

Effects of Soap Operas on Young Females' Perception of Male-Female Relationships

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Abstract

Different ideologies can be formed and adhered to by various people in different cultural settings. In the modern Kenyan societal setting, there are many soap operas screened on television stations and are viewed religiously by many, including young women. Majority of the popularly watched soaps originate from Latin America (Mexico) and United States of America. Many of them perpetuate certain ideas about how women and young girls should relate to men whom they are engaged in personal relationships. The cultivation theory posits that media mediated messages shape how we view the world and it works hand in hand with facets of perceptions. This theory has been used by some researchers (Gerbner, 1994) to predict that the media will teach a common world view, common roles and common values. This paper presents and discusses results of a study undertaken on young women (20-26years) in 2008. The objective was to establish the kinds of male-female relationship ideologies commonly portrayed by the soap operas screened on Kenyan televisions and what effects they have on the young women's perceptions about male-female relationships. The study population was 40 undergraduate female students of Egerton University, Nakuru Town Campus. The results obtained indicate that the ideas portrayed in the soap operas that were commonly watched perpetuated low economic status of females, certain gender stereotypes, high expectations in male female relationships and women insubordination. Majority of the respondents agreed that such ideologies have an influence on personal relations. The study therefore concludes that there is notable influence of the soap operas on the young females' perceptions about male and female relationships. These are eventually adapted as yard stick ideologies for approaching and dealing with relationships that they engage in.
