

# Unmasking Metaphors of COVID-19 Pandemic in Kenya's Virtual Space: A Cognitive Linguistic Approach

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## ABSTRACT

The outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019 led to the emergence of metaphorical framing. Life almost came to a standstill for more than two years. As a result, the entire world was engaged in combat with an elusive enemy widely seen as a warning sign. The study explored the metaphors employed in the fight against the virus in Kenya's virtual space when it became a public health concern. Since this pandemic was the first in a century, people came up with new vocabulary and mental analogies to describe it. This study aimed to identify and describe the lexical items used in the Citizen TV Twitter handle, Kenya, to construct COVID-19 metaphors. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) was adopted in the study. The study utilized the descriptive qualitative research design. The data obtained from the Citizen TV Twitter handle, using Python code, was subjected to the Metaphor Identification Procedure developed by scholars at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam (MIPVU). This criterion identifies the metaphorically used linguistic items. The identified metaphors were classified into their domain following source-target domain analysis. Based on the selected metaphors, the macro domains obtained were WAR, PATH, and ORGANISM. The study revealed that conceptual metaphor was extensively employed in Kenya. Metaphors were found to be widespread in discussions on COVID-19. People consistently associate certain aspects of reality with others, transferring the characteristics of one domain to another. They naturally and instinctively think in terms of metaphors. The abundance of metaphors in the discourse around COVID-19 may have been employed to motivate Kenyans to confront the challenges presented by the pandemic and show how COVID-19 was conceptualized in Kenya.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Cognitive linguistics, Metaphor, Mapping.

## INTRODUCTION

Language is pivotal in shaping our understanding of complex phenomena, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19, which emerged in December 2019 led to widespread health, social, and economic crises. Governments and organizations used language strategically to convey the severity and the necessary measures to control the spread of the virus. This study focused on the metaphorical language used to frame the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Background of the Study

The world has seen several pandemics that have threatened human existence throughout history; these pandemics include the Cholera outbreak in 1818, the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, and the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 virus is a respiratory disease that is spread from one person to the other. COVID-19 has created enormous health problems in Europe, India, Australia, Brazil, and the United States (World Health Organization, 2020). In Africa, the clinical impact was manageable. During the COVID-19 crisis, language has been instrumental in framing the pandemic. The question then becomes how the pandemic was framed because it is only then that we would understand why humans won and or took too long to.

The novel Coronavirus, officially named COVID-19, influenced global thought and communication. As the virus spread rapidly worldwide, leaders and public health officials faced the challenge of explaining the threat of this

flu-like disease and the necessary precautions to mitigate its impact. The invisible nature of the virus and the flu-like symptoms it initially presented made it difficult to conceptualize, leading to the use of metaphors to describe the situation. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), Metaphors are essential in understanding complex and abstract issues, as they allow us to relate unfamiliar concepts to more familiar experiences. The study explored the use of metaphors in the context of COVID-19 in Kenya's virtual space and focused on how they have been employed to communicate about the pandemic and influence societal responses. The study used Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980/2003), which argues that language use has a linguistic and conceptual taxonomy. Metaphor is encountered in the language (form) and comprehended in a conceptualized way (conceptual thought).

The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was discovered on March 12, 2020 (Ministry of Health, 2020). The encounter between the virus and individuals moved from disease to prevention and prevention to war. War is often perceived by many in today's society as a far and terrifying concept, an eerie reminder of absurd atrocities that are found in both historical records and daily headlines. Despite the advancements in communication and worldwide connectedness, war remains an intangible realm akin to hell. It transcends geographical barriers and penetrates through screens, exposing its harsh reality, as exemplified by the war in Ukraine. Hearts that have never seen the chaos of battlefields are deeply affected by images of desperation and tragedy. The psychological wounds it causes are as long-lasting as the physical ones. The horror it elicits encompasses several cultures and generations, permeating the collective awareness as a reminder of the most sinister aspects of human nature. The prevention of COVID-19 may be likened to a metaphorical WAR.

The abstract linear dimension of the temporal space became a path and then a journey. The progression from March to July (the data collection period) follows a trajectory from point A to B. The pandemic's progression might be conceptualized as a journey through many stages or phases, known as the PATH metaphor. At first, the virus propagated linearly as it transmitted from one location to another. The trip from point A to point B often encounters obstacles, challenges, or setbacks. These factors might be tangible (traffic or weather conditions) or intangible (such as dread or uncertainty).

The coronavirus, defined as a protein, rapidly evolved into an organism. An organism is characterized by various qualities that differentiate it from non-living entities, such as viruses like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). While organisms can reproduce autonomously through many mechanisms, viruses lack the capacity to replicate independently. Although SAR-CoV-2 does not possess these attributes, it is nonetheless seen as an organism in general since it displays certain traits often associated with living organisms inside a host. For example, the virus possesses genetic material called Ribonucleic Acid (RNA), which is capable of undergoing mutations and evolution. It can reproduce, although it can only do so within a host cell. Additionally, the virus interacts with the biological processes of the host to spread itself. These elements create ambiguity between living and non-living entities, resulting in the understanding of viruses such as the coronavirus as an ORGANISM.

The metaphorical language that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic adopted a Cognitive Linguistics (CL) perspective. People use language to make sense of their experiences, communicate those experiences/understandings with others, and express their ideas and emotions, all of which are central to the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. This school of thought in linguistics holds that the human mind plays a crucial part in developing and acquiring new languages (Gibbs, 2008; Semino, 2008). The CL viewpoint sought to understand how the metaphors were conceived and their implications in the Kenyan context.

The study obtained its data from the virtual space. In this case, Citizen TV's Twitter handle before it was changed to X because Citizen TV's Twitter Handle enjoys a high number of followers. The nature and content of these tweets are essential because they not only deliver information to various targets but also establish cognitive and attitude impacts in the audience (Hern, 2020). The tweets posted between 2020-03-01, and 2020-05-31 were collected because this was the peak period for the initial wave of COVID-19 in Kenya, and it was also when people were graphing how to frame the situation as well as the period when Kenyans were introduced to containment measures. Therefore, the importance of linguistic investigation of COVID-19 discourse cannot be gainsaid.

## Statement of the Problem

The outbreak of COVID-19 in December 2019 heralded a novel way of talking about the pandemic. It was the second pandemic in over a century since the 1918 Spanish flu. Language as a tool of self-definition remained the same, but words were woven differently or made to mean different things to accommodate COVID-19. The study investigated the metaphors that were employed in the aforementioned enterprise. Corona Virus, a protein by definition, quickly became an organism and then a monster. The abstract linear dimension of the temporal space became a path and then a journey. As a result, the encounter between the virus and individuals moved from disease to prevention and treatment to war.

The research plugs the linguistic gap created by looking at the three domains of WAR, PATH, and ORGANISM to unmask the metaphors that informed the conversations on COVID-19 within the framework of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. This research addresses the linguistic gap created by exploring the metaphors of COVID-19 used in the virtual space in Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Xu (2023) compares COVID-19 metaphors in Chinese with English social media using Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). His study conducts a comparative analysis of Chinese and English COVID-19-related metaphors derived from social media platforms, especially Twitter and Weibo. The two studies have different orientations and focus. Xu's study examined a comparative analysis of Chinese and English social media metaphors. At the same time, this research intended to fill the existing gap by investigating the metaphors used to describe COVID-19 in Kenya's virtual space.

Sasala et al. (2023) investigate the conceptual mappings in metaphors of the COVID-19 pandemic in Lukabarar using Conceptual Integrated Theory (CIM). They identified the metaphorical objects using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), while this research used the Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU). In contrast to this research, which used Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) tenets to examine the metaphors employed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya's virtual space, their study dealt with the conversations of COVID-19 and the talks that went along with it in Lukabarar. This makes the former study different from the research.

Kiptinness and Okoye (2021) investigated Media coverage of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Kenya and Tanzania: Content analysis of East African newspaper stories. Their research employed Framing Theory to examine characteristics expressed in COVID-19 coverage in Kenya and Tanzania between February and April 2020. A quantitative investigation of the Daily Nation and Citizen newspapers revealed various types of viral framing. Their work focuses on various methods of framing the virus in the newspaper. In contrast, this study focused on metaphors that were used to make sense of and communicate about COVID-19 on the Citizen TV Twitter Handle in Kenya using Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

Mutua & Oloo (2020) assert that the media have greatly influenced the public's perception of the COVID-19 outbreak. Foreign media outlets, including the BBC, Al-Jazeera, and the People's Daily, are among the subjects of scrutiny. This examination of how the COVID-19 outbreak was covered in the press sheds essential light on the framing strategies used by the media. The study examines COVID-19's tone and subject matter to its environment. This analysis mostly ignored local media and focused instead on the discourses of English-language media published internationally, thus creating a gap that this research intended to fill.

## Theoretical framework

### Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The study was based on Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). CMT is a cognitive theory that suggests that metaphors function in the cognitive domain. It posits that metaphors are not limited to language but also demonstrate underlying links within conceptual systems in the brain. The cognitive structure of metaphors is based on the idea that metaphors originate in the mind and manifest themselves in our language.

In conceptual metaphors, the mapping process is unidirectional, with the source domain being familiar and the target domain being less familiar. For example, COVID-19 can be conceptualized as a war, as it assimilates the abstract concept of COVID-19 to the more concrete concept of WAR. Metaphors are used for communication and conceptualizing the existence of particular entities in the universe. CMT recognizes a difference between the two areas: the source domain corresponds to the tangible domain, while the target domain corresponds to the intangible domain. In constructing a conceptual metaphor, there must be common features between the two entities being mapped onto each other or common ground for evoking mapping.

## METHODOLOGY

The study aimed to describe the metaphors of COVID-19, using a descriptive qualitative research design to obtain a deeper perspective on unmasking the metaphors used in Kenya's virtual space.

### Study locale

The data was gathered from the Citizen TV Twitter handle in Kenya using a Python code. The tweets posted between 2020-03-01 and 2020-05-31 were used. The tweets were saved in a comma-separated file and filtered for relevance to identify the lexical words used metaphorically. The MIPVU tool developed by Steen et al. (2010) was used to read the data and capture the possible metaphor. MIPVU is a systematic approach devised by researchers at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to identify metaphorical language in texts. Initially, the tweets were read to have a general grasp of their meaning.

Subsequently, each lexical unit (word or phrase) was scrutinized to ascertain its contextual meaning. The primary and traditional meaning of the lexical unit was determined by referring to the Advanced Oxford Learners Dictionary. This dictionary is based on Standard British English, the adopted Kenyan English standard (Kioko & Muthwii, 2004). If a distinct disparity between the primary and contextual meanings was found, the contextual meaning was comprehended as the primary meaning, and the lexical unit was regarded as metaphorical.

### Data collection method

According to Miles and Huberman (2014), no study can contain everything, and a researcher cannot investigate everyone, everywhere, nor do everything. The Citizen Television Twitter handle was the primary focus of the investigation, and the researcher deliberately selected tweets that covered COVID-19-related topics. The data was collected between 2020-03-01 and 2020-05-31. This was the busiest time of year for Kenya to make announcements on containment measures, and it was also when people were graphing how to frame the phenomena. In light of this, the study aimed to devise a method for selecting a representative sample that was the subject of the research. To keep up with the COVID-19 discourse, the researcher employed purposive sampling techniques to examine COVID-19-related tweets for three months. It is essential to conduct purposeful sampling because it enables the researcher to pinpoint in advance the examples that possess the necessary characteristics.

### Ethical consideration

Citizen TV's Twitter handle, the Royal Media Services, is in the public realm, so access to Twitter posts did not need authorization. Following Kenyatta University's research policy, the researcher obtained a letter of reference from the institution, which was utilized to apply for research permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Information (NACOSTI). Pseudo-names were used to ensure privacy.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The word 'COVID' was searched through the extracted data from Citizen TV's Twitter account between 2020-03-01 and 2020-05-31, and 893 cells were found to have COVID terms. The data of the 893 cells was scrutinized, and three primary source domains were identified. They were presented using their datetime and tweets, as illustrated below.



A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	Datetime	Tweet Id	text	Username	replies	by citizen	metaphor	war	path	organism	
2	1 2020-05-29 13:51:39+00:00	1.26637E+18	positive COVID-19 cases in	citizentkenya							
3	2 2020-05-29 08:53:52+00:00	1.26629E+18	#Covid-19 no longer an urban	TheCitizenTz				1		1	
4	3 2020-05-28 18:12:04+00:00	1.26607E+18	Confirmed cases climb to	citizentkenya				2		2	
5	4 2020-05-27 18:07:46+00:00	1.26571E+18	confirmed, Kenya's total now	citizentkenya							
6	5 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
7	6 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
8	7 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
9	8 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
10	9 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
11	10 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
12	11 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
13	12 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
14	13 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
15	14 2020-05-27 15:10:47+00:00	1.26566E+18	Kenya reports record daily jum	citizentkenya				1		1	
16	15 2020-05-25 13:35:12+00:00	1.26491E+18	more Covid-19 cases bringing	citizentkenya							

### A) Covid-19 As A War

The Oxford English Dictionary defines war as hostile contention employing armed forces between nations, states, or rulers or between parties of the same nation or state. COVID-19 is an acute human disease caused by the coronavirus, mainly by fever and cough. The metaphor may seem explainable regarding direct projection from the source domain WAR to the target domain COVID-19 guided by a series of counterpart mappings. This situation was expressed linguistically by lexical items used during a conflict, such as enemy, battlefield, frontline, etc.

Enemy: COVID-19 Is an Enemy That Is Faceless and Unprecedented

2020-05-27 11:21:52+00:00	Very true candidates' mindsets are not steady because of the COVID-19 storm in Kenya. Public schools have been used as Quarantine facilities despite COVID-19 being an Enemy that is faceless and unprecedented.
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Enemy assaults and occasionally shows no compassion and should be avoided at all costs, and exercise caution around. This is because an opponent at war might quickly kill and wreak havoc. The target domain, COVID-19, is mapped onto the enemy's features. In the context of COVID-19, it is considered an enemy because it poses a significant threat to public health, causing illness and death, thus disrupting societies worldwide. Baider and Kopytowska (2017) assert that portraying the opponent as an enemy is an influential tool for conceptualizing "the other" as a shared adversary since there was no remedy available for a virus that had the potential to cause severe harm or death.

The virus's only actions were strangling and preventing respiration, leading to illness and immunity. The virus's unique characteristics, such as improving the respiratory system, make it ineffective in preventing other diseases. The unprecedented nature of the virus makes it challenging to predict its plans of action. The faceless and unheard of are used to a virus genuinely seen under a microscope, creating an intriguing contrast. Grady (1999) argues that knowledge is equivalent to perception, and everything beyond perception is also beyond knowledge and understanding.

Using the term enemy was meant to promote a specific perspective and impact Kenyans' views about COVID-19. Many people without medical understanding thought COVID-19 was a trivial illness and acted carelessly. This necessitated former Cabinet Secretary Mutahi's Kagwe quip, "If we continue to behave normally, this disease will treat us abnormally." Using the adversary, they get the correct information, signaling a bigger problem than they believed. For this reason, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) stressed the importance of metaphor in human communication.

**Fight:** We have to fight the predicament and flatten the curve, folks.

2020-05-25 19:01:16+00:00	If Kenya will ease the stipulated regulations in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 it will result in numbers growing exponentially. We have to fight the predicament and flatten the curve, folks. #mondayreport @T @citizentvkenya
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The term "fight" refers to a struggle, conflict, or combat that involves individuals or groups engaging in physical or verbal confrontation. The "fight" metaphor symbolizes the efforts to overcome difficulties, barriers, or misfortunes, even in situations without physical fighting. The pandemic is seen as an adversary that must be subdued and overcome, and the measures necessary to combat the epidemic are symbolized by the word "fight." The metaphorical framework "fight" is suitable for Kenyans to effectively combat and manage the virus, as the building industry serves as a tangible arena for illustrating the metaphor of WAR. The fight against COVID-19 is a conflict where society is fighting to overcome the virus, and the nation must maintain order and establish a robust defense to emerge victorious.

**Frontline: Our doctors are on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19**

2020-04-24 05:59:29+00:00	Our doctors are on the Frontline in the fight against COVID-19. Our doctors are risking their lives to save our lives. Pay our doctors well. Improve the Working Conditions for our Doctors #JusticeForMedics@MOH_Kenya@Dr Q @citizentvkenya @ntvkenya @Kenyans @HiviSasa.
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Frontline is a boundary between opposing sides, referring to the most active or intense area of conflict. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline workers, including medical personnel and emergency personnel, are at the forefront of the fight against the virus. They face significant risks and difficulties, similar to soldiers on the frontlines. The metaphor "DOCTORS ARE SOLDIERS" compares healthcare practitioners to soldiers, highlighting their crucial role in the nation's overall welfare. The portrayal of vital workers as frontline workers emphasizes the importance of their efforts in healthcare, economy, and society. Using military analogies related to the pandemic encourages appreciation and honor for these vital workers, crucial in healthcare, the economy, and society.

**B) Covid-19 As A Path**

Traveling, whether by land, sea, or foot, is among the most common experiences for people. A detailed examination of the metaphors in the chosen Twitter handle reveals that the origin, spread, and mode of infection of COVID-19 may all be described as following a route. You may think of the idea of a road as the act of moving from point A to point Z. This is true for the COVID-19 infection.

This conception is predicated on the observation that the two domains of treatment and a journey share some commonalities. The travelers are diseased individuals, and the destination is recovering from COVID-19. If the patient fully recovered, they had succeeded and reached their destination; if not, it means they have succumbed. Similar to a traveler when a COVID-19 patient passes away without full recovery. PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS is founded on the central metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), which links purposes and destinations based on experience correlation and progressing toward one's destination, which entails reaching a particular sort of objective in life. COVID-19 IS A PATH: It is clear that COVID-19 is compared to a phase with a start and an end since human traits are ascribed to inanimate objects, such as those capable of moving. The linguistic expressions used realize this conceptual metaphor. For example, Up, Down, and visiting.

**UP: Confirmed cases climb to 1618 in Kenya.**

2020-05-28 18:12:04+00:00	Worrying COVID-19 Curve: Confirmed cases climb to 1,618 in Kenya. 147 cases detected in the last 24 hours Nairobi has more than 90 new confirmed cases.
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	Kagwe: Kibra recorded 35 more COVID-19 cases #Tonight @Yatch <a href="https://t.co/RrNiJwcuNS">https://t.co/RrNiJwcuNS</a>
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Conceptual metaphors have a solid foundation, as they describe the relationship between two domains. The UP metaphor is commonly employed to depict favorable feelings and cognitive conditions, while experiencing sadness signifies unfavorable feelings. Verbs like "increase" and "climb" are orientational metaphors encompassing a spatial relationship of upward and downward orientation. The COVID-19 outbreak in Kenya coincided with the outbreak's height, resulting in many such phrases. The metaphor CONTROL IS UP, grounded in metonymic connections, symbolizes the highest point of the pandemic and the intense efforts to combat it. The positive connotation of climbing to 1,618 confirmed cases in Kenya represents a challenging situation that requires urgent attention. The upward trend of coronavirus victims implies worsening the pandemic, potentially leading to increased strain on the healthcare system, higher mortality rates, and societal disruption.

The metaphor 'Climb to' is a PATH frame metaphor that maps features like force, high numbers, and hitting, expressing the increasing number of COVID-19 infections. By analyzing the metaphor through the lens of CMT, we can understand the challenging journey ahead due to the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, emphasizing the need for preparedness, resilience, adaptability, and collective effort to navigate difficult times and reach a better future.

**DOWN: If this virus was a physical assailant, this is the time we are wrestling it down.**

2020-04-09 12:10:04+00:00	Standing with W.H.O: President Kenyatta says if this virus was a physical assailant, this is time we are wrestling it down.  Kenya stands with W.H.O. in the fight against COVID-19. U.S. President Trump slammed W.H.O.'s handling of COVID-19. #CitizenBriefs <a href="https://t.co/si62ccFEbDN">https://t.co/si62ccFEbDN</a>
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The term "down" signifies the direction of the struggle, referring to the effort to subdue or defeat the virus. In this context, it signifies victory and conquest, similar to wrestling. The metaphor describes the impact of the pandemic, the decrease in COVID-19 cases, and the decline in people's spirits, social life, and health conditions. The term emphasizes the direction of control, the goal of conquest, the intensity of effort, and the objective of overcoming the virus.

**Tough Times Ahead: Tough times ahead**

2020-04-08 03:24:15+00:00	Tough Times Ahead: Health CS warns of more sad news as COVID-19 cases rise. 14 new cases reported bringing total to 172. CS says cases in Kenya so far are largely mild. All golf clubs closed indefinitely to stop the spread #DayBreak @Trial <a href="https://t.co/cBTIIitGCIQ">https://t.co/cBTIIitGCIQ</a>
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The metaphor of "Tough times ahead" highlights people's challenges and obstacles during the COVID-19 pandemic. It suggests that life progresses linearly from birth to death, with milestones indicating noteworthy occurrences or situations. The metaphor also emphasizes the irreversibility of time, as it cannot be retraced once embarked upon. The concept of strategic planning and decision-making mirrors how individuals make choices that profoundly impact their future. Time can denote a pivotal or advantageous moment for addressing a disease menace, suggesting that there may be a limited time during which it is possible to successfully manage and mitigate the spread or consequences of the disease. Ahead signifies progress toward reachable objectives, expressing a feeling of forethought and anticipation. The metaphor suggests that people should proactively prepare for tough times as the future arrives, finds us here, graduates into the past, and continues. Some believe that time passes when we do what we are doing and enter the past, while others believe that negative things will find them.

### C) Covid-19 As an Organism

Living thing metaphors depict the COVID-19 pandemic by revealing natural and paranormal creatures. COVID is portrayed in the terrifying creature monster as an odd, inexplicable, difficult-to-contemplate being that has the power to take human lives; such extraordinary, enigmatic, and otherworldly creatures confound and astonish humans. With the use of lexemes characterizing its look and behavior as devil, demon, horror, monster, murderer, and so on, the picture of a monster is typically attributed as a menacing trait filled with severely negative connotations.

#### Monster: We can still manage to fight the spread of this monster.

2020-04-01 18:27:10+00:00	@citizentvkenya @Koin. Most COVID-19 cases in Kenya are imported ones, meaning we can still manage to beat the spread of this "monster" by conducting mass testing (door to door) and forced quarantine #JKLIVE
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A monster is a noun sometimes shown as concealing itself in the darkness, presenting an unseen threat. COVID-19, being an invisible virus, might be likened to a cunning opponent that can strike unexpectedly. COVID-19 exemplifies how the word "monster" is connected to opposing ideas, danger, and terror. Usually, the metaphor alludes to a gigantic, terrifying, and dangerous mythical creature. In that, it presents a severe threat to people's health, spreading disease and, in certain situations, even resulting in death.

COVID-19 has thrown everyday life into a loop and spread dread worldwide. Most depictions of these terrible animals are ones of them being elusive and challenging to subdue. Like COVID-19, it spreads quickly and is highly infectious, making treatment and management difficult.

In literature and mythology, heroes often arise to defeat monsters, symbolizing the triumph of righteousness over malevolence. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, researchers, medical professionals, and the general public have collaborated to combat the virus by employing tactics such as immunization, testing, and adherence to public health guidelines. The development and distribution of vaccines may be seen as a powerful tool metaphorically, providing optimism for controlling and finally eliminating the disease.

#### Mugger: Rwanda's president is fighting by all means to defeat COVID-19 as an unexpected and invisible mugger.

2020-04-12 13:13:52+00:00	Rwanda's president is fighting by all means to defeat COVID-19 as an unexpected and invisible mugger. In Kenya, we want massive testing immediately this is a lesson never multiply anyhow then start boasting" Number 1" Now the government can't feed Kenyans.
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A mugger is someone who engages in the act of robbery or theft, sometimes employing physical force or intimidation, to unlawfully take possessions from another person, usually in a public setting. This metaphor might be used within organisms to depict a concealed peril or hazard that is not readily discernible. The analogy compares the danger to a mugger due to its sudden and invisible nature, which surprises the victim. The Mugger's surprise and unseen nature enhance the virus's level of harm. Individuals perceive themselves as powerless to combat an adversary that remains invisible. This suggests that Kenyans are susceptible to this danger, just like an individual strolling alone in a dimly lit alley could be vulnerable to a mugger hiding in the darkness.

The adjective unexpected implies that the threat arises abruptly and without prior notice, akin to the element of surprise experienced during a mugging. This can be attributed to the abrupt emergence of an environmental hazard. Like a mugger, COVID-19 spreads surreptitiously from one person to another, often without immediate detection, especially in asymptomatic individuals who unknowingly carry and transmit the virus. COVID-19 virus invades the human body, causing illness and potentially severe health complications, akin to a mugger overpowering their victims. Similar to how a mugger might target vulnerable individuals, such as those walking alone at night, COVID-19 poses a greater risk to certain demographics, including the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Just like a mugger disrupts the safety and normalcy in a community. COVID-19



disrupted daily life worldwide, leading to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and chances of social distancing.

Similar to how mugging may significantly harm an individual's overall welfare, this metaphor implies that the Mugging threatens one's well-being. Generally, this metaphor portrays a hidden and unforeseen assailant within the realm of the body, illustrating a danger that can potentially cause harm to an individual. The statement underscores the abruptness and concealed quality of the threat, which might result in susceptibility and adverse outcomes for the organism.

### **Killer: ... To stop the spread of the deadly unstoppable killer COVID-19 in Kenya.**

2020-03-18 18:13:13+00:00	I think the government should bring a hold on all public transportation, to stop the spread of the deadly unstoppable killer covid 19 in Kenya.
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By personifying the disease and giving it human characteristics like unstoppable and killer, the killer metaphor is utilized to map onto the COVID-19 virus, oversimplifying comprehension and making the metaphor even more powerful. The personification metaphor entails seeing the illness as a sentient being or, more accurately, as a malevolent monster whose purpose is to cause harm to the people.

Features like hate, destruction, and strength are mapped onto the COVID-19 building via unstoppable and murderous constructions, amplifying it. This conceptual metaphor is communicated through personification. Adjectives such as "deadly spreading unstoppable" modify the noun "killer." In this instance, they have been employed as a concrete domain mapped onto the target domain of COVID-19.

Depicting the virus as a killer evokes the idea of a malicious force that not only endangers people's health but also causes their demise. In this context, the term "killer" is what Van Dijk (2005) referred to as an 'Alarm word' a direct and startling word that serves a specific purpose in communication. To convince the public to remain in their residences, it is essential to highlight the virus's lethality for those with pre-existing medical issues.

The conceptual features mapped are using force, pain, and destruction. This term conveys vigilance and caution. Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003: 33), Lakoff (1992), and Lakoff and Turner (1989) assert that language users may understand a more fantastic range of experiences about nonhuman things in terms of human motives, traits, and actions when personification is employed. This is achieved effectively by mapping the characteristics of a human entity whose meaning is easier to understand through the emphasized metaphorical constructs, which are more readily understood than those of a nonhuman entity, which, if employed, would make comprehension more challenging.

## **CONCLUSION**

It confirmed that three macro ideas WAR, PATH, and ORGANISM were mapped from the source domain to assess the lexical components utilized to generate metaphors. The study found that the commonly employed conceptual metaphors are readily comprehensible to Kenyans and deeply embedded in the broader universal framework. These universally recognized conceptual metaphors have been integrated into the Kenyan conceptual framework.

It has been noted that the traditional understanding of the UP and DOWN metaphor, which suggests that going UP represents negative news and going DOWN represents positive news, can be justified by recontextualizing these metaphors in certain situations. In the financial context, the metaphor 'the number going UP' often refers to rising prices, inflation, or loan growth. On the other hand, the phrase 'numbers coming DOWN' can indicate a decline in debt, a decrease in inflation, or a decrease in costs, all of which are typically considered positive results. In the emotional realm, the phrase "going UP" can have negative connotations in some situations. For example, when tension rises or increases, it can result in disputes. Similarly, when minor difficulties are elevated or given greater importance, they can escalate and become more serious. On the contrary, the act of "going down" can have good effects, such as calming down and reducing stress. 'Lowering expectations' In some instances, reducing one's expectations can result in higher happiness. These examples demonstrate the context-dependent

nature of the metaphors "UP" and "DOWN" and their potential for meaning variation in specific scenarios. Although the conventional understanding is that UP is associated with positivity and DOWN with negativity, reversing these interpretations illustrates the adaptable nature of metaphors. This emphasizes that their meanings are not intrinsic but rather influenced by situational or cultural perspectives.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980:3) argue that our conceptual framework is primarily metaphorical, implying that our thoughts, experiences, and actions are heavily influenced by metaphor. They also state that metaphors are widespread in everyday life. This study supports these claims since it specifically examines the discourse around COVID-19. Metaphors were found to be widespread in discussions on COVID-19. How Kenyans see reality causes people to consistently associate certain aspects of reality with others, transferring the characteristics of one domain to another. People naturally and instinctively think in terms of metaphors. The abundance of metaphors like "WAR," "PATH," and "ORGANISM" in the discourse around COVID-19 may have been employed to motivate Kenyans to confront the challenges presented by the pandemic.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings demonstrate that metaphors are often expressions that have cultural connotations. The discussion of the COVID-19 metaphors employed in Kenya is relevant to contemporary society due to the ongoing threat posed by COVID, which has presented a significant issue not just in Kenya but globally. Consequently, it is recommended that more research be conducted on language usage in catastrophe discourse and other associated matters. One might research the impact of metaphors in COVID-19 discourse on gender inequality in Kenya.

Additionally, the Systematic Functional Linguistic Theory (SFL) may be applied to examine and analyze metaphors related to COVID-19. Future studies might also explore the cross-cultural and intra-cultural variations of metaphors employed in COVID-19 conversations. This could incorporate a comparison or contrastive technique to analyze the metaphorical language across different cultures.

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