The role of Caricature in Addressing Societal Issues in the Bahraini Daily Newspapers and the Public Attitudes towards these Issues Analytical and Field Study

A Thesis Submitted on Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the (Master Degree) in (Communication)

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify the most prominent issues covered by the caricatures in the Bahraini daily newspapers, and to identify the persuasive methods used in drawing the caricatures to dealing with the community issues desired by the public. Moreover, the study aimed to identify the effects of caricature in shaping the public's opinion towards these community issues, and the level of meeting the public needs of those community issues.

The researcher used the survey methodology, which is the most common analytical descriptive method used in the researches of media and public opinion. The content analysis method was also used to analyze the content of the daily Bahraini newspapers (Gulf News, Al-Watan, Al-Belad) during the period from January 2014 to December 2014.

A total number (801) caricatures were analyzed divided by 7 major categories and 19 subcategories in terms of form, and 9 main categories and 55 subcategories in terms of content. The field survey method was used to collect data through the distribution of a paper and electronic questionnaire which included of (50) items on a sample of (200) subjects of the readers of the Bahraini newspapers in all the governorates of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The population of the study consisted of all the caricatures in the Bahraini daily newspapers (Gulf News, Al-Watan, Al-Belad). The researcher reviewed all the available volumes of the three newspapers (Akhbar Al-khaleej (302) volumes, Al-Watan (279) volumes, Al-Belad (220) volumes).

The results of the study show:

1- Political issues were the main concern in the interest of caricature in addressing community issues. This is probably because of the political events experienced in the Arab World as well as the internal political situation of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2- Social issues were the second most important issue in the interest of caricature in addressing community issues. This is because these issues discuss important things to the citizens of the country such as traffic offences, population and urban expansion, traffic jams, social media and poor infrastructure planning.

3- Economic issues ranked third in the interest of caricature in addressing community issues despite being an important issue, especially after the
sharp fluctuations in oil prices, which affected the economic conditions of countries and their annual balances.

4- The results of the study show that there is a shortage in dealing with the religious and security issues by the caricatures which ranked fourth in the interest of caricature in addressing community issues in spite of the efforts of the Ministry of Interior to maintain security in the country.

5- The results of the study showed that cultural issues ranked fifth in the interest of caricature in addressing community issues. This is mainly due to the lack of cultural issues to be covered by the caricatures because there are specialized sections in each newspaper that deal with culture and cultural issues.

6- The study showed that sports issues ranked sixth and last in the interest of caricature in addressing community issues. This is because are sport pages in each newspaper which cover the sports news.

7- The results of the study also showed that there is no statistically significant correlation between the Bahraini public's exposure to the caricatures in the Bahraini daily newspapers and the educational level of the respondents.

8- The results also show that the most followed caricature artist is Abdulla Al-Muharraqi for the reasons previously mentioned which include his distinguished touch in presenting the important issues during his job besides his relation with the political issues in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

According to the results, the researcher recommends increasing the area of the caricature in the Bahraini newspapers because of its important role in presenting the national issues. The researcher also recommends paying more attention to the social issues which affect people's life such as salaries, high prices, housing, etc. The researcher recommends paying more attention to the issues related to the security of both the country and its citizens such as fighting terrorism, reducing sectarian strife, and reducing the phenomenon of religious extremism. Moreover, the researcher recommends giving more freedom to caricature artists to encourage them deal with different issues more freely and confidently.