Framing COP28: How Political Cartoons Interpreted Climate Politics and Global Environmental Conflicts

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Abstract

This study examines how political cartoons framed the climate politics of the COP28 Summit held in the United Arab Emirates in 2023. Political cartoons are widely recognized as a significant form of political humor, shaping public understanding and extending the boundaries of political debate. Despite their growing use in environmental communication, there is limited research on how cartoons construct frames around global climate negotiations. To address this gap, the study analyzes 72 political cartoons using content analysis and framing analysis. The findings show that COP28 was predominantly framed through four themes - fossil fuel industry influence, greenwashing, political incompetence, and the climate crisis. These themes were further articulated through environmental, political, economic, and blame-oriented frames. The study contributes to the literature by demonstrating how political cartoons function as discursive tools that critique climate governance and highlight perceived inconsistencies in global climate politics.

Key words: Political Humor, Cartoon, COP28, Climate Crisis, Environmental Communication

JEL Code: Q54, Q58, D72, Z18

1. Introduction

The relationship between politics and humor is encountered in almost every period in the historical process. Humor, which has different types and elements, is considered as a tool of politics and political communication. As a general concept, humor is fed by many elements, and cartoons are only one of these elements. As a medium of political humor, cartoons are highly effective in forming political discourses, actively participating in public debates and expressing views on political expectations. Cartoons can also be used effectively to engage in environmental debates. In the end, cartoons can also be considered as a part of

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environmental communication. In this context, it should be noted that cartoons as a tool of political humor are also effective when it comes to environmental debates. As a matter of fact, cartoons about the COP28 Summit and the environmental debates that took place in the context of this summit have also been actively involved in environmental debates. In this context, the aim of this study is to reveal how the COP28 Summit is framed in political cartoons.

Within the scope of the study, content analysis and framing analysis methods were used together. In the sample selection, judgmental sampling technique was used and 72 cartoons obtained from cagle.com, politicalcartoons.com and cartoonmovement.com between 01 November 2023-01 January 2024 and dealing with COP28 were analyzed. The cartoons included in the sample were analyzed primarily on the axis of four themes. Also, which frames are dominant in the cartoons analyzed under the themes of Fossil Industry Dependency, greenwashing, climate crisis and political incompetence were revealed.

In the study, firstly, the functionality of humor as an activist practice is emphasized through the relationship between political humor and cartoons. Afterwards, the relationship between cartoons and environmental activism was deepened and the potential of cartoons against environmental problems was discussed. In the next stage, the relationship between framing theory, political cartoons with environmental content and environmental problems was tried to be clarified. As a result, this research reveals the frames and themes according to which the COP28 Summit is framed in political cartoons.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Political Humor, Cartoons and Activism

Academic interest in humor can be found in almost every period of history of thought. From Plato to Freud, many thinkers have studied humor and tried to make sense of the complex relationship between the individual, society and humor (Berger, 2017: 2). Essentially derived from the Latin root word liquid/moisture, humor can be defined as the expression of emotions and thoughts with elements of laughter (Wickberg, 2014: 350). At this point, it should be emphasized that the act of laughing is one of the distinctive aspects of humor. Ultimately, the act of laughing is at the root of humor (Sanders, 1996). It can be stated that there are four basic components in the conceptualization of humor. Humor basically exists in four basic planes: social context, cognitive-perceptual process, emotional response and behavioral context (Martin, 2006: 5). At this point, it can be stated that humor comes into existence based on many different plans.

The social context, which is among the components of humor, is not only a dynamic that brings humor into existence but is also important in terms of making sense of humor's relationship with society. The concept of political humor needs to be addressed precisely on this ground. Basically, political humor can be defined as humorous forms of expression that target the political system, process, actors and other political issues in the public sphere. Political humor can be expressed through

satire, parody, comedy, painting, cartoon, caricature or graffiti. As can be seen, political humor, which can be expressed through a wide variety of tools, exists in four different derivatives: parody, comedy, satire and jokes (Feldman, 2024: 1-2; Young, 2016; Gray et al., 2009; Baumgartner, 2019). Therefore, it should be underlined that political humor is an extremely comprehensive phenomenon. Political humor plays a vital role for the existence of a participatory, sustainable and democratic public culture (Hariman, 2008, p. 248; Becker, 2014; Peifer, 2012). Therefore, political humor should be considered as an ontological part of political culture. Political humor can be considered as a sign of being pleased or uncomfortable with political events. When evaluated on this axis, it should be emphasized that political humor is more likely to express discomfort, throw stones or develop a critical discourse (Graber, 2008; Borden & Tew, 2007).

There are many tools for the emergence of political humor. Cartoons as a humorous tool are also a functional tool of political humor (Edwards, 1997; Morrison, 1992; Templin, 1999; Romano & Westgate, 2007). Cartoons function as highly functional tools in expressing criticisms about political events and actors. Cartoons combine humorous and visual communication elements. They are evaluated based on six formal aspects: use of line and form, exaggeration of physiological features, placement within the frame, text-visual relationship, object size, and rhythmic montage (Medhurst & DeSousa, 1981: 236). These issues are related to the formal shaping of cartoons, but beyond their formal characteristics, cartoons also exhibit a social function with the messages they contain. At this point, there are very strong links between the rhetorical forms of cartoons and social functionality, especially in the axis of politics (Benoit et al., 2001; Edwards & Winkler, 1997). Therefore, political cartoons can shape public opinion and produce political discourse on the axis of political debates in terms of both form and content (Mackay, 2016). From this point of view, it should be emphasized that cartoons are among the most effective types of political humor.

Cartoons, which can be found in many mass media, especially in newspapers, should not be considered as a mere means of humor or political discourse production. Cartoons also function as a means of resistance and activism practice. At this point, it should be underlined that humor is an element of resistance within the political system (Scott, 1987; Scott, 1992). Therefore, to determine the exact boundaries of political humor, the relationship between caricature and activism should also be taken into consideration. It should be emphasized that humor in general and cartoon in particular have an extremely effective role in forms of political activism (Sørensen, 2016). Individuals can use cartoons to express their criticisms, reservations or demands on certain political issues. Especially with the rise of new media technologies, the sharing of cartoons on personal accounts and the production of a kind of discourse through cartoons is extremely important in terms of making sense of the relationship between cartoons and activism.

2.2. Cartoons and Environmental Activism

Environmental activism is recognized as a field where the relationship between cartoons and activism becomes evident. Environmental activism, which

has become more and more important with the increase in climate change and other environmental disasters, is basically a concept that focuses on environmental problems, focuses on system-level changes and includes collective civil actions that go beyond personal practices such as recycling and protection of ecological balance. Environmental activism is also considered as an organized participation in environmental problems and solutions (Alisat & Riemer, 2015; Pyatt, 2011: 684). However, at this point, it should be emphasized that environmental activism should not be considered only as environmental protests. Environmental activism and environmental movements include actions such as becoming a member of environmental groups, donating to a green cause, participating in environmental protests, but it also leads individuals to a kind of 'conservation behavior' at the point of being willing to recycle (Rootes, 2003; Dalton, 2005; Dalton, 2015). In this context, it should be underlined that environmental activism includes many actions.

The increase in the effects of ecological disasters and climate change on a global scale has also affected the social manifestations of environmental activism. Many groups, including academics, are trying to bring solutions to environmental problems within their own means. In this context, it should be noted that there is a strong relationship between environmental activism and environmental problems. The increase in environmental concerns and worries determines environmental activism actions (Fielding et al., 2008; Peng & Zhong, 2021: 486). Therefore, it is possible to state that environmental activism is increasing on a global scale day by day. From this point of view, it should be noted that the tools of environmental activism have become extremely diversified in the modern era. Especially with the rise of digitalization and new media, individuals have started to have many different options to participate in environmental activist activities. However, at this point, it should be emphasized that cartoons can be an element of environmental activism as a tool.

Cartoonists and individuals can express their environmental concerns, political criticisms and environmental expectations on various platforms using cartoons (Soler et al., 2022; Einsiedel et al., 2017). In this context, it should be emphasized that cartoons have a close relationship with environmental activism as a political humor tool. Individuals can express their political criticisms through cartoons with environmental content, especially on the internet. This shows that cartoons can be used as a tool of environmental activism (Nordenstam & Wictorin, 2023). From this point of view, cartoons, which are accepted as a tool of political humor, can play a role in the embodiment of many actions such as drawing public attention to environmental crises, calling governments to a series of actions and providing support for environmental movements. Therefore, the role of cartoons in sustaining environmental activism at the individual level should not be ignored.

Cartoons with environmental content, which are frequently circulated in the digital world, play an active role especially in young users' participation in environmental activism and developing environmental sensitivities (Neas et al., 2022). As a matter of fact, cartoons draw attention as an important tool of environmental activism in making environmental crises visible, mass environmental concern and highlighting those responsible for environmental

destruction. As a matter of fact, this issue is concretely observed in many environmental issues, especially in cartoons about the COP28 Summit. In addition to all these, it should be emphasized that political cartoons also present environmental issues and problems according to certain frameworks. Cartoons, which are important tools of mass communication, also convey certain messages according to certain frames. In this context, the relationship between framing theory and cartoons should also be discussed.

2. 3. Framing Theory, Cartoons and Environmental Issues

Framing theory, which is also used as a highly effective analysis technique in media and communication research, operates on an interdisciplinary level. Framing theory, shaped by Erving Goffman's framing analysis, is frequently used in media and communication research. According to the framing theory, the discourses and narratives of news are structured in certain ways. This structured news affects the comments, perceptions and decisions of individuals. Framing theory also includes choices about which information to emphasize in a news item or media text, which aspects to highlight or how to present a certain event or issue. In this context, it should be emphasized that the framing theory comes into existence through the concepts of selection and salience (Goffman, 1974; Entman, 1993; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Edelman, 1993). According to the framing theory, news items in the media convey events to the public through certain frames. Each event passes through the filter of a certain frame and gains meaning because of this frame. Therefore, small changes in how an issue is framed can lead to major changes in public perception of the issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007). At this point, it should be emphasized that news frames are at least as important as the content of the news.

News frames, while placing the news on a certain plane, also suggest to news consumers what constitutes the subject (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3). In this context, it should be emphasized that news frames have an effective aspect. Entman states that news frames basically have four functions. News frames fulfil four functions such as a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation (1993: 52). To fully understand the framing theory, it is also necessary to specify which types of frames can be seen predominantly in the news. Firstly, it can be stated that there are many news frames. Solution framing, Individual Framing, Moral Framing, political framing, economic framing, environmental framing, cultural framing, technical framing etc. It should be emphasized that many frames can be used in terms of journalistic practices (Holmes et al., 2022). Such a wide range of news frames bring along different approaches to frame analysis. At this point, it is necessary to address the issue of environmental problems and the framing of these problems, which is also important for this study.

George Lakoff, who has made important discussions on the representation and framing of environmental events in the media, problematizes the environmental framing currently used in the media. According to Lakoff, environmental framing often functions in line with the discourse of seeing the natural environment as a resource and protecting the planet. Lakoff argues that these frames are

dysfunctional when it comes to environmental problems and that a new framing style is needed. Lakoff's suggestion is based on the idea of a more ethical and responsibility-based framing (Lakoff, 2010). Based on Lakoff's discussion, news frames on environmental problems and issues convey environmental issues to the public by addressing and framing them on certain planes. At this point, it is necessary to state that there are frames shaped in different types and forms as an alternative to dominant frames and discourses. In this context, it is necessary to emphasise that cartoons dealing with environmental issues are involved in environmental debates by developing different types of framing practices. As a matter of fact, the environmental framing logic in the cartoons about COP28, which I have analyzed within the scope of the study, is different from the frames used in mass media environments. In this context, it should be underlined that cartoons as a tool of political humor frame many public debates, especially environmental problems (Hecke, 2017; Felicia, 2021; Xi, 2025). As a result, cartoons are recognized as an important tool in the production of political discourse and involvement in political debates. The environmental problems in question are framed and disseminated through cartoons. The cartoons produced and circulated during COP28 clearly demonstrate this situation.

2. 4. COP28 Summit and Climate Controversies

The United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as COP28, took place in Dubai, United Arab Emirates between 30 November-12 December 2023. The main agenda of the organization, which was held with the participation of member countries of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, was to reduce global warming and greenhouse gas emissions. However, the COP28 Summit was left behind as a highly controversial summit within the framework of events such as the fact that the host country is a major oil producer, rather than the meeting agenda and its environmental impacts. There are many factors behind the fact that COP28 caused strong debates in international public opinion. The fact that the summit took place in Dubai and that the UAE is one of the world's major oil producing countries led to public discourse that the summit was not sincere. At the same time, the statement of Sultan Al Jaber, who chaired the summit and served as the CEO of ADNOC, that it was not possible to completely give up fossil fuels, has put COP28 in a highly controversial position in the eyes of the public.

COP28's inadequacy in the face of environmental problems, its lack of sincerity and the fact that it was hosted by a country with an economy dependent on fossil fuels brought along extremely important discussions on environmental debates and the climate crisis. COP28 has received serious criticism from the public, especially from environmental activists and political formations that prioritize environmentalist politics. In this context, it is important to conduct the research in the specific case of COP28 to make sense of the relationship between environmental problems, politics and humor. When we look at the general trend of public criticism of COP28, it is observed that fossil fuel addiction, greenwashing, political incompetence, failed politicians, etc. are at the forefront. As a matter of

fact, a similar tendency is observed in cartoons dealing with COP28. In this context, the following research questions were formulated by utilizing the existing literature:

RQ1: How are climate change and environmental problems represented in political cartoons dealing with COP28?

RQ2: Which frames are used in political cartoons about COP28 in relation to climate change and environmental issues?

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design combining content analysis and framing analysis to examine how political cartoons represent COP28 and related ecological crises. The study employs two complementary methods: content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) to identify dominant themes, and framing analysis (Entman, 1993) to explore how these themes are constructed within the cartoons. With the help of content analysis method, dominant themes in cartoons dealing with COP28 were identified. Through frame analysis, it was analyzed how political cartoons create a narrative about COP28 and the climate crisis and with which frames they present these narratives. Within the scope of the study, a judgmental sampling approach (Patton, 2014; Bryman, 2016) approach was applied to select cartoons published between November 1, 2023, and January 1, 2024. The sample includes cartoons that explicitly reference COP28, critique climate change or environmental crises, and employ visual humor to convey political or economic commentary.

Criteria such as the cartoons directly addressing the COP28 summit, containing a critical discourse on climate change and environmental crises, and presenting a political or economic criticism using visual humorous elements played a role in determining the sample. The cartoons that constitute the data set analyzed within the scope of the study were collected manually from the international cartoon websites cagle.com, politicalcartoons.com and cartoonmovement.com. The relevant websites were searched with the keyword #COP28 and the cartoons published within the specified time limit were downloaded. Cartoons that contained similarities or did not meet the sampling criteria were excluded from the scope and the study was analyzed on a total of 72 cartoons.

The (N=72) cartoons examined within the scope of the sample were analysed around the themes of Fossil Industry Dependency, Greenwashing, Climate Crisis and Political Incompetence. While creating the themes, the idea of allowing categories to emerge from the data was adopted (Benoit & McHale, 2003: 323; Vultee, 2007). In addition, each cartoon was coded for thematic content (e.g., fossil fuel dependency, greenwashing, climate crisis, political incompetence) and categorized according to four dominant frames: environmental, political, economic, and blame oriented.

4. Findings

It is observed that the cartoons about COP28 are clustered around four themes. The first of these themes is fossil industry dependency, the second is greenwashing, the third is climate crisis and the fourth is political incompetence. In addition to these themes, it is observed that blaming frame, environmental frame, political frame and economic frames are dominant in the cartoons analyzed. Each theme and frame will be discussed in detail below and relevant examples will be presented. The findings aim to show the frames and themes through which the analyzed cartoons portray COP28.

Table 1. Thematic Categorization of COP28 Cartoons

Theme	Number of Cartoons (n=72)	%
Fossil Industry Dependency	19	26.39
Greenwashing	13	18.06
Climate Crisis	22	30.56
Political Incompetence	18	25.00

Table 2. Framing of COP28 in Political Cartoons

Framing Category	Number of Cartoons (n=72)	%
Environmental Frame	21	29.17
Political Frame	16	22.22
Economic Frame	15	20.83
Blame Frame	20	27.78

4.1. Climate Crisis

It is seen in Table 1 that the most dominant theme in cartoons dealing with COP28 is climate crisis. Of the 72 cartoons analyzed within the scope of the study, 22 (30.56%) are directly on the theme of climate crisis. In the cartoons where climate crisis is the dominant theme, there are basic indicators of environmental disasters, global warming and destruction of natural habitats within the framework of COP28. In these cartoons, the sad representation of the world in various ways as a concrete outcome of environmental problems and climate change draws attention. The indicators that the world is dying and that penguins are becoming extinct due to the destruction of their habitats draw attention in terms of expressing the climate crisis. In addition, the melting of glaciers is also a frequently used tool in cartoons constructed around the theme of climate crisis. The melting of glaciers and the accompanying ecological disasters are important tools for framing the climate crisis.

Table 3. Number of Framing of Climate Crisis Themed Cartoons

Framing Category	Number of Cartoons (n=22)	%
Environmental Frame	11	50
Political Frame	2	9.09
Economic Frame	2	9.09
Blame Frame	7	31.82

Drought draws attention as another sub-theme at the point of discussing the COP28 Summit on a political plane and addressing it in a common template with the climate crisis. Drought and desertification as a result of global warming and environmental pollution also draw attention as an effective element in cartoons that directly address the climate crisis. At this point, ecological destruction is very evident in cartoons on the theme of climate crisis. Table 3 presents data on the use of frames in cartoons on the theme of climate crisis. It is seen that the primary frame in cartoons with the theme of climate crisis is the environmental frame. In this context, it can be stated that the main frame of the cartoons in which COP28 is the subject of the climate crisis theme is ecological destruction. As a matter of fact, another dominant frame in cartoons that directly address the theme of climate crisis is the accusatory frame.

Political actors, global companies, fossil fuel producers and the COP28 summit are accepted as the cause of ecological destruction and climate crisis. The actors of COP28 and this summit, which are constructed as the main actors of ecological disasters, are accused of being responsible for the climate crisis and ecological losses in the analysis political cartoons. Therefore, it should be noted that the dominant frames in political cartoons on the theme of climate crisis are political and accusatory frames. The ineffectiveness of COP28 and political actors in the face of environmental destruction, fossil fuel addiction, etc. COP28 is framed and caricatured as inadequate and ineffective in the face of the climate crisis.

4.2. Fossil Industry Dependency

As seen in Table 1, the secondary dominant theme in the cartoons addressing the COP28 summit is fossil industry dependency. Among the 72 cartoons analyzed in this study, 19 (26.39%) directly focus on the fossil fuel industry and fossil fuel dependency. Table 4 presents the frames employed in the cartoons associated with this theme. It is evident that the most dominant frame within this theme is the economic frame. Political cartoons constructed around the strong relationship between the economic activities of global capitalist corporations and states and environmental destruction predominantly employ an economic frame, identifying the fossil fuel industry as the primary cause of ecological disasters and the climate crisis. As seen in Table 4, the secondary dominant frame in this theme is the political frame. The cartoons within this theme also portray global political actors and COP28 summit participants as responsible for global ecological threats and environmental disasters. The relationships that politicians and nations establish with fossil fuel industries and the ecological consequences arising from these relationships are framed in a way that highlights capitalism, the oil industry, and Middle Eastern countries.

Table 4. Number of Framing of Fossil Industry Dependency Cartoons

Framing Category	Number of Cartoons (n=19)	%
Environmental Frame	1	5.26
Political Frame	5	26.32
Economic Frame	10	52.63
Blame Frame	3	15.79

In cartoons featuring the theme of fossil industry dependency, the general depiction is constructed through crude oil, oil refineries, and oil barrels. The dominant visual elements emphasize oil consumption and petroleum products, aiming to highlight the connection between environmental crises and fossil fuel use. Additionally, it is important to note that another significant symbol in these cartoons is money. The prominence of the economic frame further reinforces this aspect. In this theme, the depiction of the fossil fuel industry as the primary agent of environmental destruction is notably shaped by commercial interests as a central tool. In this context, the representation of the COP28 summit within fossil industry dependency-themed cartoons is fundamentally built upon critiques of capitalism, the oil industry, and the irresponsibility of global politicians. Notably, the image of politicians in these cartoons is frequently illustrated in alignment with the prototype of Middle Eastern political figures. Another recurring visual element is the oil barrel. Nearly all cartoons within this theme problematize the relationship between fossil fuels, carbon emissions, and the climate crisis through the image of the oil barrel. Thus, the secondary theme of fossil industry dependency plays a crucial role in framing the representation of COP28 in political cartoons. It is also important to emphasize that the fact that the summit was held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a major oil-producing country, further reinforces this framing. Ultimately, the UAE's status as an oil-producing nation has significantly contributed to the critical construction of the fossil fuel dependency theme in these cartoons.

4.3. Political Incompetence

As seen in Table 1, another theme in the cartoons addressing the COP28 summit is *political incompetence*. Among the 72 cartoons analyzed in this study, 18 (25.00%) directly focus on this theme. The dominant frames within this theme are presented in Table 5. It is evident that the most prominent frame in the *political incompetence* theme is the *blame frame*. In fact, it can be stated that the defining characteristic of this theme is the strong use of a blame-oriented perspective.

Cartoons under this theme explicitly hold politicians and the COP28 summit accountable for environmental problems. Recurring motifs include climate summits, failed environmental policies, futile efforts, and political figures remaining silent in the face of disasters. Additionally, global political actors and religious leaders are frequently depicted, emphasizing the role of inadequate policies and hypocritical politicians in the occurrence of environmental catastrophes. The *blame frame* is actively utilized in *political incompetence*-themed cartoons, where promises and their ineffectiveness are frequently highlighted.

Moreover, historical precedents of previous climate summits are referenced within the cartoons, reinforcing the notion that COP28, like its predecessors, is fundamentally incapable of producing effective solutions to pressing environmental issues.

Table 5. Number of Framing of Political Incompetence Cartoons

Framing Category	Number of Cartoons (n=18)	%
Environmental Frame	1	5.56
Political Frame	4	22.22
Economic Frame	1	5.56
Blame Frame	12	66.67

As seen in Table 5, another dominant frame in cartoons featuring the political incompetence theme is the political frame. In this context, the political frame functions as a complementary framework that reinforces the attribution of blame and responsibility to political actors. Cartoons structured around the blame frame and political frame depict politicians and COP28 actors as engaging in delaying tactics. These representations suggest that COP28 and other climate summits serve as distractions for the public, failing to produce concrete solutions to the climate crisis. A common feature of cartoons within this theme is the portrayal of politicians and COP28 actors as deceiving the public with empty promises. In this regard, cartoons emphasize the ineffectiveness of COP28 in addressing environmental crises. Rather than being part of the solution, COP28 is framed as an integral part of the problem.

4.4. Greenwashing

As seen in Table 1, another prominent theme in cartoons addressing the COP28 summit is *greenwashing*. Among the 72 cartoons analyzed in the sample, 13 (18.06%) depict COP28 within the framework of the *greenwashing* theme. As shown in Table 6, the most dominant frame in cartoons featuring *greenwashing* is the *economic frame*. The *economic frame* serves as a highly functional tool in illustrating how global corporations engage in *greenwashing* practices under the guise of the COP28 summit. Cartoons frequently feature the logos and actions of global oil companies, reinforcing the notion that COP28 facilitates such *greenwashing* efforts. The dominance of the *economic frame* is particularly significant, as *greenwashing* is widely regarded as a primary instrument of *green capitalism* and *green marketing*.

The relationship between *greenwashing* and the oil industry is visually emphasized through depictions such as oil barrels painted green, oil refineries framed in a green aesthetic, and green puppets manipulated from behind oil barrels. These visual elements play a crucial role in framing COP28's representation in political cartoons as an enabler of corporate *greenwashing*.

Table 6. Number of Framing of Greenwashing Cartoons

Framing Category	Number of Cartoons (n=13)	%
Environmental Frame	0	
Political Frame	3	23.08
Economic Frame	9	69.23
Blame Frame	1	7.69

Political cartoons that critically engage with COP28 through the lens of greenwashing play a crucial role in shaping its representation. These cartoons depict both politicians and corporations participating in COP28 as key actors in greenwashing practices. In this regard, it is essential to highlight that greenwashing emerges as a distinct aspect of COP28's representation in political cartoons. Cartoons illustrating the connection between greenwashing and the economic frame portray COP28 as a veil that prevents society from confronting environmental issues. Within this context, the most prominent feature of greenwashing-themed cartoons is the depiction of corporate and political actors evading responsibility by resorting to sustainability rhetoric through greenwashing practices. Accordingly, the dominant economic and political frames in these cartoons position COP28 as an ineffective and detached event, incapable of producing tangible solutions to environmental crises.

5. Conclusions

It is an undeniable fact that humor plays a significant role in shaping political debates and critiques. Through humor, political issues are brought into the public sphere, and political discourse can be developed. Therefore, there is a strong connection between humor and political communication. Cartoons, which are recognized as a form of political humor, serve a similar function. They address political issues as well as various social topics, opening them up for public discussion. In this sense, cartoons transform into tools of political humor, exerting influence within the public sphere. It is important to emphasize that the relationship between political cartoons and politics intersects across multiple domains. Particularly in discussions surrounding environmental issues, cartoons can serve as highly effective instruments. This study examines how political cartoons represent the COP28 Summit and identifies the frames employed in constructing these representations.

The highly controversial COP28 Summit, held in Dubai, UAE, has been critically interpreted and caricatured by some of the world's most renowned cartoonists. In this study, 72 of these cartoons have been analyzed. As the findings indicate, the COP28 Summit has been represented in political cartoons through four main themes: climate crisis, fossil fuel industry dependency, political incompetence, and greenwashing. Additionally, the dominant frames in these cartoons have been examined. Cartoons depicting COP28 have been constructed around four primary frames: environmental, political, economic, and blame.

Furthermore, the study identifies the dominant frames within each theme, revealing which framing strategies have been employed in COP28-related cartoons. In this context, it has been observed that the COP28 Summit is predominantly framed in political cartoons through economic and blame-oriented perspectives.

Political cartoons can be considered an effective tool for conducting political debates, particularly on environmental issues. They possess significant potential in presenting environmental problems with a humorous tone, encouraging actors to take action, raising ecological awareness, and shaping environmental strategies. As demonstrated in this study, cartoons serve to open global events such as the COP28 Summit to discussion within the context of environmental crises and global responsibility/irresponsibility. In political cartoons, the COP28 Summit is framed as an extension of political incompetence, political hypocrisy, and fossil fuel dependency while also questioning the sincerity of COP28 and similar organizations. Ultimately, this research employs both content analysis and framing analysis to reveal how the COP28 Summit is represented and framed in political cartoons. As one of the few studies examining the impact of political cartoons on environmental debates and organizations, this research aims to make a significant contribution to literature.

In general, this study has revealed how politically charged cartoons interpret and frame the COP28 summit. By analyzing 72 cartoons related to the summit, it has focused on the relationship between humor, environmental policies, and the climate crisis. It is clearly observed that the climate negotiations held within the framework of COP28 are predominantly associated with the fossil fuel industry. However, it should be noted that this study has some limitations. First, the study was conducted only within the scope of the COP28 summit, which limits its generalizability beyond the specific political and media context of COP28. The second limitation is that the study is based on qualitative and interpretive framing analysis. For this reason, it does not address how different audiences interpret or react to these cartoons. Future studies could be conducted using different methodological approaches, taking these issues into account.

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