the media reveal biases and structures that shape the society. He asserts that language and images are powerful tools for maintaining and challenging social power. His work positions social semiotics as a significant tool for analysing cultural and ideological communication influences. According to Kress (2010) the world of communication is dynamic and is still changing because of the intertwined change in social, economic, cultural and technological factors. While stressing on the importance of Semiotic Theory, Kress (2010, p.18) outlines three key points. First, “members of communities have access to the semiotic and their cultural resources are essential to act in their social worlds.” Secondly, “members are able to contribute to common purposes by dealing productively with constantly new culture, semiotic and social problems and by designing, representing and communicating their suggested solution of them.” Lastly, “that in their social-semiotic actions, members of social group have a clear sense of the effects of their semiotic actions on others and act so as not to impair the potentials for actions of others.”

Meaning is created through various means beyond language such as through language, images and sounds (van Leeuwen, 2005). Meaning is shaped socially and is a reflection of power relations in the society. He emphasizes on multimodality where different communicative elements work together to convey complex social meanings which are shaped by social and power dynamics. He asserts that communication is far beyond language involving multiple modes such as images, sounds and gestures that are governed by socially constructed rules. Various components such as visual and spatial arrangements work together to create meaning.

van Leeuwen (2005) in his semiotic analysis of elements such as framing, perspective and colour in images asserts that interpretation is influenced by these elements. The underlying concept is that communication is a clear reflection of social ideologies. Communication reinforces or challenges the existing power relationships. It entails the configuration of various aspects to present something that implies authority, control or intimacy. In an advertisement for instance where a politician is depicted standing and looking down at his audience at an angle would appear imposing. This validates their power through visual hierarchy by signalling authority. This therefore would imply that a picture like this implies dominance by those in power. Another picture of the same politician sitting at eye level with the public while engaging in informal conversations would be a good sign of equality and friendliness. Such a visual contests power dynamic. From these illustrations, it is clear to outline how power is perceived in the society as argued by van Leeuwen. The choice about colour schemes, topography and framing in images are not just for aesthetic purposes. These elements could be very significant as they can have an influence on the perception and ideologies of the people. This social semiotic approach provides a foundation in understanding how communication works across various dynamics since it recognizes that meaning is intertwined with context, power and societal organization.

2.4 Pragmatics

Pragmatics focuses on how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication. The foundation of pragmatics was laid by scholars such as Charles Morris (1938), Stephen Levinson (1983), Paul Grice (1975), John Austin (1962) and John Searle (1976). Grice (1975, p.41) asserts that “Pragmatics is concerned with speaker meaning, as opposed to sentence meaning and how speakers use language to convey not only what is explicitly stated, but also implied meanings through context and inference.” Grice introduces the Cooperative Principle, stressing that effective communication depends on shared conversational maxims-quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims by Grice help speakers and listeners infer meanings beyond the literal, essential in health communication, where messages must express not only information but also immediacy and actionable advice.

Meaning is anchored in context. For pragmatic and semiotic analyses, the cultural context in which the health messages are delivered is very critical. The impact of

cultural beliefs and practices on how health information is viewed and acted upon is very significant (Ratzan, Parker & Gellin,2021). Public health campaigns can promote greater acceptance and audience engagement. In order to ensure that messages resonate with values, beliefs and customs of the target audience, public health messages integrate culturally appropriate symbols and language. Community involvement in campaigns can promote trust and effectiveness. In order to tailor messages in the appropriate contexts that resonate with diverse audiences, then cultural adaptability should be factored in. In the scope of pragmatics, there are some factors that should be considered. These factors establish the very definition of pragmatics itself.

Speech acts are a variety of verbal communication and also a subdivision of pragmatics. Yule (1996) states that speech acts are actions that are performed through utterances. According to Bach and Harnish (1979), an action in verbal communication has a message in itself. This implies that communication is not only about language but also with action. Commissives entail the speaker making a promise and committing to a specific course of action. They shape perceptions and impact behavioural change. The use of commissives in public health gives the audience an assurance of certain results if a certain action is undertaken. Commissives are normally employed to strengthen the persuasive nature of the campaign language. The success of public initiatives like Mpox depends on whether the target audience takes the recommended action. Utterances such as “We will freely provide vaccination” builds credibility and public trust by significantly influencing how the public perceives the trustworthiness of the initiative.

The campaign language utilizes declaratives which are performative utterances in which the speaker’s words have a direct influence on reality. According to Searle (1969), declaratives often function to alter the world in accordance with the social or institutional rules. This is a very essential feature that may have an impact in the society especially in matters health. Declaratives on the other hand are mainly used to shape behaviour, attitudes and perceptions of the public. They particularly impact urgency in critical situations such as where there is disease outbreak. Declaratives have authority in policy formation, enforcement of preventive measures and in framing official communication thus signalling trustworthiness of information from credible sources.

Expressives in public health communication play a significant role in management of the emotional response of the audience. Non-verbal language such as facial expressions in images for instance where health care personnel express compassion while conducting a vaccination exercise communicates reassurance and comfort thus enhancing the expressive nature of the campaign message. Searle (1969) distinguishes expressives as part of illocutionary act where speakers convey their feelings and emotional state towards an occurrence. Expressives communicate the emotional tone that surround a particular phenomenon.

It is crucial to understand the contextual and situational aspects of messaging in the pragmatics of health messaging since meaning is anchored upon them. The Pictorial Warnings and Media Campaign by the World Health Organization (2023) primary goal was to change the behaviour of tobacco smokers through sharing of real personal stories from individuals affected by smoking related diseases such as liver cirrhosis, stroke, heart issues among others. The use of authentic personal narratives in the campaign ensured real connection with audiences which enhanced the relatability of the messages. This campaign was strategically crafted with the aim of encouraging smokers to quit smoking. This was made possible by the use of persuasive language and contextually relevant speech acts. Directives, deixis and face strategies were utilized to make the campaign more appealing and effective in order to ensure that it successfully reached the target audience.

The success of the campaign to effectively address the complex emotions associated with smoking cessation, such as fear, guilt, and hope was made possible by use of on real-life experiences. Narratives from various people who majorly consisted of former smokers such as “I had liver cirrhosis” provided factual testimonies on the implications that come with smoking. Expressives in the testimonies were politely framed using various politeness strategies with phrases such as “I wish I had listened”. This soft pragmatic approach is normally employed to avoid direct criticisms. It also conveys moral lesson while at the same time acknowledging the emotional and social truths in the lives of smokers. This campaign utilized very personal and stories that were easily relatable. The use of various pragmatic elements in this campaign was a clear demonstration expressives can have an impact in engagement and behaviour change.

The study by Umbima, Mutonya and Kiprop (2020) on pragmatic analysis of the language of healthcare professionals in Kitale, was specifically confined to the pragmatics of conversation by Grice among the healthcare professionals. This study provided a very rich insight into pragmatics. However, it failed to outline the role of visual and verbal elements that often accompany interaction in public health discourse. This study provided insights into conversational pragmatics but did not also extend its analysis to public health campaigns.

2.5 Speech Acts

In order to understand the functionality of language used in campaigns, scholars such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) lay the foundation in the Theory of Speech Acts. Campaign language strategically employs speech acts to frame issues, appeal to the emotions of the people and prompt intended action. Recently, the significant role performed by speech acts has gained massive attention in the field of public health communication. Austin (1962) assert that people do not just speak in order to convey information rather perform actions. He posits that for one to understand the meaning of an utterance, he must understand the context in which it is performed. In his Theory of Speech Acts, holds the opinion that illocutionary force of an utterance depends intrinsically on the context. For correct interpretation of an action, one needs to know the contextual information about the intention of the speaker, social setting, cultural norms and the relationship between participants.

Furthering this quest, Austin (1962) categorized utterances into various speech acts, including assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. This categorization is very important especially in health communication, as it addresses the intention behind messages. For example, a public health directive such as “Get vaccinated” does not just serve to inform but also to influence the audience’s behaviour. Therefore, understanding these speech acts is important because it allows health communicators to formulate messages that would strike a chord with their target audiences with the intention of encouraging healthy behaviour during outbreaks. Public health initiatives often rely on specific speech acts such as requests, advice and promises to influence behaviour of the public. For instance, “Please get vaccinated to avoid spread of Mpox” is a direct request which may be more effective than an informative statement such as “Vaccination prevents spread of Mpox.”

Eelen (2001) highlights that campaigns normally make use of various acts of speech to achieve specific outcomes. Directives are often employed to persuade the public to comply with health guidelines. Eelen posits that these speech acts are pivotal in ensuring that the public adopts safety and preventive measures in the face of risky health concerns. Lazarsfeld and Merton (2006) examine the importance of imperatives and advice in public health campaigns. They point out that directives are normally utilized to encourage urgency in action against various health concerns. Directives can incorporate politeness strategies in order to enhance the effectiveness of their persuasion power. This is a critical in public health where language must be crafted effectively to encourage behavioural change. Basing on Searle's (1979) classification of speech acts, public health campaign language employs directives such as "Get Vaccinated now!" to signify urgency and encourage the public to take immediate actions that mitigate the spread of diseases such as Mpox. Research outlines that campaigns that utilize directives manage to successfully influence positive behavioural outcomes. Directives can be visually represented using iconographs such as arrows and bold fonts and colours that grab audience attention such as red to signify danger.

Effective campaigns according to Jasanoff (2005) are those that utilize language strategically to frame health message is using socially acceptable speech acts. Commissives are pivotal in strengthening the commitment of both the concerned institutions and the audience. Campaigns that aim to see positive behavioural change often integrate assertive and expressive acts of speech. While assertives provide factual information about the crisis, the expressive acts convey emotional urgency of the health concern. Commissive acts are normally utilized to foster trust and commitment among the public. Through this act, the public is reassured and their confidence is built in health authorities. During public health emergencies such as in the recent outbreak of Mpox, commissives are fundamental in establishing a sense of accountability by ensuring that the public feels secure and supported during the crisis. However, the success of a health message is not always guaranteed as it depends on the context in which they are delivered (Fairclough 1995).

The Family Health Campaign established in 2008 in Kenya sought to improve maternal health care, providing comprehensive family planning and primary care to marginalized communities in Kenya. Omondi (2017) explored how this campaign initiative utilized

various pragmatic strategies such as directives, politeness strategies, implicature and framing so as to communicate various complex health information about maternal care and child nutrition to the targeted audience. The campaign sort to build a relationship with the audience by exercising politeness through phrases such as “together we can secure a brighter future for our children”. It also encouraged the public to take action such as visiting the nearest health facilities for family planning services. These directive speech acts facilitated the effectiveness of audience turnout. The campaign utilized informative speech acts through various media channels and posters to give detailed explanations regarding the use of contraceptives and child immunization thus educating the public on health risks and preventive measures.

Utterances that signified politeness such as “Healthy families are the backbone of a strong community” were used. They built solidarity with the target audiences, signifying shared values for the success of wellbeing in families. The use of straightforward language using relatable examples and references that are culturally familiar to the people was evident. This was fundamental in demystifying health topics that are socially prohibited in certain communities thereby increasing community engagement and awareness. The study findings put emphasis on the critical role played by pragmatics in crafting health messages. Utilization of effective strategies that deeply resonate with different audiences in the community is very important.

Hurford and Heasley (1983) highlight that perlocutionary act is the act of utterance carried out by a speaker which causes certain effects on the thoughts or actions of the hearer of the utterance. The main aim of perlocutionary act is to change behaviour and shape the attitudes of the public. Semiotic use of visual images of medical practitioners conducting a vaccination exercise creates a feeling of reassurance that vaccination is safe. Semiotic elements in a campaign can amplify positive emotional and behavioural outcomes that result from the use of illocutionary speech acts. The use of fear appeals such as graphic visuals displaying victims suffering from Mpox might induce fear in the target audience thus creating a perlocutionary effect.

As Searle (1969) pointed out, the perlocutionary is not under the speaker’s control rather it depends on the way the listener interprets the utterance. It is thus extremely difficult to predict what happens as a result of what a speaker utters. While a speaker

may wish to bring about a certain outcome, the experiences, emotions and beliefs of listeners shape the way they will respond. Use of utterances such as “Ensure you get vaccinated today to avoid spread” is an illocutionary act that conveys urgency and thus encourages the public to act with immediacy. Utterances that convey the safety of vaccines such as “The vaccine is safe and secure” seek to eliminate some element of fear and instead install confidence among the audience. Semiotic elements such as icon, indexes and symbols reinforce the speech act and thus enhance the perlocutionary possibility of the message. According to Jones, Patel and Smith (2020), health campaigns that capitalise on speech acts variably and frame messages in terms of community health could foster engagement and compliance among audiences.

2.6 Health Discourse

Fairclough (1992) asserts that health discourse requires an analysis of texts and interaction across different health contexts. Analysis of health discourse would entail examining how language is used to represent and construct social practices that relate to illness and other health concerns. Health discourse does not only entail transmission of information rather a set of practices that are a reflection of power relations that shape how people think about health. This argument by Fairclough puts emphasis on the role of language in the construction of meaning in the health discourse. He highlights that language is an embodiment of social contexts. Conducting analysis on the discourse strategies employed in health messages can reveal a number of issues such as the complex relationships that exists between language, power dynamics, social practices. Analysis could also highlight cultural narratives that structure public perceptions and behaviour related to health issues.

Utilization of plain language in health communication as outlined by Rudd and Anderson (2006) is very fundamental. When performing an analysis of health messages for instance, the researcher pays attention to the discourse used in health campaigns. This is done to aid in identification of jargon or complex language that may alienate certain audiences especially those that may be characterized by illiteracy in matters health. A public health campaign that makes use of technical jargon or registers without sufficient explanations may fail in its communicative intent to engage or inform vulnerable audience. This therefore necessitates the need to ensure that health messages

are linguistically and culturally accessible to all. This is to ensure that health equity is promoted and communication is effective.

The success of public health campaigns largely depends on its consideration of the health literacy levels of their target audiences. When discourse analysis comes in, it is able to identify the complexities of the language and clarity of health messages therefore revealing whether these messages are easily accessible to the targeted audience. This relationship between health literacy and public engagement is crucial as explained by McCluskey, Brady and Gollust, (2014). According to this study, people that possess higher health literacy levels are more likely to interact and effectively engage with health messages and therefore more likely to adhere to recommended health guidelines. Health literacy is the ability of people to access, understand, and use health information effectively. Literacy in public health campaigns is key in performing its discourse analysis as one can identify various challenges that may hinder the public's understanding and engagement. This guides relevant bodies in the development of more effective health communication strategies. In order to ensure success in public health communication, then health literacy should be considered. Health matters are always very critical in order to enable the public to make informed decisions about their health. Health literacy levels of the target population should be factored in when creating campaigns by making sure that messages are comprehensible and actionable. Various factors such as cultural and societal contexts shape the discourse around health matters. The significance of understanding how cultural beliefs and practices influence health perceptions and behaviour cannot be ignored. It is very important to acknowledge cultural differences in public health campaigns. This is because it directs campaign designers on the creation of messages that resonate well with different kinds audiences. The way various illnesses are portrayed in different cultures can have a significant implication on the reception of health campaigns.

Nettleton, Burchell and O'Malley (1995) examined how health discourse is shaped by societal values and norms. He asserts that public health messages are often a reflection of prevailing cultural attitudes towards some diseases and disease prevention mechanisms in the society. By analysing the cultural and societal contexts of health campaigns, researchers can identify potential barriers to message acceptance and adherence thus ensuring that public health campaigns are culturally sensitive by

effectively employing relevant health communication strategies. The present research extends this study by highlighting a few pragmatic mismatches that are culturally configured and could be potential barriers to the success of the campaigns against Mpox.

Various elements of emotional appeals employed in discourse analysis play a very fundamental role of in ensuring health communication is effective. Lang (2000) explores the critical role of emotions in influencing decision-making and behaviour especially in the context of in health. Audience engagement is facilitated by use of messages that effectively evoke emotions such as fear and hope. This in turn motivates behaviour change. As Job (1988) asserts, it is very critical to understand the interplay between fear appeals and effectiveness of messages in public health campaigns. While fear can be a very powerful motivator for action, it must be coupled with messages that evidently express how people can effectively alleviate risks. Critical examination of emotional appeals in health campaigns is of great importance as it enables researchers to assess how linguistic choices create emotional appeals and their possible impact on the audience of the message, their engagement and general health behaviour after the campaign. Various health challenges are evident across the globe. Public health campaigns are created as result and they transform people in response.in turn positive health behaviour are cultivated and this finally improves public health outcomes across the board.

According to van Dijk (1993), ideology plays a critical role in shaping discourse. Language according to him is not only a tool for perpetuating or challenging power structures. He combines linguistic, psychology and sociology elements to provide a framework for analysis of discourse. Language reflects, maintains and challenges societal power relationship. He investigates how communication is fundamental in reinforcing or challenging societal power structures. He emphasizes that ideology is crucial in discourse, analysing how discourse is shaped by certain beliefs and societal values. Public health messages often reflect the ideologies that dominate the health systems which can either promote or be a hindrance to the status quo. Ideologies embedded in public heath narratives shape how people interpret and make decisions. This has been seen in public Polio Campaign Initiatives where certain groups of people base their stands on different ideological grounds, undermining its effectiveness.

The perception, opinion and behaviour of the public are influenced by the way different ideologies are framed. When a campaign message inclines on personal choice they align with neoliberal ideologies. These ideologies give precedence to individual freedom over common and collective health strategies that may lead to marginalization or stigmatization. The Let's Move! an anti-obesity health campaign that was launched by former First Lady Michelle Obama launched in 2010. This campaign advocated for the need to be individually responsible for personal health by ensuring that people practice healthy eating and keeping fit. While this campaign can be of positive impact, it can also marginalize other members of the public by contextualizing health as a result of personal choice. This stand reinforces the ideological belief that the health of an individual is completely dependent on his value for healthy living. While this might be a good campaign as it encourages the public to adopt healthy living practices, it may also be a hindrance to policy changes and social interventions to address universal inequalities across board. Whis this study focused on ideological framing of the campaigns; the present study seeks to uncover how meanings created and conveyed through various signs and symbols. These, ultimately lead to change in behaviour and perceptions of the audience towards the disease.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) assert the need for a multimodal analysis that recognizes the substantial interdependence between language, visuals and context in order to create meaning. In the digital era, this perspective becomes very critical is because health campaigns increasingly utilize a multimedia platform to convey various messages. The use of social media can widen the reach of public health campaign. However, they can be creators of barriers through public misinformation.

While taking into consideration that technology is the foundation of communication, information on matters to do with health are usually dissected on various social media platforms. This massive transformation usually goes hand in hand with the technological advancements. Transmission of public health campaign messages are greatly influenced by these advancements. Hashtags, avatars in social media platforms such Facebook and WhatsApp, infographics and culturally appropriate signs are designed semiotically to appeal to the particular needs of the campaigns. Rathore, Singh and Mehta (2020) highlight that the social media in particular allows real-time engagement among audiences. This also comes with challenges that may arise due to

misinformation in various platforms, thus the need of the campaign to be not only factual and accurately designed but also semiotically sound as this fosters trust and clarity of their message among the audiences. Misinformation has negative repercussions as it can lead to confusion and hinder effective public health responses thus underscoring the importance of utilizing language strategically in health communication.

Tannenbaum, Abrams and Mello (2019) explore message framing. They give insights into how intertextual references in health discourse play a significant role in shaping health communication and narratives. The health discourse is characterized by intertextuality. This can be well utilized by referencing existing cultural and social norms and previous health messages in order to make the campaign messages more persuasive and audience relatable. They point out that public health campaigns often employ intertextuality by drawing on past health discourses to bolster their messages and produce a trajectory of the current message with such intertextual links. Using everyday reference points, public health messages make emotional and cultural connections. Referring to previous crises such as HIV/Aids could provoke a feeling of urgency and societal duty in the public. Social media users frequently participate in health campaigns by commenting on, sharing or discussing online or offline the health content. Examination of these factors can yield important insights into the public opinion and the effect of health messaging overall. The implication of this is that there is need to understand intertextuality dynamics. This is to facilitate effective digital health campaigns that actively engage audiences and promote health education thereby facilitating community participation in health campaigns matters. van Dijk (2008) asserts that discourse is not static, isolated phenomena but rather a dynamic process that is shaped by prior knowledge and intertextual references. He asserts that intertextuality is a mental representation tied to cognitive structures where these structures are shaped by prior knowledge or experiences. Individuals thus approach new discourse with a pre-determined understanding influenced by earlier texts. This implies that people don't just receive information but rather interpret it in relation to previous knowledge of the same derived from other sources. He asserts that individuals use cognitive structures to interpret new information and this involves linking components of the present and past discourse. This cognitive nature of intertextuality gives an explanation as to why certain messages resonate more with certain people.

He also asserts that intertextuality reinforces or challenges particular ideological stands especially in political and media discourses where intertextuality is normally deliberately employed to frame issues in ways that align with certain ideological stands. For instance, political leaders during speeches often makes references to past speeches by other leaders, historical and cultural narratives that conform with the pre-existing beliefs of the audience. With this, the speakers strengthen their arguments and leads to easy persuasion of the audience by drawing shared references. Therefore, intertextuality plays a key role in ideological manipulation where meanings are constructed not by the immediate context alone but also the broader network of past texts.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

This pragma-semiotic study is anchored on the Multimodal Theory by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006) and The Speech Act Theory by John Searle (1976).

2.7.1 The Multimodal Theory

Multimodal Theory was developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen through their seminal text on *The Grammar of Visual Design*. They came up with the idea of visual grammar which enables systematic analysis of visual elements in various multimodal texts. Multimodal theory was developed within Social Semiotics. This theory critically gives explanation how meaning is created and conveyed using various modes such as colour schemes, font, visuals, gestures, spatial arrangements and sounds that strategically interact with the aim of influencing communication. According to the proponents of this theory, meaning is not something that is confined to the linguistic resources. It however comes up as a result of an interaction between various semiotic systems whose nature is configured by various cultural and context variables.

Several tenets shape the understanding of communication. Communication does not entail ordinary language alone but a collection of modes that are rule-governed by social rule. These modes such as gestures, sounds, text, spatial arrangements and signs work together as semiotic resources. Each mode has a specific function and are very unique was in conveying meaning. The second tenet is intersemiotic interaction. While communication entails a combination of multiple modes of communication, the relationship between the modes proves a holistic understanding of the message. Intersemiotic interpretation provides easier understanding of meanings which would

have not been possible if meanings were confined to a particular singular mode of communication.

Context-dependence is the third tenet in this theory. It plays a fundamental role in meaning-making. There are various factors such as social practices of the people, cultural conventions, and situational contexts which cannot be dispensed if we are to ensure effectiveness in any form of communication. Meaning is a reflection of the social and power relations and is socially constructed. This theory gives emphasis on multimodality. This entails interaction of various elements used in communication which are fundamental in creation of complex social meanings which are shaped by power dynamics and various social factors. In order to understand how to carefully navigate through multimodal communication, it is important to note the purpose of communication and type of audience. This is because what may resonate with a particular audience may not really imply the same in another type. Meaning is not fixed rather dynamic as it constantly changes due to modes used and interpretation of audience based on various factors. Social semiotics is another tenet in Multimodal Theory. Communication is a reflection of various social structures and power relations. The semiotic resources are moulded through the social and peoples' cultural practices. This approach is based on the assumption that just like grammar which can be analysed linguistically, visual images are also governed by a set of socially constructed conventions that can also be. This implies that the speaker's choice of modes and their combinations are normally influenced by values and norms in the society.

This theory is significant in this study of public health campaigns since such campaigns often tailor their messages according to specific cultural and social contexts and make use of diverse semiotic modes in order to effectively reach and persuade a large number of audiences. The study utilized this theory to examine how various semiotic modes such as cross-indexes and symbols are strategically conditioned to achieve pragmatic goals such as creating awareness, educating the public and encouraging the high-risk groups to get vaccinated in order to prevent the spread of the disease.

2.7.2 The Speech Act Theory

The Speech Act Theory by Searle's (1976) was used in the analysis of pragmatic modes. Searle (1976) in his work on classification of illocutionary acts came up with his own

five basic types of speech acts namely assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Searle highlighted that various social and linguistic rules govern speech acts which ultimately help in determining the illocutionary force of a given utterance. These rules dictate the functionality of language in a given context. He asserts that for a successful speech act, then certain felicity conditions such as sincerity and essential conditions must be met. This theory also gives opportunity for the researcher to explore the hierarchical structuring of speech acts. These statements consist of multiple layers of speech acts; some embedded within others building a specific sequence that convey a very strong illocutionary force.

In the context of the study, the theory was useful in the analysis of the verbal dimension of vaccination campaigns against Mpox. Speech acts were therefore identified and categorized using John Searle's (1976) taxonomy of five categories in order to understand their pragmatic roles within the campaigns. The study distinguished indirect from direct speech acts, discussing whether the conveyed messages used explicit directives or some indirect persuasion to achieve the main communicate intent. The theory also guided the study in examining the hierarchical structures as well as potential pragmatic failures. This study also explored how different acts of speech perform different actions such as informing the audience about Mpox, cautioning, creating awareness and influencing behavioural change. The pragmatic lens allowed the study to uncover how language functions as social action within public health communication. This theory therefore provided a framework for identifying and interpreting the illocutionary force embedded in the campaign discourse.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design which is qualitative in nature. It paid special attention to speech acts and semiotic resources utilized in the vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. This design was adopted because of its efficiency in exploring various pragma-semiotic elements in depth. It gives opportunity for the researcher to conduct exploration of various communicative elements with a view to understand how language is carefully crafted in order to convey meanings. The collected data was categorized thematically.

3.2 Target Population

The study population entailed all communicative materials used in the campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. These materials included digital verbal and written press statements, news items and semiotic resources which included signs: icons, symbols and indexes. The data included specific materials that addressed Mpox in Kenya that were specifically designed to educate the public on Mpox, encourage behaviour change and convey vaccination messages to prevent spread of Mpox. Data was sourced from official websites of institutions of public health such as WHO, Africa CDC, MOH and official mainstream media outlets which provided critical data that was significant in the study. The local Ministry of Health is responsible for tailoring campaign messages in the country thus allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how it has been communicating public health messages related to Mpox to the general public.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study utilized Purposive Sampling given its qualitative nature. The study adopted this technique because it allows the researcher to purposefully select campaign materials that only possess the required features and are aligned with the study objectives. The materials sampled were a clear representation of the population, focusing on thematic relevance and messaging strategies employed. According to Patton (2002), this sampling technique is appropriate when the researcher intends to select materials that provide rich information for an in-depth study especially when the goal of the researcher is not to generalize a larger population but to gain in-depth insight concerning a particular phenomenon. The researcher sampled a total of thirty campaign

materials which included semiotic resources such as icons, indexes, symbols, verbal utterances inform of news items and written press statements that contained updates from relevant public health institutional bodies. These data were sourced from various websites of public health which include WHO, KEMRI, Africa CDC, the MOH and digital media platforms such as YouTube. The final number of campaign materials sampled were however dependent on the point of saturation where the researcher stopped the process when new data ceased to give new insights relevant for the study. The researcher ensured that analytic saturation was achieved because each sampled item yielded multilayered data that ensured a comprehensive pragma-semiotic evaluation. The samples presented holistic points of view through their variance in local campaign materials considering that each medium uniquely incorporated pragmatic speech elements as well as semiotic strategies to put its messages across.

3.4 Instruments

The researcher utilized the structured guiding checklist for data collection. The type of data collected included speech acts and semiotic data which were downloaded from publicly available media sources. The guiding checklist was structured to capture the two main analytical areas in the study-Pragmatics and Semiotics.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

To ensure authenticity, relevance and reliability, the researcher followed specific criteria in the choice of data collection sites. Official sources for health communication which included the WHO, Africa CDC, MOH websites, verified media outlets and official YouTube channels were first identified. After establishing the relevant platforms, the researcher did an exploration of the sites paying close attention to the contents which included press statements, visuals and video announcements addressing Mpox in Kenya. The researcher then systematically searched for data using specific keywords such as Mpox in Kenya, Vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya and MOH press statement on Mpox in Kenya. Upon identification of relevant campaign materials, the researcher proceeded to download them in digital format, labelling them according to the source and date of release or publication. The data was kept in a particular, secured local storage device to help retrieve relevant data for quick, systematic and efficient analysis. After obtaining data, the researcher read through the data and carried out a pragma-semiotic analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

In order to ensure that the objectives of this study are met, the data was first subjected to semiotic examination. This entailed classifying them into icons, indexes and symbols, analysing their meanings to discover the hidden communicative intent in the campaign. The signs were explored in depth on their functionality in meaning-making and how they interact with pragmatic elements to ensure effective communication in the attempt to prevent disease spread. In accordance with the Speech Act Theory by John Searle (1976), researcher first categorized the pragmatic data into five kinds of illocutionary power structure. This followed the examination of utterances, outlining the communicative force as well as intended perlocutionary effects. The analysis also broke down a number of multilayered speech acts clearly outlining the embedded speech acts. The research critically analysed the utterances with intention to outline possible pragmatic failures that could have impacted the entire communication process during the campaigns. The data was thematically presented with excerpts in order to clearly outline the key patterns exhibited across platforms.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

For the sake of the integrity of the study, the researcher ensured that the study adhered to strict ethical principles throughout the research process. This first entailed sourcing a research permit from Chuka University Institution Ethics Review Committee (Appendix 2). Secondly, a permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) (Appendix 3) was acquired. The researcher exercised caution in the entire process. This is because very sensitive issues are tackled in public health campaigns and this necessitated caution to ensure that misinterpretation of individuals or various cultural practices of the people and issues on stigmatization of some certain groups among the population are avoided. Sensitivity was exercised throughout the study process to ensure that the study findings do not in any way promote biases or negative stereotypes. Since the research data is in the public domain, ethical considerations were upheld in the analysis of the content. They were responsibly utilized in such a way that they cause no harm to the campaign sponsors, stakeholders and the intended audiences. The study adhered to the intellectual property rights of ownership by appropriately citing and acknowledging the sources of the research information ensuring that all forms of plagiarism are avoided. Transparency in the

research was maintained by ensuring that the study complies with the relevant institutional and professional ethical standards to ensure its relevance and integrity.

CHAPTER FOUR

MEANINGS IN VACCINATION CAMPAIGNS AGAINST MPOX IN KENYA

4.1 Icons

According to Pierce (1958), an icon is a sign which has a close physical resemblance to what it signifies. According to this definition, icons are signs that look or mimic the objects that they represent. They serve to convey universal meanings, reinforce visual memory thus making the campaign messages more persuasive and memorable. These signs provide a direct and immediate connection between the symbol and the meaning of that symbol.



Figure 1: Syringe and Vaccination Bottle Icon

The appearance of an icon of a syringe and vaccination bottle as depicted in Figure 1 was utilized to signify prevention, hope and medical intervention. This icon was reinforced the main message that vaccination was key in the prevention of Mpox. The syringe icon carries a rich semiotic significance. This icon on a denotative level depicts a tool used medically in the administration of vaccines. The icon's typical appearance of a needle attached to a cylindrical tube depicts the concept of injection which literary serves as a recognition visual shorthand for the process of vaccination. In matters public health, this icon signals the availability of vaccine and the fundamental role played by health professionals in the immunization process.

Connotatively, the icon evokes a set of emotional and psychological responses in the audience. Perlocutionary effects of feelings of fear and anxiety are instilled. This icon

is often visually presented in bright clean colours such as blue and green. These colours are mostly associated with safety and medical authority in the field of public health. The vaccine in the bottle connotes hope through the administration of the vaccine which is a lifesaving substance. This reinforces the idea that the relevant authorities are concerned with the protection and preservation of life. Symbolically, this icon is a representation of defence and immunity. It serves to inform the public that there is a barrier against the disease. This icon informs the public of the presence of vaccine thereby instilling confidence in the management of Mpox. It signifies defeat of Mpox, placing vaccination as a very critical and powerful tool in the fight against Mpox. The icon's frequent appearance in the campaign indicates a directive of a vaccination call to action by the MOH.



Figure 2: Mpox Rash Icon

The representational Mpox rash icon was depicted through images of pustules on human skin. This served as an important visual signifier that resembled the actual skin lesions on victims' skins caused by the Mpox virus. The icon literally represents the manifestation of Mpox rash on the human skin. The imagery served to inform, warn, alert and educate the public on what they need to watch out for. This visual creates awareness of what Mpox really is. Connotatively, the Mpox rash serves a critical function of evoking concern, fear and a sense of urgency. This leads to enhanced behavioural change such as seeking various medical interventions such as vaccination. This therefore aligns with the fundamental persuasive function of visual rhetoric in

campaign initiatives such as this. The Mpox rash icon also serves as a visual directive instructing the public to be cautious and aware of any developments in the bodies. This serves a locutionary act which then triggers an illocutionary force of warning, caution and urging the public and the victims to consider seeking medical help.

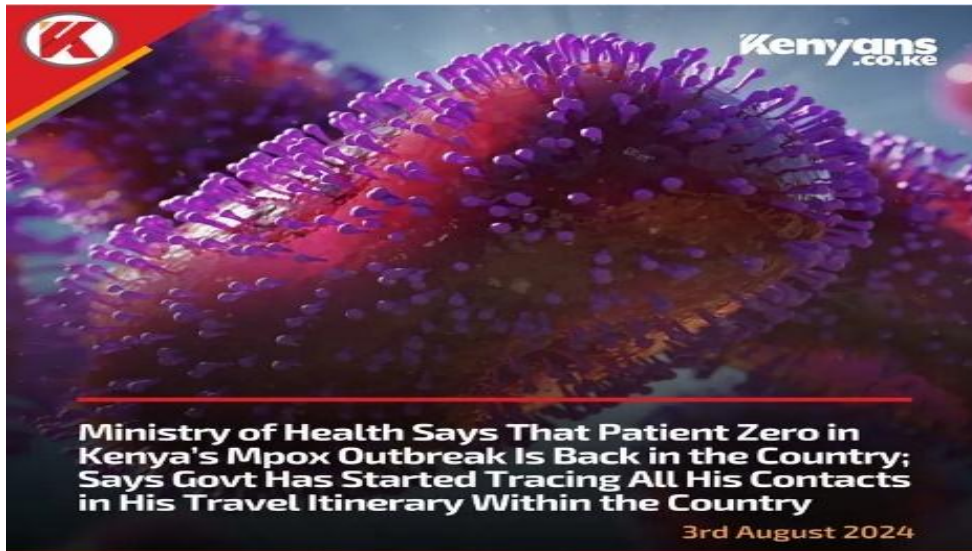


Figure 3: Mpox Virus Molecule Icon

The virus molecule icon is a significant semiotic tool that serves critical functions. Due to its visual similarity to the actual orthopox virus, this icon directly points to the disease under examination which enables the audience associate with the real biological threat. Denotatively, the icon depicts the orthopox virus deadly virus that causes actual Mpox. The virus icon connotatively evokes fear and a sense of urgency thereby reminding the public of the invisibility and persuasive nature of the deadly virus. The visual raises awareness, about the disease, informing the public of the presence of the invisible deadly virus thereby causing alertness. Its presence in the campaign contributes to the overall persuasiveness of the campaign visual rhetoric as a strategy that draws the attention of the audience and facilitates retention of the message.

This icon symbolically reinforces themes of urgency and medical intervention. It not only communicates messages of scientific authenticity but also a visual message that pits medicine against the pandemic. This icon reinforces visual familiarity, easy and faster recognition of the virus and behavioural responses in favour of the Ministry of Health's call for behavioural change. Since the rash evokes feelings of fear,

vulnerability and immediacy, it therefore does not just represent the virus, rather connotatively, it primes the emotions of the audiences to view this virus as dangerous. The icon connotes risk; an enemy to be protected from through various medical interventions.

Kenya receives 10,700 doses of MpoX vaccine as Ministry of Health seeks to curb spread

By **Maureen Kinyanjui** | April 10, 2025



Figure 4: Vaccine Bottle Icon

The vaccine bottle is a prominent visual rhetoric that serves multilayered semiotic functions. On a denotative level, this bottle is a representation of the physical container that is used in the storage of vaccine. Many a times, it is easily recognized due to its small size, clear labelled vial with a metallic coloured or silver like cap. This icon on a connotative level signifies prevention and advancement of biomedical research. This icon is normally utilized alongside images of various medical personnel or syringes, reinforcing narratives of trust in our medical and healthcare systems. The icon communicates messages of safety and verified vaccination measures that the public is exposed to. The vaccine bottle is not thus just a bottle but a symbol of hope, preparedness by the MOH and the collective resilience of the government towards securing its citizens. From a pragmatic point of view, this icon serves the function of a visual speech act, directing and assuring the public of its safety. While it signifies the availability of the vaccine, it also signifies commitment by the relevant authorities to protect the masses through vaccination.



Figure 5: Test Container Icon

Figure 5 shows an icon of a test container, usually small and narrow. On a denotative level, this tube signifies a test container that is used in the collection and analysis of collected samples of blood. The icon is an image of a tube that resembles the real diagnostic containers that are normally used for virological testing in health care facilities. Upon its view, the audience thinks of a clinical test, diagnostic accuracy and laboratory validation. This tube as seen on Figure 5 has several inscriptions which carry different meanings. The inscription “Mpxo virus” places the icon in a specific context of epidemiology thus enabling it to have a referential specificity in relation to the fight against the orthopox virus.

The icon also has a bold red “X” mark with a positive label. This colour is symbolically associated with danger, medical alerts, warnings and urgency especially during times of crises. The combination of the word “positive” with the red typography creates a sense of emphasis and communicates messages of alarm as a warning of the presence of a deadly viral infection that needs to be carefully dealt with. This evokes various feelings of fear thus pressing the need for the public to consider various intervention measures. The icon also has a faint, quite invisible negative mark. This diminished visibility can symbolically be interpreted as safety, health and negative diagnosis of the virus which could be possible but not really guaranteed. This negative quite invisible mark connotatively signifies hope, relief and freedom from the danger. This therefore reinforces vaccination as a very important procedure and step to be considered by all. This icon therefore can be used to evoke emotions as it shows not only what blood tests entail but also what it would feel like when a person tests positive for the virus.

4.2 Indexes

According to Peirce (1958), an index is a sign that shows some sort of physical relationship with what it represents and point towards its meaning, but will not be directly related to the signified. An index directly indicates its object by being materially or causally connected to it. In public health campaigns, they are often utilized to create a causal relationship between the sign and the meaning it creates. Therefore, they often employed to establish urgency, risk and consequences associated with the pandemic. They are designed to help build the narrative of risk and urgency thereby motivating the audience to considering various preventive mechanisms such as vaccination in order to avoid the consequences associated with the pandemic.

Figure 5 shows an image of a hand in purple glove holding a test container. This is a significant indexical figure that points to the real world of biomedical testing and disease containment. This index connotatively highlights the professionalism in disease diagnosis and sample handling. The gloved hand highlights the level of precaution that is taken because of the severity of the disease. While this sign does not resemble a mere clinical activity, it directly points to the existence of a virus- evoking notions of medical vigilance and urgency needed in the detection of the virus. The glove also signifies the biohazardous nature of orthopox virus thus reminding the public on the need to handle blood samples with the seriousness it deserves and ensuring that hygienic protocols are maintained.

On the denotative level, gloves signify protection, precaution and hygiene. The purple colour however introduces a symbolic interpretation. It is important to note that the purple colour of the glove is not incidental. This colour carries meaning that reinforces the seriousness of the matter at hand. In the medical imagery discourse, the purple colour is often associated with urgency, sterility and alertness. Purple gloves unlike the famous white or blue gloves evoke a sense of specialized handling of blood samples especially those thought to be high risk samples and biohazardous like Mpox virus. When paired with other visual elements such as the test container in figure 5, it enhances the perception of clinical sterility thus boosting the public's confidence in the health care systems within the nation. The purple glove also brings about differentiation in the handling of Mpox blood samples from normal routine procedures that entail the use of white gloves signifying the uniqueness of the case at hand.



Figure 6: Health Care Professional Index

Figure 6 highlights another indexical image of a blurred ministry of health professional with a stethoscope, holding a syringe. This is a multilayered index that signifies the active role played by the state in ensuring that the disease is prevented by implementation of vaccination programs by qualified medical personnel across the nation. Its indexical significance highlights a real-time preparedness for vaccination. Literally, the syringe denotes a medical tool that is normally used for injection in the medical field. This indexical figure shows a health care official in the background who is visibly part of the health authority.

This image although blurred intentionally depicts the healthcare worker wearing a stethoscope. These occurrences serve semiotic purposes by universalizing the medical personnel's representation thus shifting the real focus from the particular individual to the symbolic role of disease prevention. This index suggests the need of the public not to be concerned with an individual but rather focus on the syringe as an instrument for vaccine administration. The presence of syringe and the stethoscope signify that the person involved in the vaccination exercise is a health care professional. The foregrounding of the syringe and its clear view creates a focal point which significantly draws the attention of the viewers to the idea of the presence of vaccines and the commencement of the exercise by relevant authorities. The stethoscope connotes trust, care and professionalism. Its inclusion in the image serves credibility and legitimacy functions. Its presence promotes a sense of collective responsibility and

urgency by public health bodies and their zeal towards ensuring that the masses are vaccinated by qualified ministry professionals.



Figure 7: Red Cross Personnel Index

Figure 7 is an indexical image of a health care official from the Red Cross; a non-governmental organization. The image depicts a personnel member in a sensitization process. This image indexes an organized public sensitization exercise that is an intervention considered by relevant public health institutions. The image captures a vaccination campaign meeting where a Red Cross worker addresses a group of participants seated around tables. At the most basic, denotative level, the image depicts a formal health education or training session. The visible Red Cross emblem, the presence of notebooks and bottled water, and the attentive posture of the participants all signal an organized effort aimed at disseminating important information. The setting which is an indoor room with modest furnishings suggests that the campaign is grounded in community-level engagement rather than a high-tech medical facility.

Beyond this surface description, the image evokes deeper, connotative meanings linked to trust, authority, and community solidarity. The Red Cross symbol, a universally recognized emblem of humanitarian aid, medical assistance, and emergency response, lends the speaker immediate credibility and authority. This signals to the audience that the information being shared is reliable and trustworthy. The arrangement of people seated around tables fosters a sense of inclusion and dialogue rather than passive

reception. This spatial organization implies that the campaign values the participation and voices of the community, emphasizing empowerment rather than top-down instruction. Furthermore, the attentive expressions and body language of the participants reflect a shared commitment to the campaign's health goals, conveying a sense of responsibility and collective care.

Several semiotic tools combine to produce these meanings. The red colour of the speaker's jacket prominently draws attention and symbolizes urgency, care, and action, reinforcing the importance of the Mpox vaccination campaign. The facilitator's standing posture, facing the seated group, indicates leadership and expertise, while the participants' focused listening suggests readiness to absorb and act on the information. The spatial dynamic, with the speaker physically elevated and the audience arranged around tables, highlights the roles of knowledge bearer and recipients, typical of instructional and persuasive settings.

From a pragmatic perspective, the image implies a range of speech acts. The facilitator is likely performing assertive acts by providing factual information about Mpox vaccination and its benefits. Simultaneously, there is an implicit directive act, encouraging the participants to consider or commit to vaccination. The interaction also embodies expressive acts, as the mutual engagement between speaker and audience demonstrates respect, care, and encouragement, fostering positive attitudes towards the health intervention. Overall, this image communicates a powerful narrative of an organized, trustworthy, and community-centred health campaign. It frames vaccination not simply as a medical procedure but as a shared social responsibility, aiming to inspire agency and collective action among community members. This act meaning-making is central to understanding how such visual and interactional signs contribute to the persuasive and educational goals of the Mpox vaccination campaign.

4.3 Symbols

Symbols are signs whose meanings are established through social and cultural convention. Interpretation of symbols require prior cultural knowledge or learning. The interpretation of symbolic resources utilized in the campaigns are anchored on Pierce (1931) semiotic model. According to Pierce (1958), a symbol has no resemblance between the signifier and signified at all. The relationship between the signifier and the

signified is usually anchored on convention or social agreement as meanings are subject to change depending on various factors such as cultural and historical periods. Utilization of symbols in public health campaigns strengthens the persuasive nature of the messages thereby ensuring that the messages resonate with societal norms and values. In vaccination campaigns against Mpox, several symbolic tools have been utilized and they have been effective in conveying messages of safety and urgency.

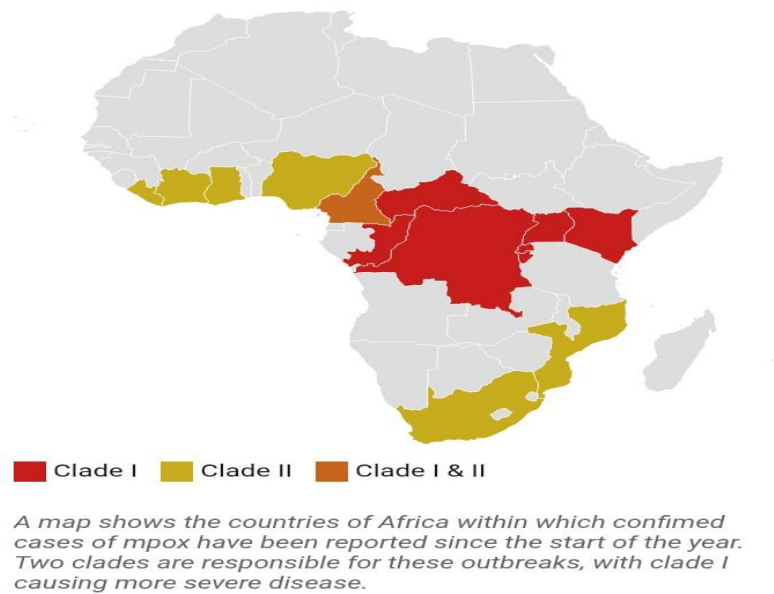


Figure 8: Map of Africa Symbol

One of the significant symbols in this study is that outlined on Figure 8. This image depicts the continent of Africa with countries geographically located around East and Central Africa painted in red. This map depicts countries with confirmed cases of Mpox. This is not incidental as the image serves as a potent symbol that is strategically designed to elicit both cognitive and emotional responses. On the denotative level, the map serves to represent Africa, a geographical location. However, its symbolic significance especially with the inclusion of Kenya suggest a deeper interpretation. The placement of Kenya within the red-painted zone suggests the centrality of Kenya in the Mpox crisis. The map of Africa with Kenya in red operates as a symbolic sign (Pierce 1938). Anchored in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) notion of visual grammar and Peirce's Semiotic Theory, its meanings are derived from culturally established conventions that associate the specific colour scheme with danger, warning or emergency. Through shared societal meanings, red has come to symbolize blood.

According to Pravossoudovitch, Guéguen, Fayolle, and Havlíček (2014), red is often associated with danger and caution than safety in human perception. The colour connotes Kenya as a high-risk zone and hotspot for the spread of Mpox in Africa thus putting it on an epic centre position for the campaign. The red colour on the map that sets out Kenya and other African counties evokes feelings of fear which is a strategy used in the design of campaigns of such nature to generate a fear appeal strategy. The red colour symbolizes a nation in crisis. This therefore intensifies health messaging and the need for the government to take serious and urgent actions lest its citizens suffer.

The image evokes a sense of collective responsibility with other nations in the continent depicting a shared regional responsibility with other nations in the continent. This further depicts a shared responsibility towards combating Mpox. These visual outlines the need to address this issue seriously since it is not only confined within the borders of Kenya but also requires cooperation and solidarity from other African states. The use of this visual is deliberate as it heightens the consciousness of the public concerning the seriousness of the pandemic within national boundaries. This therefore triggers responses from the citizens.

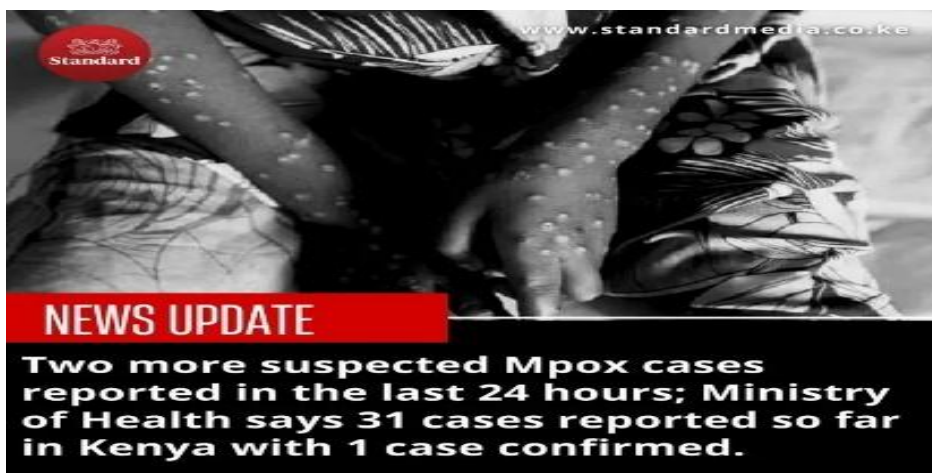


Figure 9: Mpox Rash Symbol

Figure 9 shows an image of a victim with Mpox rash visible on the hands. This image however has been discoloured and presented in white and black. The denotative interpretation of this image is that of a person suffering from Mpox. The choice to present it in white and black devoid of colour transforms this image from a mere visual rhetoric to a powerful symbolic tool that depicts suffering and universality of suffering.

On the connotative level, the absence of colour abstracts the identity of the victim thus positioning the individual as a symbolic representation of the victims of the pandemic. This tone serves to evoke a sense of empathy and gravity that is associated with the severity of the disease. The main aim of a campaign such as this is to trigger emotional responses which is aimed at behavioural change. Therefore, the aesthetic choice deeply resonates with the public as it creates feeling of fear, empathy and urgency.

The image of the hands as the focal point becomes a universal communicative rhetoric that symbolizes the fragility of human touch and the risk that is involved through contact. The presentation of the image in black and white symbolically serves to distract and direct the attention of the viewer to the rash. Echoing the use of monochromes in the media, where moments of tragedy and crisis are captured in this colour, the presentation of the image therefore symbolizes loss and mourning especially with the knowledge that this pandemic has a number of fatalities. Colour was deliberately removed to serve as a temporal displacement thus presenting the disease as a current and historical threat and a warning to the public against resistance of preventive measures such as vaccination.



Figure 10: Emergency Symbol

Figure 10 is that of an image inscribed “EMERGENCY” accompanied by a white downward arrow which is universally recognized as a symbol in the healthcare domain. This slogan denotatively symbolizes a physical location intentionally set aside for emergency services. This symbol serves to guide the patients, staff and the general

public to the designated location where emergency services are being offered. The word on the image has been capitalized and written symbolically to capture the attention of the coming audience. On the connotative level, this symbol carries layers of meanings that are beyond the literal function. The use of colour red in the image is intentional and conventionally associated with danger and emergency. In the context of Mpox pandemic, this symbol signifies the gravity of the threat at hand. This therefore demands serious attention and action by the public and relevant authorities. The arrow pointing downwards intensifies further the immediacy in terms of handling the disease thereby evoking a psychological response that this could be a serious matter of life and death. This in return heightens the state of alertness among the population. The presence of the emergency sign symbolically implies that the health institutions are ready to respond, communicating that Mpox is no longer a threat rather a pressing issue that needs to be taken with seriousness it deserves.



Figure 11: Kenya Red Cross Society Symbol

Figure 11 displays a visual of a health care official from the Red Cross; a non-governmental organization in the process of sensitization as described in Figure 7. The official is dressed in the official Red Cross uniform jacket bearing the Red Cross emblem. The Red Cross emblem is a powerful symbol that has been prominently been utilized in the Mpox campaign. This is a symbol that carries layers of meanings. This symbol denotatively represents the Kenya Red Cross Society which is an organization that has been established to provide medical care and aid, emergencies and relief during disasters, both locally and globally. Governed by the Geneva Conventions, this symbol is internationally recognized as a symbol of neutrality, protection and medical intervention.

On the connotative level, the Red Cross emblem symbolizes hope, urgency, compassion and humanitarian care especially during crises. This reinforces the notion that the pandemic is professionally handled by credible institutional bodies with authority, goodwill and trust. The emblem utilizes the red colour which signifies a call to action and safety thus urging the public to consider seeking help. Red connotes blood and medical care thereby aligning with the focus of the campaign and reinforcing the function of the emblem which is a rallying sign of protection during crisis such as Mpox pandemic.

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2024. Kenya is taking decisive action to contain the spread of mpox, after the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) declared this infectious disease a public health emergency.

Figure 12: Coat of Arms Symbol

The national coat of arms as depicted in Figure 12 is a symbol of state authority, unity and legitimacy. In the context of pragma-semiotics, the image is loaded with several convention interpretations and meanings ranging from national identity, Kenya's sovereign authority and trust. The two lions on the coat of arms symbolize strength and guardianship thus reinforcing the role of the government in ensuring that it protects the health of its citizens. The presence of shield and spear serve a symbol of national defence metaphorically representing the states readiness in the fight against Mpox pandemic. The rooster holding an axe is a symbol of vigilance. Therefore, this emblem serves to inform the public on the government's preparedness and alertness in the face of Mpox threat. The word "Harambee" inscribed in the coat of arms is a Swahili term that means "pulling together" this serves to symbolize the need for unity and cooperation among the citizens and the state in mitigating the spread of Mpox. Connotatively, this inscription calls for solidarity, individual responsibility and a shared

patriotic duty for the well-being of all citizens. The symbol affixing the national emblem and the name of the concerned ministry is deliberate. Symbolically, the Republic of Kenya binds itself to the content; a clear indication that it is answerable to its citizens on issues pertaining the disease.

The image is accompanied by reference made to Africa CDC and a declaration that this pandemic is a public health emergency. The symbolic framing signals that apart from the state, global alliances are in motion to ensure that they stimulate public urgency and shift the psychological passive awareness of the disease to active participation. The inscription of the MOH in blue is not coincidental. According to Tabanejad (2024), blue functions semiotically as a symbol of safety, hygiene and dependability. This colour evokes psychological calmness and reduces anxiety in medical contexts, making it a preferred colour in hospitals and health communication materials. In public health, blue is often associated with medicine and normally, pharmaceutical packaging and professional medical attires are in blue symbolically anchoring the message in medical rationalism. Blue has a calming psychological effect on the viewers in contrast with red which connotes danger. This colour serves to diffuse panic and anxiety that come during disease outbreaks. Therefore, while it helps to control perlocutionary effect, it does not provoke fear, rather, encourages the audience to consider rational responses.

4.4 Metafunctions

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) explore on the grammar of visual design. They provide a framework for analysis of visual elements and how they shape communication in social contexts. They come up with visual grammar framework that explains how various semiotic elements such as colour and visual images create meaning. Their approach is based on the assumption that just like grammar which can be analysed linguistically, visual images are also governed by a set of socially constructed conventions that can also be analysed. They highlight that visual communication is structured by three meta function that help us to understand how visual images enhance communication, convey meaning and guide the interpretation of images.

4.4.1 Analysis of Metafunctions



Figure 13: Mpx Lesions Icon

Figure 13 presents an image of a pair of human hands with evidence of Mpx lesions. An official statement from MOH accompanies the visual confirming the fifth case of positive Mpx transmission in the country.

4.4.1.1 Ideational

The represented participant in the image is that of severely infected palms. The central placement of both palms draws the attention of the viewer to the lesions that are unmistakable signs of Mpx. The image excludes the other parts of the body such as the face. Focusing solely on the palms universalizes the threat that comes with transmission of Mpx through contact such as hand shaking. The verbal element that accompanies the image is an assertive that provides information about the location of the patient. The presence of the text contributes to the overall construction of meaning by linking the symptoms that have been depicted in the image to real-life data that has been verified epidemiologically. The visible lesions in the palms are a symbol that mark the disease thus visually communicating the dangers that come with contraction of Mpx.

4.4.1.2 Interpersonal

This meta function analyses the relationship that exists between the image and the viewer. The palm is intentionally directly gazed, open and positioned to face the front creating a demand for the image. The position confronts and urges the viewer to pay close attention to the picture. The image's close-up framing draws the viewer into the experience of Mpox, minimizing any form of destruction by ensuring the viewer remains glued to the visual thus producing some sense of intimacy. This positioning of the palms as the main focus area encourages empathy thereby encouraging emotional weight that comes as a result of seeing lesions that dominate a victim's healthy hand as a result of Mpox infection. The phrase that accompanies the image together with the number of positively confirmed Mpox cases serves to enhance the authoritative nature of the image and its alarming tone. Particular reference to the cabinet secretary for health reinforces the governmental and institution's legitimacy of the message. Therefore, the visual and the text collaboratively work together to ensure that credibility is preserved.

4.4.1.3 Textual

This meta function concerns itself with analysis of visual and textual elements, how they are organized to create coherence and emphasis. Figure 13 presents an image which follows a vertical top-bottom reading structure. The "Citizen TV" header highlights the source. It is then followed by the textual caption, the image of a victim's hands and lastly coloured news Panel. The logical flow depicted in the figure aids in the interpretation of the message from the source, to the visual shock and lastly to the formal explanation accompanying the visual. The hands with lesions are framed symmetrically and centralized. They are contrasted sharply with a plain background and the bright orange -blue "NEWS ALERT" inscription that saliently anchors the urgent message. The gaze of the viewer on the very key areas of the image which are the lesions and the public health alert is retained by the strategic use of high-contrast colours.

4.5 Pragmatic and Semiotic Interaction

The analysis of the data collected reveals a systematic integration of speech acts and semiotic tools aimed at creating contextually relevant and persuasive messages. The integration between speech acts and various semiotic resources is evident. The findings

are systematic with Searle (1976) and Kress & van Leeuwen’s theoretical framework. The Multimodal Theory states that meaning is shaped by visual composition factors and is dependent on the analysis of various modes. This multimodal strategy serves not only to strengthen the perlocutionary effect of the campaign message but also to inform and urge the public to consider taking into account various preventive steps. Intersemiotic interaction is a tenet in Multimodal Theory which implies that communication entails combination of various modes which interact and work together to create meaning. The data reveals a clear illustration of multimodal use of signs accompanied by verbal message intended to amplify the persuasive force of the campaigns message as depicted in Figure 1. This clearly aligns with Multimodal Theory where meaning is derived from various modes and relies on the cooperation of pragmatic and semiotic modes that are shaped by both social and institutional contexts.



Figure 14: Test Container Icon

Figure 14 presents a visual of a test container boldly marked X in red and placed on a white gauze that is often associated with wound management and medical care. The overall background colour is black which connotes solemnity. Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) argue that in public health and advertising contexts, black can signify authority, mourning or elegance depending on the intention of the message and the interpretation of the audience. This therefore makes it a symbolic resource for signalling gravity, urgency and mourning for loss caused by the disease. The visual has a superimposed text written “NEWS UPDATE” in white-red and capitalized alongside an assertive.

According to Searle (1976), an assertive expresses a truthful proposition whose illocutionary force lies in its epistemic authority. This announcement layered with various semiotic modes illustrates the communicative impact that the visual might have. The assertive utterance has a perlocutionary effect that is designed to raise public awareness, inform them on the need to be vigilant and compliance with health guidelines. The statement is also an indirect directive structured to direct the audience into exercising caution and adherence to the ministry of Health protocols.

The combination of colour, spatial arrangement and symbolic imagery was deliberately carried out in order to produce a tight multimodal communicative act. The dark positive, mark "X" are employed to signify infection, danger and warning. It is an index and symbolically refers to the presence and danger of an infection test. Black as defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) signifies, seriousness, mourning and death. The incorporation of black background in the symbol introduces a seriousness factor and puts risk into the forefront. The strategy is viewed to draw the attention of the audience towards the seriousness of the current condition. This incorporation thus transforms the forceful speech act into a multimodal utterance to result in a rich communicative product with increased perlocutionary effect wherein the illocutionary force is supplemented by the aspects of semiotics.

Such an integration ensures that the audience not only hear the campaign message in their minds but are also marked on their minds by what they are able to see. It is important to note that interpretation of meaning is anchored not only on what is said but also how it is visually presented and its intention to amplify or contour their final pragmatic intent. Whatever reinforces the communicative goal of a campaign is its ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions that are normally manifested across various modes. The representational choice of various medical equipment and tools in form of icons, indexes and symbols enhances the ideational function of the campaign which is to communicate factual and epidemiological content to the public.

According to Jakobson (1959), the process of intersemiotic translation entails transformation of verbal content into equivalent visual elements. Since there is no exact translation, similar semiotic equivalents are used in many cases. Figure 15 contains an assertive “Ministry of Health confirms second case of Mpox in Kenya”. This statement

could also be intersemiotically translated through the red “X” positive mark on the test container which is a visual metaphor, a semiotic condensation of the process of clinical confirmation of the virus that communicates a diagnosis visually without requiring verbal supporting statements or elaborations. The use of such modes created redundancy which is a significant phenomenon in public health as it improves the cognitive uptake of the information by diverse audience irrespective of the varying literacy levels. With intersemiotic translation, the linguistic gap is bridged thus ensuring that messages are well received.

CHAPTER FIVE

SPEECH ACTS IN VACCINATION CAMPAIGNS AGAINST MPOX IN KENYA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides response to the second study objective. Using Searle's (1976) typology of speech acts, the study categorized the speech acts into five illocutionary power structure. The findings of this analysis revealed that public health campaign messages utilized various speech acts to inform, persuade and influence behaviour change while at the same time advocating for vaccination among the high-risk population. The data also exhibited utterances with a combination of various speech acts. Such utterances reinforced the overall nature of communicative effectiveness ensuring that the campaign messages achieved their intended purpose.

5.1.1 Directive Speech Acts

Directives are speech acts that are usually employed to influence the listener into doing something. They were majorly used in the campaign messaging to encourage and persuade the audience to adopt certain preventive measures as guided by relevant health authorities. They were explicit and intended to direct the audience into taking specific actions such as considering vaccination.

We reassure the public that our healthcare facilities are fully prepared to diagnose and treat Mpox. There is no need to panic if you believe you may have symptoms. Mpox is transmitted through direct contact with an infected person, contact with contaminated body fluids, clothing, utensils or even contact with infected wild animals. To prevent further spread of Mpox, we urge the public to avoid unnecessary travel to countries with Mpox outbreaks. (MOH Press release on Mpox Situation in Kenya on 6 September 2024.)

The speech act functions as direct directive. The speaker of the utterance, presumably a person with authority uses an imperative to urge the members of the public to refrain from travelling to countries that are considered high-risk zones for transmission of Mpox. The use of the imperative "avoid" matches the illocutionary intention of issuing a warning or caution against certain behaviour. The illocutionary force behind this utterance is to influence the public to limit mobility so as to reduce exposure to the

disease. This utterance is structured as a command but introduces a softening strategy by the use of the word “*unnecessary*” thereby making the directive less authoritative and more advisory. This linguistic strategy enhances pragmatic politeness of the imperative thus increasing its potential ability of acceptance. The perlocutionary outcome of this utterance is compliance and change or cancellation of unnecessary trips.

We urge Kenyans to consider vaccination, prevent the spread of potentially harmful information, seek accurate information from credible sources, keep vigilant and question the validity of the content they encounter online. (Press statement by MoH on the update of the mpox situation in Kenya 24 September 2024)

This speech act is a direct directive which is aimed at urging the public to consider vaccination. This utterance has utilized polite but persuasive language. This has been done avoiding an authoritative and command tone by softening the imperative through the performative verb “*urge*”. The use of polite advisory terms rather than a command is a positive politeness strategy that enhances compliance with the directive. The campaign creators intentionally avoided the use of direct imperatives with a commanding tone. The main aim of this strategy is directing the public to avoid certain actions as such could probably have negative perlocutionary results. The perlocutionary effect cannot be guaranteed but there is a likelihood of favourable interpretation because of the structure of the utterance. The strategic use of appeals to civic and personal responsibility results to a strong perlocutionary effect aimed at containing the spread of the disease.

The perlocutionary effect that comes is that of individual responsibility towards vaccination, critical thinking, discernment and reasoning by critically engaging with online content before taking any action. The use of directives within the sociopolitical and public health context is pragmatically appropriate. Since the public is already aware of the pandemic and is already primed to receive advisories and guidelines, this utterance aligns with the contextual felicity condition which dictates that for the action to be relevant, then the speakers should have authority, the hearer should be capable of performing the action and the action must be relevant.

5.1.2 Commissive Speech Acts

Commissive speech acts primarily aimed at ensuring that the government built trust with the public by conveying commitment towards supporting the entire campaign process. These speech acts performed a critical role in ensuring a good cooperative relationship between the public and health authorities, ensuring that the messages of public health were well reinforced thus making the campaign messages much acceptable by the audience.

The Mpox vaccination campaign will not target the general population, but will prioritize high- risk groups, starting with 13 counties currently reporting confirmed cases. The roll out will not be nationwide at the stage, but will focus on the affected counties, with adjustments made as the situation evolves. (CS Aden Duale, MOH Daily Nation Digital Newspaper, April 10,2025)

This statement by the Cabinet Secretary in charge of Health is a commitment by the government in ensuring that specific actions are taken to contain the disease. This utterance “*The Mpox vaccination campaign will not target the general population but will prioritize high-risk groups*” does not merely perform an informative function but also commits the government at large to a specific course of action that is to be undertaken. Pragmatically, this utterance serves as a promise to make sure that the intervention is prioritized in areas most needed. The structured language of assurance and certainty in the statement heightens the illocutionary force of the commissive. Modal verbs such as “*will*” function as linguistic markers which serve to assure the public that the actions are not just speculations but true.

The perlocutionary effect of such a statement is creation of expectations in the speaker that the government is ready to contain the disease through vaccination. The Ministry of Health’s commitment to focus on a number of specific counties with confirmed cases pragmatically narrows the promise scope. This ensures that the commitment given appears real, measurable and achievable. Furthermore, the commissive is a trust-building mechanism because of its reassurance that the government is not blindly reacting but is guided by scientific data. The clause “*as the situation evolves, we shall make necessary adjustments*” serves as a mitigated commissive. Pragmatically, it gives room for flexibility while still putting into consideration the illocutionary commitment.

This clause softens the rigidity of the process which is very important at times when uncertainty is very high. This commissive also performs persuasive functions. The act encourages the target group among the population to prepare for vaccination. On the same note, it discourages unwanted expectations from other members of the public by clearly asserting that they have not been considered at this point. This utterance builds a frame of reassurance strategically by committing to prioritization of vaccination efforts to curb the crisis.

“Tonix Pharmaceuticals Holding Corp, a fully-fledged integrated biopharmaceutical company today announced a research partnership with KEMRI to design and conduct a Phase 1 clinical trial of TNX-801, an investigational vaccine designed to prevent Mpox. The trial will take place in Kenya, focusing on assessing the vaccines” safety, tolerability and immunogenicity. Tonix will sponsor the trial, while KEMRI will oversee the execution of the study.” (KEMRI Press Release 13 November 2024.)

The above commitment is a future-directed commitment made of institutional promises whose aim is to foster public health through vaccination. *“Tonix will sponsor the trial, while KEMRI will oversee the execution of the study”* is a dual commitment whose main functions is to establish credibility and intentions of good will for Kenyans. In order for the commissive to be pragmatically successful, certain felicity conditions must be met. First, Tonix must have the authority and resources needed to fulfil the promises given to the public. Sincerity condition is the second condition that must be met for the speech act to be successful.

The speaker who is acting on behalf of the institution intends to carry out the action genuinely thereby meeting this condition. The institutional setting and the context of press release by KEMRI is enough evidence on how these felicity conditions are indeed satisfied. The illocutionary force of such a statement is to assure the Kenyan public, international medical institutions and various key medical stakeholders that Tonix is taking ownership and responsibility of the logistics and financial requirements thus instilling confidence and trust in them.

This utterance *“The government remains committed to prioritizing local vaccine manufacturing through Biovax”* (MOH press release by PS. Dr. Ouma Oluga on 14

May 2025) is a direct commitment by the MOH. It uses a performative verb “*remains committed*” to clearly depict the Ministry’s promise and its intentional commitment towards enhancing self-sufficiency of vaccine. The institution’s commitment in this clause “*prioritizing local vaccine manufacturing*” is a plan that binds the speaker and the institution at large. According to Searle (1976), this commissive makes a strong illocutionary point by expressing its intention to consider specific actions in the future. Furthermore, by asserting this commitment, credibility is built. The pragmatic effect is mobilized confidence in the public by legitimizing the capacity of the ministry for long term solutions of the crisis through manufacturing vaccines.

This act of speech “*This donation marks an important step in the government’s efforts to strengthen the immunization program.*” (MOH press release by PS Dr. Ouma Oluga on 14 May 2025) is an indirect commitment of the government towards sustaining and scaling immunization program. The strategic lexical choice of the word “*efforts*” presupposes the government’s ongoing future involvement in the immunization initiative. This act attributes donation as a milestone. This strategy entails the speaker extending institutional responsibility into the future. This is a key trait in commissives. The intended perlocutionary effect is expectation of accountability as the audience will pragmatically interpret the utterance as an assurance to continued public health provision. The utterance also instils trust, securing institutional legitimacy and encourages collaboration by asserting that the government will be instrumental in production and distribution of vaccines. Therefore, members of the public and stakeholders are encouraged to make interpretation of these efforts as evidence of long-term commitment and investment in the health security of the citizens.

Probably by the end of the year then we should have received some doses which we can start deploying to the most at risk. We are working very closely with the Africa CDC so that we can be taken through the required procedures to be able to request for this vaccine. (Deputy Director General-MOH, Citizen TV Kenya News Item- November 3,2024)

This utterance is a commitment of the speaker towards a future course of action. It contains a factual information about the collaboration between the government of Kenya and Africa CDC in relation to procurement of vaccine. The illocutionary force

behind the utterance is reassurance to the members of public that concrete actions are taking place. This subtly invites the public to trust the process and be ready for vaccination once the vaccines are available. The intended perlocutionary effect is mental preparedness from the most-at-risk individuals. There is a high likelihood of anticipation, acceptance and compliance once the vaccination exercise commences. The utterance makes use of an indirect directive which is a strategy to soften the message instead of using a harsh commanding-like tone which may disfigure the intended perlocutionary effect.

5.1.3 Expressive Speech Acts

These speech acts were designed to express the feelings and emotional responses of the audience. The use of expressives were intentional and designed to evoke different feelings of emotions through fear appeals, messages of compassion and those of shared responsibility. Expressives were significant in the creation of emotional connection between the Ministry of Health, relevant health authorities such as WHO and the audience thus emphasizing the impact of collective responsibility in various decision-making institutions.

The Ministry is deeply concerned with the misinformation and disinformation, we urge Kenyans to prevent the spread of potentially harmful information, seek accurate information from credible sources, keep vigilant and question the validity of the content they encounter online. (24 September 2024, MOH Press Statement)

The utterance “*The Ministry is deeply concerned with the misinformation and disinformation*” is a direct expressive speech act. It conveys the internal psychological state of the concern by MOH regarding the content that is being circulated online which could be potentially harmful and misleading. The realization of the intended illocutionary force is on its attempt to create awareness and inform the public on the seriousness and alarming nature of the situation. This concern is not only descriptive but it projects MOH as very vigilant and responsive to communication crisis. The intended perlocutionary effect of this utterance is that of urgency and awareness. Public trust is also built in the credibility of the ministry’s communication. In the broader contexts of public health campaigns, such expressives legitimize moves that bridge the gap between technical health information and public sentiments by humanizing

institutional authority. The MOH signals presence of online misinformation by airing this concern. The expressive therefore prepares the audience to be vigilant by ensuring that they seek for accurate information from credible sources and verify online content before consuming.

The utterance “*The identification of a new clade of Mpox, its rapid spread in eastern DRC, and reporting of cases in some neighbouring countries are extremely worrying.*” (14 August 2024, Director General WHO) is an expression of the psychological state of the speaker. This utterance conveys concern and anxiety created through rapid epidemiological spread of Mpox. The speaker’s strategic choice of evaluative words such as “*extremely worrying*” is deliberate and goes beyond the presentation of facts. It explicitly conveys the affective stance towards Mpox. The emotion of worry is clearly and directly conveyed. The hearer of the utterance does not need to infer the underlying state of the speaker’s mind. This therefore qualifies this as a direct speech act. The illocutionary force behind the utterance is to alert the stakeholders and members of the public on the seriousness of the pandemic thus legitimizing the urgency of subsequent preventive measures. The perlocutionary effect created is a sense of seriousness, alertness and caution among citizens of the countries neighbouring DRC. They are likely to be more vigilant, more receptive to health protocols and guidelines and less likely to dismiss the risks associated with Mpox. Furthermore, this utterance could cause heightened awareness thus prompting the public to adjust their health-related behaviours such as considering vaccination advisories especially to the high-risk groups.

5.1.4 Assertive Speech Acts

Assertives were intended to provide factual information regarding the transmission of the virus, the safety of the vaccines and its effectiveness in ensuring that there is no further spread. Assertives played a fundamental role in setting the foundation for other types of speech acts. They provided necessary background information about Mpox ensuring both directives and commissives have a greater impact in the whole vaccination narrative. The persuasive potential of assertives relied on how they were structured and presented.

Assertives are statements that commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, aiming to inform or describe reality. The statement “*Kenya is among the nine African countries allocated Mpox vaccine doses following a surge of Mpox on the continent*” (WHO Update, 14 November 2024) is an assertion of truth. In this case, the speaker commits to Kenya being one of nine African countries to be vaccinated with Mpox vaccine doses. The speaker asserts a fact that Kenya has been allocated Mpox vaccine doses along with eight other African countries. The information is presented as a truthful report about a public health measure, conveying the situation objectively. The act does not institute a new institutionally founded reality, as declaratives would, and nor does it aim to pledge future action, as commissives would. Instead, its illocutionary force in representing information as being true and trustworthy.

The speech act is categorical because the proposition is made clearly without implicit connotation. The illocutionary force of the utterance is thus informative and truth-committing: the speaker intends to inform and simultaneously undertakes obligation for the truth of the utterance. The perlocutionary effect of the statement is twofold. To the people of Kenya, it is an assurance of reassurance that the country is in a continental ecosystem that has acquired doses of vaccines in response to the Mpox outbreak. Such reassurance can inspire confidence in readiness in public health. It just so happens that by making Kenya’s contribution the result of a “*surge of Mpox on the continent,*” the statement can heighten perceived need for the vaccination campaign, thereby boosting compliance and uptake. On this basis, the statement is merely a straightforward assertive: it conveys information, binds the speaker to such information being the case, and binds the audience to see Kenya as being ready and prepared in an African health effort.

Kenya requested and received Mpox vaccine as part of the Access and Allocation Mechanism and is planning a July 2025 vaccination campaign for the highest risk groups. Through the Emergency Operations Centre, MOH collaborated with other Kenyan government agencies and multilateral entities to respond to the Mpox outbreak. (Africa CDC, 19 July 2025)

The statement “*Kenya requested and received Mpox vaccine as part of the Access and Allocation Mechanism and is planning a July 2025 vaccination campaign for the*

highest risk groups” performs several layered speech acts that are instrumental in public health communication. Essentially, the statement is an assertive speech act. It discusses Kenya’s forceful moves in acquiring Mpox vaccines and the country’s intention to implement a targeted campaign of vaccinations. Assertive speech acts entail the speaker binding themselves to the truth of the proposition.

The speaker, in this case, accounts for two major actions: ordering and obtaining vaccines, as well as scheduling a campaign for high-risk groups. This is intended to alert and inform the public of the state’s official response to the Mpox threat. The sentence “*Kenya requested and received Mpox vaccine through the Access and Allocation Mechanism*” indirectly accomplishes a commissive speech act both on the part of the Kenyan government and the world health system. Kenya’s question is a sign of a previous promise to contain the epidemic, while the successful receipt of the vaccine from a proper channel indicates commitment on the part of international stakeholders to supporting poor nations. Although the sentence itself does not technically obligate one to future action, it suggests continued participation and preparedness.

Kenya takes a bold step in the fight against Mpox as the Ministry of Health receives 10,700 doses of the MVA-BN vaccine. With 68 cases reported across 13 counties, vaccination will focus on high-risk groups—close contacts, long-distance truck drivers, and frontline healthcare workers. (MOH News update on 11/04/2025)

This statement is an embedded range of speech acts. At its core, the central aim is an assertive speech act. The utterance stands for factual information about the doses of vaccines Kenya has received, confirmed cases and people being targeted for vaccination. The speaker is presenting verifiable facts to be taken as true. The first clause, “*Kenya makes a bold step in the war against Mpox*”, is an assertive with evaluative force. The expression “*a bold step*” imposes a positive evaluative colouring with the effect of adding to Kenya’s positive act. This is accompanied with an expressive undertone, although the overall function is assertive, since Kenya’s reception of the vaccine is being presented as a matter of fact.

The second clause, *“With 68 cases in 13 counties, vaccination will focus on high-risk groups, long-distance truck drivers and frontline health workers”*, continues the imperative role by demanding statistical data and concrete priorities for vaccination. Illocutionary force is informative, grounding the campaign speech on measurable epidemiological fact. It is a direct speech act since it utilizes neither implication nor indirectness. Facts and target of the vaccination campaign are stated outright. The perlocutionary effect is twofold. On the one hand, the message is directed at reassuring the public by showing that the Ministry of Health has acquired vaccines and prioritizes high-risk groups. This creates institutional preparedness confidence. Second, the reference to *“68 cases in 13 counties”* is a tone of seriousness and urgency that appeals to the public for compliance and cooperation during vaccination drives. For the high-risk groups, the effect is to indicate that they are targets, and they should present themselves for vaccination.

5.1.5 Declarative Speech Acts

Declaratives serve to bring change in the external status of a condition at hand. They function not only as statements rather a powerful tool that shape public understanding and encourage compliance with stated guidelines. The use of declaratives emerged as a very significant strategy. Utterances exhibited were not mere descriptions of facts but rather a tool for change. Declaratives were very instrumental in promoting public compliance and immediacy which was very effective in the prevention of the spread of Mpox.

Today, we declare Mpox a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security to mobilize our institutions, our collective will, and our resources to act swiftly and decisively. This empowers us to forge new partnerships, strengthen our health systems, educate our communities, and deliver life-saving interventions where they are needed most. There is no need for travel restrictions at this time. (The Africa CDC 13 August 2024)

Declaratives are speech acts that, in virtue of being uttered, produce a change in the external world, provided that the institutional authority to effect the change is vested in the speaker. Here, the speaker, being a health authority, possesses institutional mandate to declare something of this nature. By declaring that Mpox is a *“Public Health Emergency of Continental Security,”* the utterance itself constitutes the new social and institutional reality. The illocutionary force of this utterance is encoded within the

performative “*declare*.” The speaker clearly marks the declaratory act and the listener need not to infer what the speaker intended to say. The illocutionary point is that officially declaring the disease an emergency amounts to setting up a system of response.

In contrast to directives, which simply state or seek to shape behaviour, the declarative in this case also has a constitutive role of changing institutional status: the state of emergency for Mpox is created. The resulting intended illocutionary force of this utterance is that it warns governments, institutions, and societies that heightened attention, resources, and action are now warranted. It also legitimizes subsequent actions such as resource mobilization, health system strengthening, and public information campaigns. The perlocutionary effect of the utterance to the public is psychological, generating urgency, seriousness. Furthermore, through this, relevant governmental bodies are likely to initiate policies and institutional responses. The use of declaratives in campaign discourse shows how public health communication is not merely a matter of informing or persuading but also of creating institutional facts through language.

5.2 Hierarchical Structure of Speech Acts

Data collected revealed that a number of press statements followed a certain hierarchy in the arrangement of speech acts. These statements consisted of multiple layers of speech acts, some embedded within others, building a specific sequence that convey a very strong illocutionary force. Structuring of speech acts this way ensures coherence, persuasiveness and relevance of the message keeping in mind the intent of the speech act. The layering of speech acts was intentional and done to achieve a more complex communicative purpose. The framing of a directive within an assertive serve to ensure that the message is legitimate since the public is first made aware about the presence of the vaccine for instance, its efficacy before being directed to consider vaccination. These two speech acts nested together ensure that apart from receiving a command, there is also a rationale for compliance. With this arrangement, the directive is made more persuasive thus ensuring that the campaign achieves its intended purpose.

5.2.1 Assertive-Directive Combination

The Ministry of Health will continue to share important information through our official social media accounts, websites, press and sensitization forums nationwide. We urge the public to be cautious of misinformation spread on social media and to remain vigilant. We remain committed to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all citizens and shall continue to implement comprehensive response measures. (Press Statement on Universal Health Coverage Staff, date 13 May 2025, MOH.)

This press statement issued by the ministry of Health consists of a number of speech acts layered together to inform the audience on the need to be vigilant during the crisis. Primarily, this utterance is an assertive as it functions to convey a statement of fact about the plans of the Ministry of Health. The primary role of this utterance “*The ministry of health will continue to share important information through our official social media accounts, websites, and press and sensitization forums nationwide*” is to inform the public and reinforce the Ministry’s role in the ongoing crisis. Embedded with a directive and commissive, this utterance goes beyond statements of facts. The directive “*we urge the public to be cautious of misinformation spread on social media and to remain vigilant*” is meant to encourage the public to be vigilant on what they hear and read across various platforms. This directive serves to influence the behaviour of the public using soft appeals.

The utterance also make use of commissives. The commissive “*we remain committed to safeguarding the health and well-being of all citizens and shall continue to implement comprehensive response measures*” enhances the credibility earlier introduced by the assertive by clearly presenting a proactive stance towards the management of Mpox. The overall layering of this utterance clearly demonstrates a strategic organization of assertives which build credibility, a commissive that expresses dedication to the welfare of the public and a directive intentionally designed to influence the behaviour of the public. The perlocutionary goal of this utterance is to build public trust and influence behaviour change.

5.2.2 Commissive-Assertive-Declarative Combination

The Ministry of Health wishes to reassure Kenyans that there is no active case of Mpox disease in the country following the uneventful recovery of the index case that was

identified on 29 July 2024. On the 13 July 2024, the Africa CDC and prevention declared the outbreak as a public health emergency of continental concern while the following day WHO similarly declared the event as a public health emergency of international concern. These two declarations by the continental and global health body are similar and highlight the public health threat posed by this outbreak and the need for an immediate and coordinated international response to control the disease. (Mpox MOH Press release on Mpox disease outbreak situation in Kenya 16 August 2024)

This multilayered utterance consists of a commissive speech act “*the ministry of Health wishes to reassure Kenyans that there is no active case of Mpox disease in the country following the uneventful recovery of the index case that was identified on 29 July 2024*” which is primarily designed to restore public calm by the use of the performative verb “*wishes*”. This speech act is closely layered with an assertive function as the speaker states a fact regarding the absence of Mpox in the country. The combination of these two speech acts reveals multifunctionality of institutional speech where the Ministry of Health builds credibility using expressions of commitment. From a pragmatic point of view, the assertion regarding the absence of Mpox in the country is effective in illocutionary uptake. The perlocutionary effect of this statement is to ensure that there is calmness, reduction of public anxiety and restoration of the Ministry of Health’s control over epidemiological landscape. This phrase “*uneventful recovery*” is a linguistic strategy carefully designed to function as a mitigating strategy thereby downplaying what is perceived a threat and reassuring the public of its safety.

This utterance “*On 13 July 2024, the Africa CDC and prevention declared the outbreak as a public health emergency of continental concern while the following day WHO similarly declared the event as a public health emergency of international concern*” which comes on the second part of the statement is predominantly an assertive speech act. This section performs an act of ratification by the Ministry of Health’s alignment with big national institutions of public health such as Africa CDC and WHO thereby endorsing the fact assertion earlier stated thus involving epistemic legitimacy. This assertive contains a fact that is not to be disputed or challenged by the public.

The clause *“these two declarations by the continental and global health body are similar and highlight the public health threat posed by this outbreak and the need for an immediate and coordinated international response to control the disease”* immediately comes after the assertive and operates as an assertive and a directive at the same time. From a global point of view, this clause assertively articulates the seriousness and gravity associated with Mpox. The phrase implicitly calls for action albeit indirectly by relevant bodies of public health. This is a good illustration of an indirect directive where a speaker intentionally avoids the use of overt imperatives with the intention of bringing about a certain course of action through propositional framing as seen in the phrase. From a pragmatic standpoint, the use of hedging, epistemic modality and institutional referencing is a fundamental strategy that bolsters the authority of the speaker and compliance of the audience.

5.2.3 Assertive-Commissive Combination

The ministry of health continues to collaborate with County Governments and partners to strengthen efforts to contain the Mpox outbreak and control the further spread of cases, including through enhanced surveillance, contact tracing, diagnostic testing and public awareness campaigns to promote public safety and ensure that all necessary measures are in place. The ministry of health thanks all Kenyans for their cooperation and remains steadfast in its commitment to closely monitor the outbreak situation and take all necessary steps to keep the country safe and safeguarding the health of all Kenyans. (Press statement by MOH 24 September 2024).

On the surface, the sentence performs a series of assertive speech acts. The sentence informs the public of the ongoing and current government’s action to contain the Mpox outbreak, enhanced surveillance, diagnostic testing, contact tracing, and public awareness campaigns. The speaker, a trustworthy public institution, assures the truth of the propositions and asserts them as fact, thereby operating towards building credibility and reassuring the people. These assertives play a critical function in health communication by reducing uncertainty and strengthening institutional presence during health crises.

Beneath the surface, there is a strong commissive speech act within the sentence, as can be observed in the phrase *“remains steadfast in its commitment to closely monitor the*

outbreak. and take all necessary steps.” Here, the Ministry makes a commitment to future action, which is an indicator of institutional responsibility and accountability. Commissives are particularly useful in public health communications because they transmit continuity, stability, and readiness which are attributes that are required to get the confidence of the public. By declaring a commitment at large, the Ministry is assuring citizens that the issue is within their control and further action will be initiated if necessary. There is also an expressive speech act in the words *“thanks all Kenyans for their cooperation.”* The Ministry, in doing this, is acknowledging the public’s role in the response and making a tribute. The expressive act enforces the emotional solidarity of the people and government. It is a strategic act of solidarity, designed to support the sacrifices of the population and gain further cooperation. Furthermore, the broader speech act structure expresses an indirect directive, calling the public to remain watchful, rule-guided, and remain engaged in health safety protocols. Despite there not being an explicit command given to the public, the emphasis on cooperation, collaboration, and public awareness places an implicit demand for ongoing behavioural conformity. This form of indirect directive is an institutional formal speech standard tactic; whereby commanding terms are toned down in order to maintain politeness while still guiding action.

These constituent speech acts work together to construct a narrative of control, transparency, and shared responsibility, needed to maintain public order and cooperation in case of health crises. In the broader pragma-semiotic context, this press release illustrates how speech acts are strategically utilized to construct meaning and elicit public response. The performative force of the speech act lies not only in what it says, but in what it accomplishes socially: affirming institutional authority, managing public sentiment, and maintaining a regime of co-operation that makes health interventions successful.

5.2.4 Commissive-Expressive-Directive Combination

The ministry remains committed to the health and safety of all Kenyans and appreciate the cooperation of the public, the media and all stakeholders in managing and preventing the spread of the disease. We are dedicated to providing timely updates as more information becomes available and ensuring the health and safety of all Kenyans. We however urge all members of the public, stakeholders and including the media to

verify any information on with the Ministry on the hotline number provided below before releasing it to the public. (Mpox MOH Press release on Mpox disease outbreak situation in Kenya 16 August 2024)

This claim shows an expressively constructed multilayered speech act performing expressive, commissive, directive tasks simultaneously. At its literal sense, this adage is accompanied by a strong expressive speech act, primarily through its tone of gratitude and dedication. The phrases “*appreciate the cooperation of the public*” and “*dedicated to. committed to the health and safety of all Kenyans*” express institutional values, compassion, and gratitude. Relationally, these statements are pragma-semiotic, as they function as relational signs that fortify the government-citizenship relationship. The statement does not provide information; it renders the Ministry affectively sensitive and socially responsible, which is imperative in enhancing public confidence and optimism during health crises. Such expressive actions are not incidental; they build the institutional ethos and provide a form of public identification with state initiatives.

According to this expressive dimension, there is a potential commissive speech act. In announcing the Ministry’s continued commitment to providing “*timely updates*” and protecting public health, the institution takes on a future obligation. This promise is commissive, especially in a press conference or public announcement, where these claims are greeted as official institutional guarantees. Notably, these promises assume structures of responsibility, in which the Ministry becomes symbolically and practically responsible for the information exchange and health care. It then uses a directive speech act in the final sentence “*We urge all members of the public, stakeholders and including the media to check any information with the Ministry on the provided hotline number.*” It is politely commanding and is used to control the dissemination of Mpox information. Pragmatically, the word “*urge*” remains polite but implies duty. From a semiotic point of view, this order is also an indexical sign of institutional control, it sends all information upstream to the Ministry as a source of authoritative facts. The hotline number is constructed as a symbolic anchor, representing centralized knowledge, control over narrative, and gatekeeping of the public discourse.

This statement is also arguably to have an implicit declarative speech act. Though not legally enforceable, the Ministry’s statement here is an act of institutional alignment in

action: it communicates to all that sounding out with the Ministry is the normal and right practice for responsible release. Where such communications come in the form of formal press briefings, they carry regulatory weight, shaping public expectation and conditioning information handling and dissemination. Overall, this statement is an exhibition of the strategic layering of multiple speech acts within one communicative event. In the pragma-semiotic sense, such multi-functionality is paramount to making sense of the manner in which language operates as an instrument for coordinating both meaning and behaviour in public health communication.

5.2.5 Assertive-Commissive-Directive Combination

In addition to the vaccination drive, the Ministry is enhancing its surveillance systems and ensuring that personal protective equipment PPE is distributed to healthcare workers. Training programs are also underway to ensure health workers are well equipped to manage and contain the virus effectively. (Media reports by MOH Thursday 23/01/2025)

The above statement is a commissive speech act, an assertive and directive with an illocutionary commitment in maintaining the health care workers safety. *“Besides the vaccination campaign, the Ministry is ramping up its surveillance systems and ensuring that personal protective equipment PPE is distributed to health workers”* is a commissive whose function is to commit and assure the public about the current efforts that are aimed at preventing the spread of the virus. According to Searle (1976) speech act categorization, commissives are categorized in terms of projecting responsibility into the future. This is indicated by the presence of progressive verb forms such as *“is enhancing”* and *“is ensuring.”*

This statement also suggests a continuing duty on the part of the concerned health authority. The claim also contains an embedded assertive speech act *“the Ministry is improving its surveillance systems”* that makes a statement of fact regarding the ongoing efforts by the ministry by means of enhancing surveillance systems. The main function of the assertive is to confirm credibility for the speaker and thereby provide the active ability of the government in the management and control of Mpox. The coordination between the two speech acts shows illocutionary layering whereby are a

series of speech acts that are aligned in the same utterance coexist to provide different communicative functions.

This statement “*training programs are also in progress to make sure health workers are also very well prepared to deal with and contain the virus successfully*” is an assertive statement with a commissive tone. The primary role of the clause is to ensure health practitioners are well prepared and thus has an illocutionary commitment in the development of capacity. The commissive tone of the statement is seen in present progressive structure “*are also underway*” which has been designed to convey support and institutional credibility in assurances of safety for health care workers. The underlying act is an indirect directive whose intention is to promote action and compliance. The Ministry uses assertive language to direct, mobilize and co-ordinate action among health stakeholders while maintaining politeness and authority.

The hierarchical structure exhibited in this statement is a case of cascade pattern with a commissive function supported by assertive and directive that both perform different functions in projecting the general meaning of the statement. Through the stratified structure, the MOH with its announcement can achieve its pragmatic outcome which entails informing and influencing behavioural adjustment in regard to the crisis.

5.3 Pragmatic Failures

Pragmatic failures may arise when the intended communicative goal of the message fails to achieve its objective due to mismatches between the speaker’s meaning and the interpretation of the message by audiences. Such failures could be attributed to various causes such as cultural misalignments, ambiguity and vagueness which then cause the erosion of the intended illocutionary force. The analysis that follows outlines and explains key occurrences observed in the selected campaign materials.

5.3.1 Sociopragmatic Failure

The study revealed a case of ambiguity and lack of contextual clarification in the campaign wording. The statement “*Limit the number of sexual partners to reduce the risk of exposure*” (Press Statement by MOH by the Cabinet Secretary for Health, September 24,2024) is a presupposition that presumes a shared understanding of how Mpox is transmitted. It presumes that the disease is primarily transmitted from one

person to another through sexual context. This is a contradiction to the public knowledge concerning the spread of Mpox since it is in public domain that Mpox may not be linked to a person's sexual behaviour. The directive thus can result to incorrect interpretation of information because of cultural sensitivity around issues to do with sexuality. What this may in turn lead to is public denial or non-compliance of the stated directive since the moral judgement has already been perceived rather than the health advisory to curb the spread of the disease.

The directive also does not specify to whom the message is directed. The directive fails to answer the following concerns; Is the directive directed to the general public? Is it targeting a specific group that is at risk? Is it directly addressing known individuals infected by Mpox? The directive fails to clarify the subject thereby leaving room for misinterpretation. With this, the illocutionary force which is intended to warn the public is weakened. The hearers of the directive may likely fail to recognize themselves as the ones being addressed. There is therefore a likelihood that the directive is dismissed since it is considered irrelevant.

5.3.2 Pragma-linguistic Failure

This "*Avoid contact with wild animals and refrain from consuming bushmeat*" (MOH Press Statement by the Cabinet Secretary - Health, October 3,2024) is a direct directive speech act. Its intended illocutionary force is to advice and warn the public against consuming bushmeat. It is a direct speech act with a clear imperative instruction. The intended perlocutionary effect of this directive by the MOH is to caution the masses on things that should be avoided to curb the spread of Mpox. Searle (1976) defines directives a speech acts such as instructions, warning, commands and instructions that attempt to influence the hearer into performing an action. The success of a directive is dependent on certain felicity conditions which, must be met in order for the speech act to be rendered effective. This therefore implies that the listener must understand the reason behind the directive and must be able to do the act. The speakers on the other hand must be sure that the action is necessary and appropriate. The findings revealed the use of imperatives without proper justifications.

While this directive is intended to curb spread, it lacks an explicit justification. The statement is in violation of preparatory condition. According to Searle (1976) for a

directive to be effective, the speaker must make an assumption that the hearer of the directive needs a sufficient reason to comply. The above directive has been plainly stated. It does not give an explanation as to why the public should avoid bushmeat. The connection between Mpox transmission and bushmeat has not been given. This statement's intention is to influence a perlocutionary effect which may likely not occur since the public may view this as an arbitrary instruction that is culturally insensitive. Searle (1976) assert that an illocutionary act is dependent on mutual understanding. Bushmeat is a common delicacy in many African homes. Thereby the Ministry of Health's decision to give a directive that is not grounded on cultural awareness or necessary scientific explanations may risk cultural rejection thereby rendering the speech act unsuccessful.

5.3.3 Pragmatic Inconsistency

The country is on high alert following the spread of Mpox cases in several counties. Several counties including Uasin Gishu, Busia, Bungoma and Trans Nzoia have reported new cases of Mpox over the last few days but medics operating in the counties say that there is no need for fear. Several children have died, medics say there is no need for panic. Doctors have now issued a call to action and asked Kenyans to be vigilant. (KTN Prime News, July 31,2025.)

The above statement is an assertive which reports fact that are alarming. Cases of Mpox across several counties instils and raises fear, heightening seriousness and the sense of urgency among the members of public. The statement that follows reassures the audience that there is no need to panic. The intended illocutionary effect is to calm the audience. This is a contradiction of the earlier assertion, downplaying the severity of the situation at hand. A mismatch and incoherence caused by this hiccup exists. The likely perlocutionary effect of this statement is confusion. The intended perlocutionary effect which was to calm the public may not be achieved. Later, the directive calls the public to be vigilant displaying mixed signal. There is a likelihood of mistrust on the speaker's credibility signifying a breakdown in the effectiveness of the utterance. The message is unclear: are we really in danger?

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the Findings

This study sought to analyze meanings created and conveyed through various semiotic resources in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya. It also examined the use of speech acts, assessing their pragmatic functions in a bid to understand how semiotic and pragmatic elements were utilized in the campaign platform. This study utilized a qualitative approach in data analysis, exploring how the two communicative modes work together to create meanings.

The analysis revealed that various semiotic resources such as signs, colour schemes, spatial arrangements and layouts were used in the campaigns against Mpox. The data collected provides evidence of images of symptoms of Mpox and other risk indicators which were crucial in creating a sense of urgency among the public. The campaign incorporated images of health care workers in the process of sensitization and vaccination, images of affected individuals which personalized the Mpox threat and encouraged compliance with health directives. Symbolic elements such as the Red Cross emblem and the Coat of Arms served to give the messages authenticity and credibility, building trust of the institutions behind the campaign. The spatial arrangement structured the flow of the information by ensuring that critical messages get the first visual priority. These semiotic resources carried multiple meanings and did not work in isolation but were very fundamental in ensuring the success of the campaign.

Using Searle's (1976) Theory of Speech Acts, the researcher categorized the speech acts as directives, commissives, expressives, assertives, and declaratives. The study reveals use of directives to instruct, urge and persuade the public towards desired behaviours such as compliance with the stated guidelines. While assertives built trust by providing evidence-based knowledge and facts regarding Mpox, commissives displayed the government and institution's commitment of support, reassuring the public of active involvement in order to mitigate the spread of the disease. Expressives on the other hand humanized the campaign, conveying solidarity by evoking a sense of empathy and concern of the victims while declaratives were mainly utilized to effect change, signifying institutional authority, legitimizing the public health directives. The

pragmatic analysis also reveals hierarchical structuring of speech acts. These statements consisted of multiple layers of speech acts, some embedded within others, building a specific sequence that convey a very strong illocutionary force. The study outlined combination of several speech acts which played a fundamental role in enhancing the communicative force of the utterance.

The findings indicate a mixed convergence of pragmatic and semiotic elements. The speech acts were strategically merged with non-linguistic resources such as indexes, icons and symbols. They did not exist independently but as a unit to add intensity to the communicative power of the campaign. This integration was an effective strategy by relevant campaign creators to convey complex health information in a very clear and engaging manner. This integration was instrumental in emphasizing key messages of urgency, precaution and institutional credibility thereby facilitating better understanding of the messages by the audiences. This coordinated use of pragmatic and semiotic tools demonstrates the importance of integrating multiple modes of communication to effectively impact and influence behavioural change. The research also identified few instances of pragmatic breakdowns. These discrepancies such as the use of unclear instructions, pragma-linguistic mismatch and pragmatic inconsistency were as a result of misalignment between the interpretation of the audience and intended illocutionary force of the message.

6.2 Conclusion

The research examined various elements of the campaigns, from semiotic resources to speech acts. The following can be deduced on the basis of the pragma-semiotic analysis: Mass vaccination drives against Mpox in Kenya employ an appropriate combination of semiotic and pragmatic resources. Visual icons, symbols, indexes, colour codes and spatial positioning reinforce the verbal message by verifying messages of safety, urgency and concern in common. These elements all combine to be a cohesive communicative force that, aside from informing the public about the pandemic, urges certain preventive measures, particularly vaccination among vulnerable populations. A rich source of multimodal semiotic elements with various meanings are used in a bid to make the messages appealing and persuasive. Symbols, icons, indexes, use of colours, spatial relationships and other semiotic signs enhance the effectiveness of the

campaign. or instance, syringe, test tube and vaccine bottle utilization actually symbolically depicts health security and vaccination.

Mpox vaccination drives rely primarily on the five speech act types of Searle's (1976) having varying distinctive communicative purposes. The drives make use of a multilayered speech acts which form a hierarchical structure that enhances forcefulness of communication and propels perlocutionary effect to its extreme. All official press releases by MOH and other health regulatory agencies such as WHO and Africa CDC were done in English, ostensibly leaving out members of the public who do not know the said language. There are very few instances of pragmatic inconsistencies which may undermine clarity resulting to perlocutionary failure. Overall, the success of public health campaigns is not merely linguistic but multimodal.

6.3 Recommendations for Further Studies

The current research conducted a pragma-semiotic analysis of communication strategies on Mpox vaccination campaigns in Kenya. The research examined how semiotic resources and speech acts cooperate to create meaning. However, in reference to the study scope, the following proposals can be assessed for future studies for a willing researcher: First, comparative analysis would be carried out to determine campaign differences and similarities between Mpox and other public health campaigns such as Cervical Cancer campaigns. Additionally, there could be an examination of the impact of pragma-semiotic misalignments in vaccine hesitancy across board to challenge prospective pragmatic and semiotic mismatches which could indeed contribute to vaccine hesitancy. Lastly, another possible area would be to track campaigns longitudinally, looking at whether the pragmatic and semiotic strategies used to Mpox vaccination campaigns shift, and how these shifts in language and semiotic framing affect long-term public health outcomes.

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APPENDICES





Appendix 1: Study Data

Objective 1: To critically analyze the semiotic resources that create meanings in vaccination campaigns against Mpxv in Kenya

Sign	Type	Illocutionary Force	Perlocutionary Effect	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
<p>1. Syringe and vaccination bottle</p> 	Icon	Prevention, hope, medical intervention	Inform the public of the presence of vaccine. Instill confidence in the management of Mpxv	A tool used in the administration of vaccine	Hope
<p>2. Mpxv rash</p> 	Icon	Alert, warn, caution	Raise awareness, instill fear due to the presence of the disease.	Manifestation of Mpxv rash	Fear, a sense of urgency
<p>3. Mpxv virus molecule</p> 	Icon	Inform, alert, warn	Raises awareness, about the disease, informing the public of the presence of the invisible deadly virus causing alertness	Orthopox virus	Danger, threat
<p>4. Vaccine bottle</p>	Icon	Inform, persuade, reassure.	Enhances trust in vaccination	Vaccine vial	Safety, hope, prevention, medical care, intervention and advancement of biomedical research

<p>Kenya receives 10,700 doses of Mpox vaccine as Ministry of Health seeks to curb spread</p> <p>By Maureen Kiprop April 10, 2022</p> 					
<p>5. Test container with a visible red positive mark</p> 	Icon	Educate, warn, inform	Raises alarm, warns against speculation thus prompting the public to seek medical advice	Real diagnostic container and	Positive confirmation of Mpox
<p>6. Health care professional</p>  <p>Ministry of Health confirms Mpox outbreak in Kenya</p>	Index	Signify professionalism, medical care intervention	Encourages public to seek medical help, instils trust	A healthcare worker ready to inject, a tool that is used for injection.	Trust, care, preparedness
<p>7. Red Cross personnel in a sensitization exercise</p> 	Index	Inform, educate, create awareness	Instils and builds trust, motivates community collaboration with various health institutions	an official from Red Cross conducting formal training	Humanitarian effort, trust, authority and community solidarity

<p>8. Map of Africa depicting some regions in red</p>	Symbol	Warn, inform, create awareness	Shared responsibility, encourages vigilance	A map depicting geographical locations affected by Mpox	Regional alertness, spread of Mpox
<p>9. Mpox rash on hands</p>	Symbol	Warn, inform, create awareness	Evokes feeling of empathy, triggers behavioural change	Person suffering from Mpox	Severity of the pandemic,
<p>10. Visual inscribed “EMERGENCY” in bold and red</p>	Symbol	Warn, emphasize	Heightens the state of alertness among the population.	A locational set aside for emergency services	Gravity of Mpox, urgency, preparedness
<p>11. Kenya Red Cross emblem</p>	Symbol	Authority, trust	Instils confidence, encourages compassion	The Kenya Red Cross Society	Hope, compassion and humanitarian care

<p>12.Coat of Arms</p>  <p>REPUBLIC OF KENYA</p> <p>MINISTRY OF HEALTH</p> <p>FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2024. Kenya is taking decisive action to contain the spread of mpox after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the infectious disease a public health emergency.</p>	Symbol	Inform, legitimize	Legitimization of the messages of the crisis.	The emblem of the Republic of Kenya	Authority, vigilance, institutional legitimacy and credibility
<p>13.Test container</p>  <p>NEWS UPDATE</p> <p>Ministry of Health confirms second case of MPOX in Kenya, the truck driver was screened and isolated at Malaba border, Busia county, ministry says 40 out of 42 samples in labs tested negative</p>	Icon	Inform, create awareness, warn	Raises alarm, warns against speculation thus prompting the public to seek medical advice	A test container for collection of samples	Positive confirmation of MPOX
<p>14.MPOX lesions palms</p>  <p>NEWS ALERT</p> <p>Fifth case of MPOX confirmed in Kenya; Health CS Barasa says the female patient, 29, is a Mombasa resident and is also spouse to the 4th confirmed case reported in Malindi.</p>	Icon	Warn, inform, educate	Warns against failure to heed to directives, instil fear of the severity of MPOX	Visible manifestation of MPOX	Infection, alertness, presence of MPOX
<p>15.MPOX lesions on face</p>  <p>BBC Swahili</p> <p>Watu watano washukiwa kuwa na ugonjwa wa MPOX nchini Kenya</p> <p>https://bbc.in/4fRnG4C</p>	Icon	Warn, educate, inform	Warns against failure to heed to directives, instils fear of the severity of MPOX	Physical manifestation of MPOX skin lesion	Severity of MPOX, visibility of MPOX

Objective 2: To examine the use of speech acts in vaccination campaigns against Mpox in Kenya

Speech Acts Type	Date of Release	Campaign source	Illustration	Direct/Indirect	Illocutionary Act
Directives	6 September 2024	Press Release-MOH Website	“We reassure the public that our healthcare facilities are fully prepared to diagnose and treat Mpox. There is no need to panic if you believe you may have symptoms. Mpox is transmitted through direct contact with and infected person, contact with contaminated body fluids, clothing, utensils or even contact with infected wild animals. To prevent further spread of Mpox, we urge the public to avoid unnecessary travel to countries with Mpox outbreaks.”	Direct	Reassurance, inform, advice
	6 September 2024	Press Release-MOH Website	“If caring for such patients, adhere to preventive measures as advised by your Healthcare provider.”	Direct	Advise, command
	24 September 2024	Press statement-MOH Website	“We urge Kenyans to consider vaccination, prevent the spread of potentially harmful information, seek accurate information from credible sources, keep vigilant and question the validity of the content they encounter online”	Indirect	Request, advice warn
	September 24,2024	Press statement-MOH Website	“Limit the number of sexual partners to reduce the risk of exposure”	Direct	Advice, caution
	October 3,2024	Press statement-MOH Website	“Avoid contact with wild animals and refrain from consuming bushmeat”.	Direct	Advice, warn, caution

Commissives	April 10,2025	Daily Nation Digital Newspaper	“The Mpox vaccination campaign will not target the general population, but will prioritize high-risk groups, starting with 13 counties currently reporting confirmed cases. The roll out will not be nationwide at the stage, but will focus on the affected counties, with adjustments made as the situation evolves.”	Direct	Inform, caution, clarify Commit
	13 November 2024	Press Release- KEMRI official Website	“Tonix Pharmaceuticals Holding Corp, a fully-fledged integrated biopharmaceutical company today announced a research partnership with KEMRI to design and conduct a Phase 1 clinical trial of TNX-801, an investigational vaccine designed to prevent Mpox. The trial will take place in Kenya, focusing on assessing the vaccines” safety, tolerability and immunogenicity. Tonix will sponsor the trial, while KEMRI will oversee the execution of the study.”	Direct	Announce, inform,
	November 3,2024	MOH -Citizen TV Kenya News Item)	“Probably by the end of the year then we should have received some doses which we can start deploying to the most at risk. We are working very closely with the Africa CDC so that we can be taken through the required procedures to be able to request for this vaccine.”	Indirect	Commit, reassure
	14 May 2025	Press Release- MOH Website	“The government remains committed to prioritizing local	Direct	Inform, reassure

			vaccine manufacturing through Biovax”		
	14 May 2025	Press Release- MOH Website	“This donation marks an important step in the government’s efforts to strengthen the immunization program.”	Direct	Inform
Expressives	24 September 2024	Press statement- MOH Website	“The Ministry is deeply concerned with the misinformation and disinformation, we urge Kenyans to prevent the spread of potentially harmful information, seek accurate information from credible sources, keep vigilant and question the validity of the content they encounter online.”	Indirect	Create awareness, Urge, advise, warn, inform
	14 August 2024	Director General- WHO Website	“The identification of a new clade of Mpox, its rapid spread in eastern DRC, and reporting of cases in some neighbouring countries are extremely worrying.”	Direct	Warn, express concern
Assertives	14 November 2024	Director General for Health, Capital FM Kenya-YouTube	“We are assured by the manufacturer of the vaccine that by the end of the year we can be able to have about two million doses but the vaccine will not be for everybody because of the scarcity in terms of availability of the vaccine.”	Direct	Reassurance, inform, warn
	11 April 2025	News update- MOH Website	“Kenya takes a bold step in the fight against Mpox as the Ministry of Health receives 10,700 doses of the MVA-BN vaccine. With 68 cases reported across 13 counties, vaccination will focus on high-risk groups—close contacts, long-	Direct	Inform, create awareness

			distance truck drivers, and frontline healthcare workers.”		
	14 August 2024	Update WHO Website	“Kenya is among the nine African countries allocated Mpox vaccine doses following a surge of Mpox in the continent”	Direct	Inform
	10 April 2025	News Item. Citizen TV Kenya-YouTube	“Vaccination is one of the most effective public health interventions. Saving millions of lives globally every year. This vaccine that we are receiving here today has shown efficacy of up to 82% in reducing disease severity, transmission and mortality particularly among the vulnerable population.”	Direct	Inform, educate
	19 July 2025	Press Release MOH Website	“Kenya requested and received mpox vaccine as part of the Access and Allocation Mechanism and is planning a July 2025 vaccination campaign for the highest risk groups. Through the EOC, MOH collaborated with other Kenyan government agencies and multilateral entities to respond to the mpox outbreak”	Direct	Inform
	19 July 2025	Press Release MOH	“The vaccination drive, which began in April 2025, is headed for protection of vulnerable groups, including those with exposure in high-risk sites and in contact with confirmed persons, but not the population at large yet”	Direct	Inform, educate
	31 July,2025	KTN Prime News-You Tube	The country is on high alert following the spread of Mpox cases	Direct	Warn

			in several counties. Several counties including Uasin Gishu, Busia, Bungoma and Trans Nzoia have reported new cases of Mpox over the last few days. But medics operating in the counties say that there is no need for fear. Several children have died, medics say there is no need for panic. Doctors have now issued a call to action and asked Kenyans to be vigilant”		
Declarative	13 August 2024	Africa CDC Website	“Today, we declare Mpox a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security to mobilize our institutions, our collective will, and our resources to act swiftly and decisively. This empowers us to forge new partnerships, strengthen our health systems, educate our communities, and deliver life-saving interventions where they are needed most. There is no need for travel restrictions at this time.”	Direct	Declare Reassure
	16 August 2024	Press Release-MOH Website	“On the 13 July 2024, the ACDC and prevention declared the outbreak as a public health emergency of continental concern while the following day WHO similarly declared the event as a public health emergency of international concern.”	Direct	Declare, inform

Hierarchical structure of speech acts-Identification of multilayered speech acts.
Section 2

Campaign Source	Date of Release	Speech Act Type	Illustration	Illocutionary Force
MOH Press Statement on Universal Health Coverage Staff	13 May 2025	Assertive-Directive-Commissive Combination	The ministry of health will continue to share important information through our official social media accounts, websites, press and sensitization forums nationwide. We urge the public to be cautious of misinformation spread on social media and to remain vigilant. We remain committed to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of all citizens and shall continue to implement comprehensive response measures, (, date	Commit, request, urge
MOH Press release Mpox on Mpox disease outbreak situation in Kenya	16 August 2024	Commissive-Assertive-Declarative Combination	“The ministry of Health wishes to reassure Kenyans that there is no active case of Mpox disease in the country following the uneventful recovery of the index case that was identified on 29 July 2024. On the 13 July 2024, the ACDC and prevention declared the outbreak as a public health emergency of continental concern while the following day WHO similarly declared the event as a public health emergency of international concern. These two declarations by the continental and global health body are similar and highlight the public health threat posed by this outbreak and the need for an immediate and coordinated international response to control the disease”	Clarify, inform,
MOH Press statement	24 September 202	Assertive-Commissive Combination	“The Ministry of Health continues to collaborate with County Government and partners to strengthen efforts to contain the Mpox outbreak and control the further spread of cases, including through enhanced surveillance, contact tracing, and diagnostic testing and public awareness campaigns to promote public safety and ensure that all necessary measures are in place. The ministry of health thanks all Kenyans for their cooperation and remains steadfast in its commitment to closely monitor the outbreak situation and take all necessary steps to keep the country safe and safeguarding the health of all Kenyans.”	Inform, commit, reassurance

Press statement by MOH on the update of Mpox situation in Kenya	24 September 2024	Expressive-Directive-Commissive-Assertive Combination	“The Ministry is deeply concerned with the misinformation and disinformation, we urge Kenyans to prevent the spread of potentially harmful information, seek accurate information from credible sources, keep vigilant and question the validity of the content they encounter online. The Ministry will continue to provide regular updates as more information becomes available.”	Express concern, direct, inform, commit
Mpox MOH Press release on Mpox disease outbreak situation in Kenya	16 August 2024	Commissive-Expressive-Directive Combination	“The ministry remains committed to the health and safety of all Kenyans and appreciate the cooperation of the public, the media and all stakeholders in managing and preventing the spread of the disease. We are dedicated to providing timely updates as more information becomes available and ensuring the health and safety of all Kenyans. We however urge all members of the public, stakeholders and including the media to verify any information on with the Ministry on the hotline number provided below before releasing it to the public.”	Commit, caution, request
Mpox MOH Press release on mpox disease outbreak situation in Kenya	16 August 2024	Assertive-Directive-Combination	“If you and your loved one experience above signs and symptoms and have a history of travelling to an area reporting Mpox cases, or have come into direct contact with someone with such signs and symptoms should report to the nearest health facility and provide such information. Cover lesions and wear a well-fitting mask when around other people.”	Inform.advice
Media reports by MOH Thursday.	23 January 2025	Assertive-Commissive-Directive	“In addition to the vaccination drive, the Ministry is enhancing its surveillance systems and ensuring that personal protective equipment PPE is distributed to healthcare workers. Training programs are also underway to ensure health workers are well equipped to manage and contain the virus effectively.”	Assurance, promise, inform

Appendix 2: Institutional Ethics Review Committee Authorization



CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18

Direct Line: 0772894438

Email: info@chuka.ac.ke

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka

Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

11th July, 2025

REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/825

TO: Rebecca Chemutai Chemiati

RE: A Pragma-Semiotic Analysis of Communication in Vaccination Campaigns Against Impox in Kenya

This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 11th July, 2025 – 11th July, 2026.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely


Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY



