



The Palgrave Handbook of African Men and Masculinities

Edited by

Ezra Chitando · Obert Bernard Mlambo
Sakhumzi Mfecane · Kopano Ratele

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ABSTRACT

Humour has played several functions in both modern day and the past. The common function of humour has been to offer some comic relief and basically make people laugh. This is more so true for the pandemic era. However, as different scholars have come to show, humour plays far more complex functions in different contexts. The advance of digital technologies has increased access to and participation on social media of different people of various persuasions. Despite this seeming democratisation of media spaces, there has been clear domination of such spaces by varying ideologies whether in politics, economics or social and gendered perspectives. In the latter for instance, patriarchal tendencies have dominated at times taking extreme forms such as sexism and male chauvinism. In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, humour has also taken forms and roles beyond just the comic. Humour has mirrored society while at times ridiculing absurdity and anomalies. This means that a society, where dominant masculinities or hegemonic patriarchies are prevalent, is most likely to produce humour which reflects on this while at times laughing at some of the excesses of patriarchal hegemony and these masculinities. Humour too has a subtle role: one that is not easy to decipher but is critical. For instance, humour can help construct, sustain and entrench gendered ideologies and perspectives. It is in these contexts of the roles that humour plays in society that this chapter seeks to explore gendered Covid-19 humour. The study deploys largely textual analysis of humour entries, mostly WhatsApp platforms where Zimbabweans participate and interact.

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