

**Image Schemas in Metaphors  
of the COVID-19 Pandemic  
in Lukabaras**

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**Abstract**

*This article describes the image schemas manifested in the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras, one of the varieties of the Luhya language spoken in western Kenya. The study is guided by the principles of Conceptual Integration Theory by Fauconnier and Turner (2002) and the Image Schemas Theory by Johnson (2005). The article relied on data collected through key informant interviews from 36 purposively sampled native speakers of Lukabaras in which 30 conceptual metaphors of COVID-19 were identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). Through the metaphors that were identified, the findings show that there was the CONTAINER, PATH, FORCE, PART-WHOLE and OBJECT image schemas. However, the results reveal that the image schemas of COVID-19 pandemic as instantiated in metaphors such as COVID IS LIGHTNING (Covid no Iweni) and COVID IS A DRIZZLE (Covid no lunyilili) hindered the interventions to prevent the spread of the disease. Consequently, containment measures including keeping social distance, handwashing, restricted movement and use of masks were flouted because the disease was taken for granted. The study recommends that there is need for stakeholders involved in health and risk communication to consider the emerging socio-cultural frames of new pandemics like COVID-19 when coming up with preventive strategies in order to enhance the fight against such disease outbreaks.*

**Keywords:** *COVID-19 pandemic, conceptual metaphor, image schemas, Lukabaras*

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## **Introduction**

According to Amaireh (2022), it is essential to investigate the language that is used to represent the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the whole world in many facets of life including; politics, economy, education, health and social lives. For instance, by March 2022, the pandemic had claimed 6,011,482 deaths (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020). In this regard, there was increased global concern, panic and uncertainty regarding the spread and adverse effects of the disease. During the crisis, the pandemic was apparently conceptualized variedly and the language utilized to talk about this new phenomenon was experientially different depending on one's cultural context.

Shoneborn (2020) argues that metaphor is one way in which such an abstract concept as COVID-19 was expressed and understood in discourses. Similarly, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) contend that the conceptualization of such abstract concepts as pandemics is largely metaphorical. Therefore, investigating how the COVID-19 pandemic was framed metaphorically becomes necessary since metaphorical entailments in various concepts differ culturally and over time (Kovesces, 2010). On this basis, this study analysed conceptual metaphors of COVID-19 pandemic in Lukabaras within the principles of conceptual integration and focused on image schemas as a notion of metaphorical framing in abstract concepts (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). Moreover, a concept is understood metaphorically as a conceptual metaphor by connecting mappings from a source domain (B) to a target domain (A) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

## **Image Schemas and Conceptual Integration**

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), image schemas are basic abstract structures that are preconceptual in origin, are imaginative, non-propositional in nature and operate as organizing structures of experience at the level of bodily perception and movement. Johnson (1987) observes that image schemas are at once visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile and the recurring bodily experiences are referred to as image schemas to emphasize means of structuring particular experiences schematically to enable order and connectedness to our perceptions and conception. Furthermore, image schemas motivate important aspects of how we think, reason, and imagine and since they arise from our embodied interactions with the world, they are independent of culture and are thus common to people of all cultures (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

In this view, the connection taken from the social cultural experiences of Lukabaras speakers in the context of COVID-19 was expressed through conceptual metaphor and was a means of language interpretation of the Lukabaras thought system framed as image schemas. Conceptual

integration necessitates the derivation of meaning from different notions through use of conceptual metaphors in which mental spaces are the elementary units of cognitive arrangements. Since image schemas are a result of what we experience as we interact with the environment, they allow the mapping of spatial information into a conceptual structure and play a fundamental role in various cognitive semantic processes (Johnson, 2005).

Johnson (2005:15) asserts that image schemas are not the same as real images which can be referred to as “rich” images. Instead, image schemas are presumably more abstract than ordinary images and consist of dynamic spatial patterns that underlie the spatial relations and movement found in actual concrete images. According to Johnson (ibid), the first thing that a human being comes in contact with is his body. As such, in our daily lives we constantly experience the getting in and getting out from areas that are defined. The body can thus serve as a ‘container’ as it is solid and has an in-out aspect with it. So, this is how basic and common experience is projected metaphorically to many other aspects of our lives, hence, much of our world can be understood in terms of this CONTAINER schema. From this, there would be shaped a ‘schema’ regarding the space within and the space without, and simply anything related to it.

It is argued that there is no consensus as to the specific number of image schemas in Cognitive Linguistics because different linguists have come up with different classifications and interpretations (Johnson, 1987; Evans & Green, 2006; Mandler, 2004; Peña, 2003). In the same vein, Gibbs (2017) observes that the same image schema can be instantiated in many different kinds of domains because the internal structure of a single schema can be metaphorically understood. Nevertheless, Peña (2003) proposes that the CONTAINER, PATH, and PART-WHOLE schemas are the basic image-schemas which can provide guidelines for the orderly activation of other subsidiary schemas.

**Table 1: Taxonomy of Image Schemas by Peña (2003)**

Major Category	Sub - Category	Specific Image Schema
CONTAINER		IN-OUT, FULL-EMPTY, EXCESS
		COMPULSION, BLOCKAGE,
PATH	FORCE	COUNTERFORCE, REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT, ENABLEMENT
	CIRCLE	CYCLE, SPIRAL

Major Category	Sub - Category	Specific Image Schema
	-other-	PROCESS, FRONT-BACK, NEAR FAR, VERTICALITY
<b>PART-WHOLE</b>		MERGING, MATCHING, COLLECTION, CENTRE PERIPHERY, LINK

**Source:** Gathigia (2014:51)

On the other hand, Johnson (1987) classifies image schemas into CONTAINER, BLOCKAGE, ENABLEMENT, PATH, CYCLE, PART-WHOLE, FULLY, ITERATION and SURFACE as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: Taxonomy of Image Schemas by Johnson (1987)**

<b>CONTAINER</b>	<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>COMPULSION</b>
BLOCKAGE	COUNTERFORCE	RESTRAINT -REMOVAL
ENABLEMENT	ATTRACTION	MASS-COUNT
PATH	LINK	CENTER-PERIPHERY
CYCLE	NEAR-FAR	SCALE
PART-WHOLE	MERGING	SPLITTING
FULL-EMPTY	MATCHING	SUPERIMPOSITION
ITERATION	CONTACT	PROCESS
SURFACE	OBJECT	COLLECTION

**Source:** Gathigia (2014:52)

Although there is a discrepancy between the classification of image schemas by Peña (2003) and Johnson (1987), the present study found the two taxonomies beneficial in describing the image schemas of COVID-19 in Lukabaras.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. Data was collected from purposively sampled speakers of Lukabaras, a cluster member of the Luhya macro language group of western Kenya. The people who speak Lukabaras are known as the Kabras and live in the northern part of Kakamega in western Kenya (Lewis, et al.,2022). The respondents were drawn from churches and market places because shutting them down during the pandemic adversely affected the socioeconomic livelihood of these people. Further, the respondents were aged (30-39 years) and (above 60 years) because this was the most affected age bracket during the pandemic in Kenya (MOH,2020). The study extracted 30 conceptual metaphors using Metaphor Identification Procedure by Gibbs (2017) from the respondents through key informant

interviews and focus group discussions. The data was then analysed within the tenets of Image Schemas Theory (Johnson,2005) in order to establish image schemas. The image schemas were further analysed and their subsidiary schemas which were found significant in this study were identified and presented in tables.

## Results

### Image Schemas in Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras

According to Kuhn et al. (2008), image schemas are structured mental representations that appear significantly through bodily experiences to enable us to conceptualize a variety of cognitive domains. Anudo (2018), however, argues that the representation of image schemas differs culturally from language to language. In view of this, the most basic image schemas that are manifested in human experiences include CONTAINMENT, PATH and FORCE. The present study accounted for the image schemas in the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras and described their instantiations based on culture-specific evaluations. Moreover, the results showed that the image schemas in Lukabaras were expressed by use of prepositions, verbs and human body, animal, object and natural occurrences metaphors. It was established that the image schemas derived from metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras included; CONTAINER, PATH, FORCE, PART-WHOLE and OBJECT. This was presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Image Schemas in Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras**

Image Schema	Metaphor in Lukabaras	Gloss
CONTAINER	<i>COVID no lunyilili</i>	COVID is a drizzle
	<i>COVID ne siasa</i>	COVID is politics
	<i>COVID ne shinyasio</i>	COVID is condemnation
	<i>COVID ne shiboko</i>	COVID is wrath
	<i>COVID ne shibela</i>	COVID is grief
	<i>COVID namangayimwe</i>	COVID is a difficult situation
	<i>COVID no butakha</i>	COVID is poverty
	<i>COVID ne yinzala</i>	COVID is hunger
	<i>COVID ne shiboye</i>	COVID is imprisonment
PATH	<i>COVID ne sheli</i>	COVID is doomsday
	<i>COVID nikwamachenga</i>	COVID is coal fire
FORCE	<i>COVID ne wonyo</i>	COVID is a warning
	<i>COVID no lweni</i>	COVID is lightning
	<i>COVID ne shimbulubusi</i>	COVID is a whirlwind
	<i>COVID ne liminikha</i>	COVID is stress
	<i>COVID no muyeka</i>	COVID is a cold
	<i>COVID niyamachina</i>	COVID is hailstorm

OBJECT	<i>COVID ne shilikisa</i>	COVID is a hiccup
	<i>COVID ne lifumbetsa</i>	COVID is mist
	<i>COVID ne shimanulwa</i>	COVID is a weapon
	<i>COVID ne yingaka</i>	COVID is a hook
	<i>COVID ne yimbaale</i>	COVID is a pebble
PART-WHOLE	<i>COVID no lubala</i>	COVID is a sting
	<i>COVID no bulilo</i>	COVID is a bait
	<i>COVID no mucheniwamakana</i>	COVID is a strange visitor
	<i>COVID no musuku</i>	COVID is an enemy
	<i>COVID nibwononi</i>	COVID is a spoiler
	<i>COVID ne shiniamuliro</i>	COVID is a troublemaker
	<i>COVID no muchesi</i>	COVID is a reaper
	<i>COVID nikhulieyimbulu</i>	COVID is like a monitor lizard

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**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

Studies in metaphors show that there is no standard number of categorizing the image schemas (Anudo 2018; Gathigia 2014; Pena 2006). However, it is observed that the most basic image schemas are the CONTAINER, PATH and FORCE. The present study was able to identify the CONTAINER, PATH, FORCE, OBJECT and PART-WHOLE image schemas in the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas as presented in Table 3.

A similar classification was adopted in Gathigia (2014) and provided an account of basic image schemas such as CONTAINER, PATH, FORCE and OBJECT in the metaphors of Love in Gikuyu. However, Gathigia (2014) argues that some image schemas can map onto each other such that similar metaphors are manifested in different image schemas as observed in the case of CONTAINER and the PART-WHOLE image schemas. Moreover, the image schemas can also be scaled into subsidiary image schemas. For instance, the CONTAINER image schema has the subcategories IN-OUT and FORCE.

The findings showed that the basic image schemas for the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas which were identified could be scaled into subcategories. However, whereas studies such as Peña (2003) analysed FORCE, OBJECT and PART-WHOLE as subsidiary image schemas, the present study analysed them as basic image schemas. This was because the metaphors of COVID-19 that manifested through these image schemas stemmed from independent categories of source domains such as natural occurrences, person and objects.

**Discussion**

**The CONTAINER Image Schemas**

According to Johnson (1987), CONTAINER image schemas are composed of various parts which include: interior, boundary and exterior elements. A CONTAINER image schema thus gives a guide for a systematized projection of mental spaces and image schemas onto it (Peña, 1998). The findings of the present study established that the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas exhibited the CONTAINER image schema as presented in the data in Table 4.

**Table 4: CONTAINER Image Schemas in Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas**

<b>Image Schema</b>	<b>Metaphor in Lukabararas</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
CONTAINER	<i>COVID no lunyiili</i>	COVID is a drizzle
	<i>COVID ne siasa</i>	COVID is politics
	<i>COVID ne shinyasio</i>	COVID is condemnation
	<i>COVID ne shiboko</i>	COVID is wrath
	<i>COVID ne shibela</i>	COVID is grief
	<i>COVID namangayimwe</i>	COVID is a difficult situation
	<i>COVID no butakha</i>	COVID is poverty
	<i>COVID ne yinzala</i>	COVID is hunger
	<i>COVID ne shiboye</i>	COVID is imprisonment

**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

The findings established that the CONTAINER image schema was instantiated through metaphors such as *COVID no lunyiili* (COVID is a drizzle), *COVID ne siasa* (COVID is politics), *COVID ne shinyasio* (COVID is condemnation), *COVID ne shiboko* (COVID is wrath), *COVID ne shibela* (COVID is grief), *COVID namangayimwe* (COVID is a difficult situation), *COVID no butakha* (COVID is poverty), *COVID ne yinzala* (COVID is hunger) and *COVID ne shiboye* (COVID is imprisonment).

However, A CONTAINER image schema entails different subsidiary image schemas such as IN-OUT, and EXCESS. The subsidiary image schemas are used to manifest part of the main image schema which remains central in understanding of conceptual metaphors. The IN-OUT and EXCESS subsidiary image schemas in metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas are as illustrated in Table 5.

**Table 5: IN-OUT and EXCESS Subsidiary Image Schemas**

Image Schema	Subsidiary Schema	Metaphor	Gloss
CONTAINER drizzle	IN-OUT	<i>COVIDno lunyilili</i>	COVID is a
		<i>COVID ne siasa</i>	COVID is politics
		<i>COVID no butakha</i>	COVID is poverty
		<i>COVID ne yinzala</i>	COVID is hunger
		<i>COVID ne shiboye</i>	COVID is imprisonment
	EXCESS	<i>COVIDne shinyasio</i>	COVID is condemnation
		<i>COVID ne shiboko</i>	COVID is wrath
		<i>COVID ne shibela</i>	COVID is grief
		<i>COVID namangayimwe</i>	COVID is a difficult situation

**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

Anudo (2018) argues that the manifestation of a subsidiary image schema in a metaphor means that part of the knowledge we realize is only a fraction of the main image schema to which it is supplementary. The findings of the present study established the IN-OUT, and EXCESS subsidiary image schemas in the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras. The study through focus group discussions established the image schemas in the metaphors of COVID-19 pandemic in Lukabaras as illustrated in the following excerpt.

**FGD Moderator:** Briefly explain what you think of the COVID-19 pandemic

**Discussant 1:** *Omanyenolimufulayolunyilili, siwiyikamataa. Shokholangaotorangatsanotsiashichilasomanyalwanawiyetawe. Kho esie, endolangakovititsakhuliolunyilili. Khulatoratsanikhutsia.* (You know **when you are in a drizzle**, you don't need to shelter. You just keep going because you can't tell when it will stop. For me, I see COVID-19 as a drizzle and we will move on as it drops.)

**Discussant 2:** *Eyi! Waa. Mulunyilili otorangaobubiokhuburamukufulaokunyinji. Kovitiseliyotendeyiatawe.* (Oh! My friend. **In a drizzle** you get drenched more than in heavy rains. COVID-19 cannot be taken lightly.)

**Discussant 3:** *Esiendalolangaendiokhurulakoviti niyanzakhwabamushibelaeshikalimuno. Abandubefubafwitsangamanibalalasi khwakhabe khuliretaweshichilaam alako ka koviti. Olumbelunobuliwotsiaabandubatsamushibela.*

(I think from the time COVID-19 came; **we have been in a lot of grief**. Our relatives passed on and we could not mourn their demise because of the COVID-19 protocols. Everywhere you could go, people were in grief.)



**Discussant 4:** *Nolinendesholianilwolwawikhalanga halala. Ne Eshibalashumileshinohataniyinyilila, nolarulaolaliaorie. Sololaokhurulalwolumbelunolwanza **Khubelemushikhashobutinyu.*** (If you have food, that's the time you can relax. **In these difficult times**, even if it drizzles you must get out otherwise how will you feed and yet COVID-19 has caused lack of so many things.)

**Discussant 5:** *Esieendolatsaorikovitineshifuneshokwikaliravanasiasabalalaemipangoc habo. **Khubeletsamusiasa.** koviti ne siasatsa, mulalola.* (I think COVID-19 is just a reason to deny some politicians room to carry on with their activities. **We are just in politics**, COVID is just politics. You will come to realize later.)

**Discussant 6:** ***Kovitineshivoyee.** Kubelekhuliabavoye. Sololamwekafiyuyakhutula. Sochendataa.* (**COVID is imprisonment.** We are just like prisoners. You see how the curfew is restricting us. You can't go anywhere.)

The findings established from discussant 1 that Lukabaras speakers framed COVID-19 through their experience of getting into a drizzle. This example illustrates the notion that one who gets into the drizzle is actually in a contained place but walks out into the rain. The findings revealed that this portrayed the experiences of one who is infected by the pandemic as being in a drizzle. Since drizzles are light rain that can sometimes take longer to subside, the findings showed that one needed not to shelter but walk in. However, the consequences would be that one could easily get drenched. The findings deduced that people took for granted the seriousness of the pandemic hence flouted the protocols and increased the risk of getting infected.

The findings observed that this was an instantiation of the IN-OUT subsidiary image schema in which according to the image schema theory is a manifestation of the CONTAINER image schema. For this reason, motion descriptions vary with respect to which schemas they express and the grammatical forms used to express the schematic information (Lakoff, 2005). For example, the verb walk indicates movement and the preposition in or out gives information about the schematic spatial relation between the mover and the direction. The frame of reference for the locational description is with regard to the experience one is involved in. It was established other instantiations of the IN-OUT subsidiary image schema include; *COVID ne siasa* (COVID is politics), *COVID no butakha* (COVID is poverty), *COVID ne yinzala* (COVID is hunger) and *COVID ne shiboye* (COVID is imprisonment).

On the other hand, the EXCESS subsidiary image schema was instantiated in metaphors such as *COVID ne shinyasio* (COVID is condemnation), *COVID ne shiboko* (COVID is wrath), *COVID ne shibela* (COVID is grief) and *COVID namangayimwe* (COVID is a difficult situation).

For instance, it was deduced from discussant 3 that the loss of lives due to COVID-19 was understood as having caused a lot of grief. The overwhelming situation of mourning amid tight measures of preventing the spread of the disease aggravated the feeling of loss. The findings revealed that being in such a situation was conceptualized as being contained in an excessive form of torture that came with grief and was heavy to bear hence the framing of COVID-19 as GRIEF.

### The PATH Image Schema

Peña (1998) argues that the Path image schema contains structural elements such as an initial location, a final location or destination, a sequence of intermediary sections along the path towards a given direction. Furthermore, Peña (1998) and Anudo (2018) contend that the PATH image schema also has three different inclinations in which the horizontal path entails FRONT-BACK and LEFT-RIGHT inclinations whereas the vertical path entails UP-DOWN inclinations and the circular path entails CYCLICAL inclinations. It was established that the PATH image schema in the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras were manifested through the VERTICAL subsidiary image schema and the PROCESS subsidiary image schema as presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: PATH Image Schema in the Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras**

Image Schema	Subsidiary Schema	Metaphor in Lukabaras	Gloss
PATH	VERTICAL	<i>COVID nikwamachenga</i>	COVID is coal fire
	PROCESS	<i>COVID ne sheli</i>	COVID is doomsday
		<i>COVID ne wonyo</i>	COVID is a warning

**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

As shown in Table 6, it was established that the PATH image schema was scaled to VERTICAL subsidiary image schema manifested through metaphors such as *COVID nikwamachenga* (COVID is coal fire) and the PROCESS subsidiary image schema as exhibited in metaphors like *COVID ne sheli* (COVID is doomsday), *COVID ne wonyo* (COVID is a warning). For instance, the framing of COVID-19 through the VERTICAL subsidiary schema, *COVID nikwamachenga* (COVID is coal fire), was because COVID-19 infections spread through stages or waves.

The first stage was witnessed when the pandemic emerged. Just like fire is lit and keeps burning or getting hotter, the spread of the pandemic was framed as it were from a source and it moved along a path as its effects got serious. The PROCESS subsidiary image schema in the metaphor *COVID ne wonyo* (COVID is a warning) showed that COVID-19 emerged as one of the signs that were ecclesiastically understood to occur in the end times. Despite these frames, the findings indicated that Lukabaras speakers conceptualized the pandemic as fire that would only last a short while once the wood is consumed. This implied that the effects of the disease would get less serious with time. As a result, people ended up flouting the preventive measures.

**The FORCE Image Schema**

The FORCE image schema was analysed as an independent category and not a subsidiary image schema. Thus, the findings established that the FORCE image schema constituted the COMPULSION subsidiary image schema and the BLOCKAGE subsidiary image schema. The data was as presented in Table 7.

**Table 7: FORCE Image Schema in the Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras**

Image Schema	Subsidiary Schema	Metaphor in Lukabaras	Gloss
FORCE	COMPULSION	<i>COVID ne shilikisa</i>	COVID is a hiccup
		<i>COVID ne liminikha</i>	COVID is stress
	BLOCKAGE	<i>COVID no lweni</i>	COVID is lightning
		<i>COVID ne shimbulubusi</i>	COVID is a whirlwind
		<i>COVID no muyeka</i>	COVID is a cold
		<i>COVID niyamachina</i>	COVID is hailstorm
	<i>COVID ne lifumbetsa</i>	COVID is mist	

**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

From Table 7, COMPULSION subsidiary schema was exemplified in metaphors such as *COVID ne shilikisa* (COVID is a hiccup), *COVID ne liminikha*, (COVID is stress). The results revealed that COVID-19 was framed as a hiccup to imply it was only a minor setback and the effects would not last long. It was established that where people were banned from social gatherings such as funerals, they would break the protocols and argue that the disease was hinderance to their cultural practices which included organizing elaborate mourning events for their lost ones. The BLOCKAGE subsidiary image schema was instantiated in metaphors like *COVID no lweni*, (COVID is lightening), *COVID ne shimbulubusi*, (COVID is a whirlwind) *COVID no muyeka*, (COVID is a cold) *COVID niyamachina*, (COVID is hailstorm) and *COVID ne*

*lifumbetsa* (COVID is mist). For instance, the BLOCKAGE subsidiary image schema like *COVID no Iweni*, (COVID is lightning), *COVID ne shimbulubusi* (COVID is a whirlwind), implied that COVID-19 was framed as a hindrance through natural occurrences such as lightning and whirlwind. Nevertheless, the findings showed that perceiving COVID-19 as a natural occurrence meant that it was beyond the people's power to control the outbreak and just like mist, it would clear or end without any intervention.

### The OBJECT Image Schema

Anudo (2018) and Gathigia (2014) observe that the OBJECT image schema constitutes several schemas such as LINK, PART-WHOLE, CENTREPERIPHERY and COLLECTION. However, the subsidiary image schema that was manifested in the metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabarar was the LINK and MASS-COUNT. The findings presented the data for the OBJECT image schema as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: OBJECT Image Schema in the Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabarar**

Image Schema	Subsidiary Schema	Metaphor in Lukabarar	Gloss
OBJECT	LINK	<i>COVID no lubala</i> <i>COVID no bulilo</i> <i>COVID ne yingaka</i>	COVID is a sting COVID is a bait COVID is a hook
	MASS-COUNT	<i>COVID ne shimanulwa</i> <i>COVID ne yimbaale</i>	COVID is a weapon COVID is a pebble

**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

The findings in Table 8 revealed that the LINK subsidiary image schema was instantiated in metaphors like *COVID no lubala* (COVID is a sting), *COVID no bulilo* (COVID is a bait) and *COVID ne yingaka* (COVID is a hook). On the other hand, the MASS-COUNT subsidiary image schema was manifested in examples such as *COVID ne shimanulwa* (COVID is a weapon) and *COVID ne yimbaale* (COVID is a pebble). The framing of COVID-19 as a bait or hook was in agreement with Chau (2021) who argued that the Kenya's government response to the pandemic was mired in allegations of corruption and mismanagement. For instance, in August 2020 multiple protests were witnessed in and around Nairobi due to reports of irregularities in medical supplies procurement (Chau, 2021). Yusuf (2020, as cited in Chau, 2021) observed that a close examination of orders and suppliers revealed Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) paid grossly inflated prices for masks and, more broadly, regularly paid above-

market prices for drugs. Consequently, an Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) report established criminal culpability on the part of public officials in the purchase and supply of COVID-19 emergency commodities at Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) that led to irregular expenditure of public funds (Chau, 2021).

**The PART-WHOLE Image Schema**

The findings established that the PATH-WHOLE image schema constituted the LINK subsidiary image schema. It was inferred that since image schemas can have ancillary image schemas that overlap, the LINK subsidiary image schema occurred both in the OBJECT and the PART-WHOLE image schemas. The findings revealed that instantiations of the LINK subsidiary image schema included; *COVID no mucheniwamakana* (COVID is a strange visitor), *COVID no musuku*, (COVID is an enemy), *COVID nibwononi*(COVID is a spoiler), *COVID ne shiniamuliro* (COVID is a troublemaker), *COVID no muchesi* (COVID is a reaper) and *COVID ne yimbulu* (COVID is a monitor lizard).The results indicated that whereas the pandemic was conceptualized as a person, it was only part of a person’s attribute relevant to the understanding of the disease that was projected. For instance, COVID-19 was conceptualized as an enemy. The attribute of enmity was linked to the undesirable effects caused by the disease. For this reason, other attributes such as a person being a friend did not apply. The data was as presented in Table 9.

**Table 9: PART-WHOLE Image Schema in the Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas**

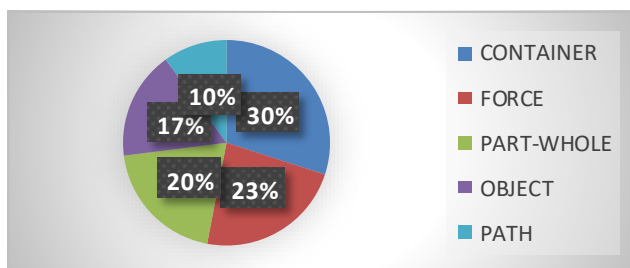
Image Schema	Subsidiary Schema	Metaphor in Lukabararas	Gloss
PART-WHOLE	LINK	<i>COVID no mucheni wamakana</i>	COVID is a strange visitor
		<i>COVID no musuku</i>	COVID is an enemy
		<i>COVID nibwononi</i>	COVID is a spoiler
		<i>COVID ne shiniamuliro</i>	COVID is a troublemaker
		<i>COVID no muchesi</i>	COVID is a reaper
		<i>COVID ne yimbulu</i>	COVID is a monitor lizard

**Source:** Fieldwork (2021)

**Prevalence of Image Schemas in Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabararas**

The findings revealed that out of the 30 metaphors of COVID-19, the CONTAINER image schemas were the most prevalent at 30%, the FORCE image schemas represented 23%, the PART-WHOLE image schemas represented 20%, the OBJECT image schemas represented

17% and the least prevalent was the PATH image schemas at 10%. This was presented as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Prevalence of Image Schemas in Metaphors of COVID-19 in Lukabaras**

As shown in Figure 1, the CONTAINER image schema was the most pervasive in the metaphors of COVID-19. This finding was similar to Gathigia (2014) and Anudo (2018) in which it was revealed that since image schemas rely on embodied experiences, the human body plays a central role in explaining how the mind unpacks unknown phenomenon. In this light, the human body is regarded as a CONTAINER in which we experience the world around us through the sense of touch, sight, emotions and hearing. The data for the present study revealed that the specific manifestations of metaphors in the CONTAINER, PATH, FORCE, OBJECT and PART-WHOLE image schemas were through the subsidiary image schemas for each of these image schemas.

### **Conclusion**

The study established that image schemas played a role in the metaphorical conceptualization of COVID-19 in Lukabaras. It was observed that Lukabaras speakers utilized the CONTAINER, FORCE, PART-WHOLE, OBJECT and PATH image schemas to frame their understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is argued that through the image schemas established in the metaphors, the efforts to prevent and fight against the pandemic were hindered. The study reveals that the metaphors utilized in the conceptualization of the pandemic portrayed a situation where people took the disease for granted. This had implications on the preventive strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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