

Influence of Viewing Soap Operas on The Sexual Behaviour of The Youth in Maasai Mara University, Kenya- A Case of Popular Culture and Content In Kenya Televisions

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Abstract: Sexual behaviour of the youth has drastically changed as a result of the media content they consume. At the peak of this is the influence of viewing soap operas. Youths are dropping out of school having fallen victims to this handicap that leaves them expectant and helpless for the girls while the boys are helplessly ushered into fatherhood. This happens to the youths both in rural areas and urban centres as a fairer and safer option if they are lucky enough not to get infected with STIs and or HIV/AIDS. Sexual moral decay is there the world over and it is a conspicuous even nationally. Here in Maasai Mara University, it is not uncommon to find the youths engaging in casual sex based on what they see from watching the soap operas. This commonly goes by the identity of 'no strings attached'. This is a research proposal on the influence of viewing soap operas on the sexual behaviour of the youth. The purpose of the study is to come up with new long lasting solutions to the problem. There are specific questions to be answered. These questions will facilitate the researcher in formulating a hypothesis which will aid in guessing the outcome of the research thus staying focused on the mission. I will review works of other scholars so as to develop an analytical framework for analysing and interpreting data and to have a variety of approaches in dealing with the problem among other important facts. The research will take a descriptive design. The study will request 200 respondents to participate in the survey based on simple random sampling.

Keywords: Soap Operas, Television, Kenya, Maasai Mara, Popular Culture/ Content.

INTRODUCTION

Televised programmes qualify as a convenient conveyor of sexual education in our culture but with a number of conflicting ideologies. TV access in the society and the appeal it brings with it has carried with it soap operas into the household lifestyle. As such soap operas have become one of the ingredients that shape the sexual behaviour of the youths among the other sex related issues.

While the sexual messages range from benign to mild and to the extreme end of being explicit, various themes in various soap operas are tailored in a way to influence sexual behaviour. These soap operas contain themes that are intended to rouse curiosity to the explicit content.

Throughout its dialogue, characterisation, story lines and themes, soap operas present youths with a plethora of visual and verbal content that influence their sexual behaviour on how dating, intimacy, relationships

and sex are handled. These messages in turn illicit various adverse effects on the sexual behaviour of the youth. This is because the messages are presented only on the pleasant side without telling the viewer their negative aspect.

The youth become victims easily because they are presented with a unidirectional picture of the sexual relationships in these soap operas as these sexual encounters are always presented as spontaneous, romantic and risk free. This has enticed the youth into embracing this kind of carefree sexual behaviour.

Soap operas have been related to expressing more liberal sexual attitudes to being more accommodative to the sexual improprieties and to negative attitude towards being a virgin. Together, these findings provide a tentative evidence of there being a link between viewing of soap operas and the viewers own sexual attitudes, expectations and behaviour.

The effects of watching soap operas on the behaviour of the youths regarding sex are of increasing interest to educators, policy makers and the society as a whole. The concern is that the extent to which frequent consumption of media through watching these soap operas with high level of sexual content and low levels of portrayal of responsible sexual behaviour is of a crucial influence on young people. Subsequent sexual behaviours include the irresponsible use of protection from diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

Research done in U.S.A has demonstrated that the youths are heavy consumers of sexually oriented television programmes and this includes but not limited to soap operas which play a massive part. The researcher acknowledges that the above relationships is looked at from a generalised standpoint, especially in Kenya and U.S. however, TV programmes in soap operas are programmes that carry sexual content across the boarders into an individual's sitting room. Content analysis reveal that soap operas as part of TV content contain a high, growing and increasingly explicit dose of sexual messages and that a proportion of such messages display or model either restraint contraceptive use. Even as such, there is no evidence that there is a relationship between exposure to sexual content on the television as a result of watching soap operas and the youth's attitude concerning sexuality and their own sexual behaviours. Therefore a detailed research addressing the nature and influence of watching soap operas on the sexual behaviour of the youths might create data. This data could guide policy making and programming in both the government and in the media industry.

Problem Statement

As soap opera dissemination through various TV stations expand, the sexual behaviour of the youth, by practising what they ape from the soap operas originating local and even other cultures deteriorates. One can conclude that this shift in sexual behaviour of the youth might be caused by conglomeration of media exposure of various soap operas. This study establishes the relationship between viewing soap operas and their influence on the sexual behaviour of the youth in the society, in this case, Maasai Mara University.

It is through observation and reading relevant materials on the sexual behaviour of the youth that it has come to my attention that this behaviour is not excellent. Through voracious reading, with the aim of finding out what could be leading to this, most hands pointed towards the media consumption. As a result, I have chosen to investigate the influence of watching soap operas on the sexual behaviour of the youth, having concurred with the other sources that watching soap operas could influence the sexual behaviour of the youth.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of studying and researching on the effects of viewing soap operas on the sexual behaviour of the youth in Maasai Mara University is to determine why the behaviour and morals of the youths have eroded rapidly despite Mara being an institution of higher learning hence the youth being expected to be on high alert.

There have been introduction of various clubs in the facility that aim at teaching the youth on behaviour, like guiding and counselling department, yet the youth seem not to be able to ignore the allure of the media, more so watching soap operas that has influenced their sexual behaviour in myriad ways.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, the research has based its objectives on:

- i. To investigate if viewing soap operas has any influence on the sexual behaviour of the youth.
- ii. To find out the sexual behaviour that the youth adopt as a result of watching soap operas.
- iii. To investigate whether viewing soap opera can be used to promote responsible sexual behaviour.

The research question

- i. Does viewing soap operas have any influence on the sexual behaviour of the youth?
- ii. What are the sexual behaviours that the youth acquire as a result of watching soap operas?
- iii. What are the ways in which viewing soap operas can be used to promote responsible sexual behaviour?

Research Hypotheses

The study will test the following hypotheses:

- Sexual behaviour among the youth is influenced by the soap operas they watch on television.
- Television has become an educator to the youth on sexual matters through the airing of the soap operas.
- Watching soap operas have promoted irresponsible sexual behaviour among the youth.

Significance of the study

To theyouth, this study will help shape their sexual behaviour from aping everything displayed on the soap opera programmes. To the intellectuals, especially in Maasai Mara University: both students and lecturers; to understand the impact of watching soap operas on the sexual behaviour of the youth. To the future parents, it will help the students in Maasai Mara University to be equipped with good strategies towards

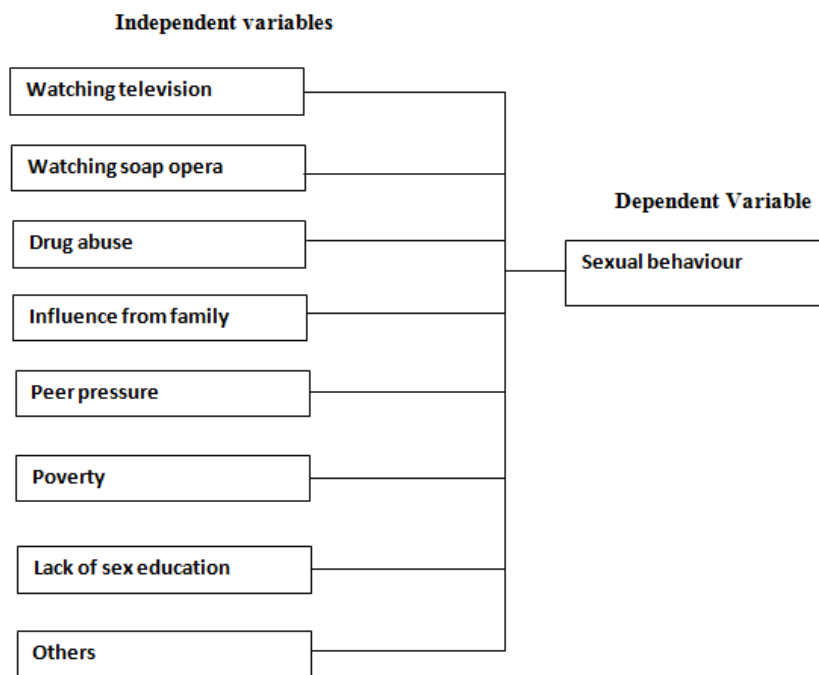
family upbringing on sex related issues induced through viewing of soaps.

This research is also of significance value to the media industry in Kenya and the Ministry of Information in Kenya as those graduates whom they will employ will be able to advice the industry and the government to amend or introduce some regulation that will help preserve the sexual immorality of the youth via the media.

Limitations of the study

The study was limited to the youth and media practitioners within the study area. There has been some reluctance in the responses especially in providing the information about their sexual behaviour by the youth. Researcher also faced some challenges during data collection as there was no enough time as he was required to attend academic activities as well.

Research Theoretical Framework



LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review literally refers to the analysis of books or manuscripts. In research it means the work the researcher consulted in order to understand and investigate the research problem. It is an account of what has been published about a topic by accredited researchers and scholars. In this research, we are going to explore the work of different scholars on how viewing soap operas influence the sexual behaviour of the youth.

A lot has been written on the topic under review. Sexual behaviour of the youth has been related to so many causes like poor upbringing, lack of sex

The potential for mass media to influence behaviour has been supported through a number of different psychosocial theories, hypotheses, and models. Although there is considerable variation in theoretical mechanisms by which media might affect adolescents' sexual attitudes and behaviours, most posit that sexually related message content and behaviour act over time as stimuli to change consumer psychological, physiologic, and behavioral function.

The study thus analyses three theories namely Social-Learning Theory, Agenda setting/framing and Cultivation theory to relate the sexual behaviours among the youth.

Conceptual Framework

This is represented in a table form as follows showing the relationship between variables in a research study. The independent variable is watching soap operas on television.

education, the influence of the media, drug abuse, poverty, peer pressure, influence from family and much more.

Theories have also been formulated to explain the causes of the influence of television viewing on the sexual behaviour of the youth. A theory is a formulation of underlying principles of certain observed phenomena (occurrence) which have been verified to some extent. These include agenda setting/ framing, cultivation and cognitive social learning. Theories act as bedrock of understanding sexual behaviours; they have an impact on problems on sexuality as faced by the youth which

are conceptualized and also provide a framework for scientific observation.

And for that matter, literature review is important. By reviewing the work of other scholars, it gives a researcher some insight into what has already been done. It enables the researcher to have a variety of approaches when dealing with the problem and it sharpens and deepens the theoretical foundation of the research. It again aids in developing an analytical framework as a basis for analysing and interpreting data. All these will enable the researcher to have a better understanding of the causes of the problem at hand, which will ease the solution finding task.

Soap opera

A soap opera, or simply soap, is a serial drama, on television or radio that features related story lines dealing with the lives of multiple characters. The stories in these series typically focus heavily on emotional relationships to the point of melodrama. The name *soap opera* stems from the fact that many of the sponsors and producers of the original dramatic serials' broadcast on radio were soap manufacturers.

Origin of the genre

The first serial considered to be a "soap opera" was *Painted Dreams*, which debuted October 20, 1930 in Chicago. Early radio series such as *Painted Dreams* were broadcast in weekday daytime slots, usually five days a week, when most listeners would be housewives; thus the shows were aimed at and consumed by a predominantly female audience.

The first national radio soap opera was *Clara, Lu, and Em*, which aired on the National Broadcasting Corporation Blue Network at 10:30 pm on Tuesday, January 27, 1931.

Story and episode structure

A crucial element that defines soap opera is the open-ended nature of the narrative, with stories spanning several episodes. One of the defining features that make a television program a soap opera, according to Albert Moran, is "that form of television that works with a continuous open narrative. Each episode ends with a promise that the storyline is to be continued in another episode".

Soap opera storylines run concurrently intersect and lead into further developments. An individual episode of a soap opera will generally switch between several different concurrent narrative threads that may at times interconnect and affect one another or may run entirely independent of each other. Each episode may feature some of the show's current storylines but not always all of them.

Plots and storylines

The main characteristics that define soap operas are "an emphasis on family life, personal relationships, sexual dramas, emotional and moral conflicts; some coverage of topical issues; set in familiar domestic interiors with only occasional excursions into new locations" Fitting in with these characteristics, most soap operas follow the lives of a group of characters who live or work in a particular place, or focus on a large extended family.

The storylines follow the day-to-day activities and personal relationships of these characters. "Soap narratives, like those of film melodramas, are marked by what Steve Neale has described as 'chance happenings, coincidences, missed meetings, sudden conversions. In many soap operas, in particular daytime serials, the characters are frequently attractive, seductive, glamorous and wealthy just as is the case with *Wild at Heart*."

Wild at heart also focuses on more everyday characters and a situation, its story lines is based on family discord, marriage breakdown, or financial problems.

Romance, secret relationships, extramarital affairs, and genuine love have been the basis for many soap opera storylines. Soap opera storylines sometimes weave intricate, convoluted, and sometimes confusing tales of characters who have affairs, meet mysterious strangers and fall in love, and who commit adultery, all of which keeps audiences hooked on the unfolding story twists

Performers

Due to the longevity of these shows it is not uncommon for a single character to be played by multiple actors. Conversely several actors have remained playing the same character for many years, or decades even.

Evolution of the daytime serial

For several decades most daytime soap operas concentrated on family and marital discord, legal drama, and romance. The action rarely left interior settings, and many shows were set in fictional, medium-sized Midwestern towns. Though the daytime versions are not very popular as women increasingly working outside of the home hence daytime television viewing declined. This led to creation of teens oriented serial versions from 1990s. Current soap opera commonly watched by the youth in Kenya is '*Corazón indomable*' which translates to *Wild at Heart* in English. It is a Mexican telenovela produced by Nathalie Lartilleux for Televisa. It is a remake of *Marimar*, produced in 1994.

Effects of soap operas in the sexual behaviour of the youth

Although a number of factors contribute to the youth's sexual behaviour, television viewing has been accused of playing a central role in shaping their behaviours [1]. In a recent survey, 53% of teens said that they use TV and movies as a source of information about sex and birth control [1].

This source of sexual learning may be problematic, especially because television often depicts sex as glamorized with attractive characters engaging in such mature behaviour without precaution or consequence. Given this skewed source of sexual information, it becomes important to examine the impact of sexual portrayals on youngsters' sexual socialization. Significantly fewer studies have been conducted on the impact of sex in comparison to violence.

ATTITUDES

Aside from learning information, this soap opera has televised portrayals of sex which has influence the youth's attitudes towards such intimate behaviour. The results on a single item measure of acceptability of premarital sex revealed that youth in Maasai Mara University approve of such behaviour after exposure to the soap. Although the last study suggests that a single exposure may have influenced the attitudes, the influence on heavy viewers was much higher.

Bryant and Rockwell [2] attempted to address this by examining how massive exposure to sexual depictions influence youth's moral evaluations. The results revealed that it massively exposed to sex between unmarried characters accepted the act as not bad as is also similar to the youth in Maasai Mara. Over the past several decades television has become a large influence on people's attitudes and behaviours. "Television has been found to reflect and possibly shape the attitudes, values, and behaviours of young people" [3].

Television has become so influential that it serves as a teacher, often providing a common source of information for young adults [4]. The role of media in the lives of the youth has raised concerns in many areas; however, aggression/violence and sexuality are two key areas of research. The current study focuses on the relationship between soap operas viewing and sexual behaviour of the youth.

Concerns have been raised about TV as a teacher of sexuality by social commentators[5] and by researchers. Interestingly, even parents think that television has a large impact on adolescents' attitudes and they recognize that many adolescents spend more time watching television than they do in school or with their parents [4]. A survey completed by 1400 parents found that parents thought television was the second

most influential source of information next to them. However, only 13% of these parents thought that television provided their children with accurate information [6]. Louis Harris and Associates[7] found that the majority (64%) of adults in the U.S. believe that television encourages teenagers to initiate sexual activity [8].

When examining the research on TV and sexuality, one concern is that television characters serve as role models for young adults. Bandura's [9] social learning theory states that new behaviours seen by individuals are likely to be observed, and reproduced. Researchers argue that television provides adolescents with models whose sexual attitudes and behaviours are learned and replicated [4].

In addition to providing role models, television conveys "sexual scripts that establish norms and expectations concerning how to be sexual, why to have sex, whom to have it with, and what the appropriate sequence of activities is" [5]. A study of 1043 adolescents found that they considered television to be their greatest source of pressure to become sexually active. Ward found that sexuality was the focus of one-third of the shows popular among young people. Three types of programming that are high in sexual content and have a potentially large influence on young people are prime time shows, soap operas, and music videos.

Studies of prime time television have shown that the most frequent sexual content consisted of verbal sexual implications between unmarried characters. In content analyses of prime time programming, sexual behaviour was found to occur in 25 to 50% of interactions between the characters [5], and premarital and extramarital sex occurred more often than sex between married couples[4].

Soap operas tend to have more sexual content than prime time programs, but they portray the types of intimacies differently[10]. Soap operas generally show intimate moments, whereas prime time programs generally imply the sexual content[11].

Over the past few decades, the frequency of sexual incidences on soap operas has increased, especially among unmarried partners. Over 30million adults and 4 million adolescents watch soap operas on a regular basis[11]. These soap opera are always rendered in accompaniment of music videos within them either as a bridge between episodes or for information purposes. The type of music and messages within them vary. Most of these images are always sexually provocative.

In a study examining the influence of exposure to music video imagery on sexual attitudes, it was found that exposure to sexual imagery had a

significant effect on attitudes of sexual permissiveness[12]. This in other words influences the sexual behaviour of these youth.

The mass media are an increasingly accessible way for people to learn about and see sexual behavior. The media may be especially important for young people as they are developing their own sexual beliefs and patterns of behavior and as parents and schools remain reluctant to discuss sexual topics.

In the United States, young people spend 6 to 7 hours each day on average with some form of media. A national survey in 1999 found that one third of young children (2 to 7 years old) and two thirds of older children and adolescents (8 to 18 years old) have a television in their own bedroom. Many of those televisions also are hooked up to cable and a Videocassette Recorder (VCR)[13].

Sexual talk and displays are increasingly frequent and explicit in this mediated world. One content analysis found that sexual content that ranged from flirting to sexual intercourse had increased from slightly more than half of television programs in 1997-1998 to more than two-thirds of the programs in the 1999-2000 season. Depiction of intercourse (suggestive or explicit) occurred in one of every 10 programs[13].

One fifth to one half of music videos, depending on the music genre (e.g., country, rock, rap) portray sexuality or eroticism[14]. Two thirds of Hollywood movies made each year are R-rated; most young people have seen these movies long before they are the required 16 years old [15]. Although teen girls' and women's magazines, such as *Seventeen* and *Glamour* have increased their coverage of sexual health issues over the past decade, the majority of advertising and editorial content in these magazines remains focused on what girls and women should do to get and keep their man[16].

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth rarely find themselves represented in the mainstream media. Although a few of the youth-targeted programs such as "Dawson's Creek" and "Will and Grace" have included gay characters, what some have called compulsory heterosexuality prevails [17-18].

The Internet has increased dramatically the availability of sexually explicit content. Computer and Internet use is diffusing more rapidly than any previous technology; as of the end of 1999, more than half (56%) of all adults in the United States were online.

The word sex is the most popular search term used on the Internet today[19]. The Internet may have both positive and negative effects on sexual health. According to one national survey of young people (10-

17 years old) who regularly used the Internet, one out of four said he or she had encountered unwanted pornography in the past year, and one out of five had been exposed to unwanted sexual solicitations or approaches [20]. At the same time, a number of sites, such as the American Social Health Association's iwannaknow.org, promote healthy sexual behavior and provide young people with advice on communication in relationships as well as methods for protecting against sexually transmitted diseases.

Despite increasing public concern about the potential health risks of early, unprotected sexual activity, most of the mass media rarely depict three C's of responsible sexual behavior: Commitment, Contraceptives, and consideration of Consequences. Although more than half of the couples who engage in sexual intercourse on television are in an established relationship, 1 in 10 are couples who have met only recently; one quarter do not maintain a relationship after having sex[1].

Only about 1 in 10 of the programs on television that include sexual content mentions the possible consequences or the need to use contraceptives or protection against STDs. Unintended pregnancies rarely are shown as the outcome of unprotected sex, and STDs other than HIV/AIDS are almost never discussed [1]. Abortion is a taboo topic, too controversial for commercial television and magazines[16].

Do audiences learn about sex from this array of sexual information and portrayals? The perceived sensitivity of sex as a research topic and a focus on television to the exclusion of other media unfortunately has restricted the kind of research that has been done. Much of the empirical work has been analyses of content that allow only speculation about what effects the content might have on audiences. But an emerging set of studies that go beyond content to address how audiences select, interpret, and apply sexual content suggests that the media may play an important role, especially for young people[21].

SELECTION OF SEXUAL MEDIA CONTENT

When asked where they have learned the most about sex, younger adolescents (13-15 years old) rank the mass media fourth behind parents, friends, and schools. Older adolescents (16-17 years old) put friends first, then parents, and then the media[22]. More than half of the high school boys and girls in a national survey in 1997 said they had learned about birth control, contraception, or preventing pregnancy from television; almost two thirds (63%) of the girls (and 40% of the boys) said they had learned about these topics from magazines[23].

The media are used as sources of information about sexuality at some times more than others. One

qualitative study found three patterns of sexual media use among early adolescent girls (11-15 years old) that suggested that sexual portrayals in the media were attended to more when girls were interested personally in learning about relationship norms, strategies for establishing relationships, and tips on how to get sexually attractive.

Some girls still found depictions of sex in the media (e.g., nudity in advertisements) "gross" and "disgusting," while other girls had papered their walls with images of media models they lusted after or aspired to be. Still other girls, typically those who had been involved in sexual relationships, were less enamored with the mainstream media's sexual fantasy and had turned to "oppositional" media (e.g., fringe music groups, teen-produced magazines, aka zines) that spoke more to the kinds of relationships they wanted [24].

We know that patterns of media use differ dramatically by age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic level. Girls and women typically choose softer music, and more relationship-oriented television programs, movies, and magazines, while boys and men prefer more action and activity-oriented media and sports programming, heavier rock and rap music, action and adventure movies, music, and sports magazines.

African Americans typically view more television than Whites, prefer television programming and movies that feature Black characters, and listen to different genres of music [25]. Thus, it is important to consider the media's effects on sexuality within subgroups: All people will not be seeing the same set of sexual messages--some will see much more than others, some will be seeking out the sexual content; some will try not to be exposed to it.

INTERPRETATION

All members of an audience also will not see or interpret the same messages in the same way [26]. One striking example of differences in interpretation was found in an analysis of one of rock star Madonna's early music videos, "Papa Don't Preach." When first released, newspaper columnist Ellen Goodman called it "a commercial for teenage pregnancy," while the religious right said it was a stand against abortion.

College students who saw the video differed in their "reading" of the video, too. Although most White females thought the video was about a teen girl deciding to keep her unborn child ("baby"), Black males were more likely to think the girl (Madonna) in the video was singing about wanting to keep her boyfriend "baby." Since the young men were identifying primarily with the dilemma of the boyfriend in the video, they were less likely than the female viewers to see or hear the cues that suggested pregnancy [27].

Other studies also conclude that young males and females interpret media content differently. Ward and her colleagues [28] have shown college students portions of situation comedies such as "Roseanne" and "Martin." They find that young women are more likely than young men to think the sexual scenes they see are realistic, and the women are more approving than the men of behaviors that are relationship-maintaining (e.g., jealous husband protecting wife) and less approving of relationship threats (e.g., man contemplating cheating).

APPLICATION

As people attend to and interpret sexual media content, they also evaluate and may or may not incorporate what they are seeing in their own developing sense of sexuality. This is the step that we traditionally have thought of as media effects. Does the sexual content in the media influence how people behave sexually? Are people having sex earlier, with more partners, without protection or affection because of what they see in the media?

The answer to these questions is a qualified 'yes'. Qualified, because even though we know a fair amount about the ubiquity of sexual content in the media, we still have only sparse research on the effects of sexual media content. According to classic social scientific methods, an ideal test of the effects of sexual media content would involve either randomized assignment to different sexual media diets, or longitudinal surveys. Such studies would establish whether media exposure or behavior came first, and would allow for generalizations about what kinds of media content cause what kinds of behaviors.

Theories

The relatively few correlational and still fewer experimental studies of the relationship between exposure to sexual media content and effects suggest that the media do have an impact in at least three ways: (a) by keeping sexual behavior on public and personal agendas, (b) by reinforcing a relatively consistent set of sexual and relationship norms, and (c) by rarely including sexually responsible models. Three theoretical perspectives often used by communication researchers: (a) Agenda Setting/Framing, (b) Cultivation, and (c) Cognitive Social Learning Theory, help to explain why we expect these outcomes.

Agenda Setting/Framing

Agenda Setting and Framing Theories propose that the media tell people both what is important in the world around them, and how to think about the events and people who inhabit that world [29]. Although rarely thought of as sex educators, even the news media help keep sexual behavior salient. The American public and policy makers frequently are faced with news stories about abandoned babies, sex-enhancing drugs, and even

presidential sexual affairs. Topics and images that are frequent and prominent in the media become topics that audiences think are important.

Early coverage of the AIDS epidemic provides a good example of how agenda setting and framing work in relation to a sexual health issue. When AIDS was first discovered, the media were slow to cover the story because it was considered a problem only for gay men, intravenous drug users, and a few Hemophiliacs. It took a number of years and the deaths of celebrities such as Rock Hudson for the media to put the problem higher on the news agenda, and even longer for the frame to shift from one of a problem of morality to one of a threat to the public's health[30].

The media are in a unique position to get people thinking and talking about specific issues, while keeping other issues from the public eye. The people who are cited or figure prominently in the stories become known as the heroes or the villains, while some solutions and not others are offered.

People use the stories they see both in the news and in entertainment media as reference points about what's important and to compare what they already know, or think they know about what's good and bad, and what should be done about problems. The result often reinforces stereotypes and helps define what is considered appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the culture[31].

Cultivation Theory

According to Cultivation Theory, television is the most powerful storyteller in the culture, one that continually repeats the myths and ideologies, the facts and patterns of relationships that define and legitimize the social order. According to the cultivation hypothesis, a steady dose of television, over time, acts like the pull of gravity toward an imagined center. This pull results in a shared set of conceptions and expectations about reality among otherwise diverse viewers[32].

Tests of the hypothesis have found, for example, that junior and senior high school students who frequently viewed daytime soap operas were more likely than those who watched less often to believe that single mothers have relatively easy lives, have good jobs, and do not live in poverty [33]. Exposure to stereotypical images of gender and sexuality in music videos has been found to increase older adolescents' acceptance of non-marital sexual behavior and interpersonal violence [27]. Heavier television viewers also have been found to have more negative attitudes toward remaining a virgin[34].

Others have shown that prolonged exposure to erotica leads to exaggerated estimates of the prevalence

of more unusual kinds of sexual activity (e.g., group sex, sadomasochistic practices, bestiality), less expectation of sexual exclusivity with partners, and apprehension that sexual inactivity constitutes a health risk [26]. In one experimental study, college student who were exposed to about 5 hours of sexually explicit films over 6 weeks were more likely than a control group to express increased callousness toward women and trivialize rape as a criminal offense[26].

Two correlational studies have found relationships between the frequency of television viewing and initiation of intercourse in samples of high school students. However, because these were only cross-sectional analyses, it was not possible to say with certainty which came first--the TV viewing or the sexual behavior[29].

It is possible that teens who were becoming interested in sex had turned to sexual content in the media because it was now salient in their lives. It also is possible that the teens saw the ubiquitous and typically risk-free sexual media content as encouragement for them to engage in sexual behavior sooner than they might have otherwise. It is most likely that both causal sequences are operating, but longitudinal studies of young adolescents are needed to conclude that with more certainty.

Cognitive Social Learning Theory

Cognitive Social Learning Theory and its earlier variant, Social Learning Theory, predict that people will imitate behaviors of others when those models are rewarded or not punished for their behavior. Modeling will occur more readily when the model is perceived as attractive and similar and the modeled behavior is possible, salient, simple, prevalent, and has functional value [9]. Thus, the theory predicts that people who attend to media content that includes depictions of attractive characters that enjoy having sexual intercourse and rarely suffer any negative consequences will be likely to imitate the behavior.

A related idea is that the media provide cognitive scripts for sexual behavior that people may not be able to see anywhere else [35]. Sexually inexperienced people especially may use the media to fill in the gaps in their understanding about how a particular sexual scenario might work (e.g., kissing goodnight at the end of a date, having sex with a new or multiple partners). Walsh-Childers[16] found that viewers' own expectations for using condoms were affected by depiction of condom use in a soap opera, for example.

What's typically missing from the media's current sexual script, however, is anything having to do with the possible negative consequences of sexual activity or ways to prevent negative outcomes, so it is

unlikely that protective behavior could be imitated. Content analyses suggest that media audiences are most likely to learn that sex is consequence-free, rarely planned, and more a matter of lust than love[1]. From the most sexually explicit media content, now more readily available than ever before on the Internet, cable TV, and videocassettes, they are likely to learn patterns of aggressive sexual behavior, as well [36].

The respondents were required to state if viewing soap operas has influenced the sexual behaviour of the youth as a big number of youths in Maasai Mara University are. The key reason was that TV has become the teacher for issues on sex and behaviour change. Besides, the most common programs watched by a large percentage of ladies are soap opera though the number of men is also increasing gradually.

This alongside other programmes aired via the television has influenced the sexual behaviour of the youth seriously. Some of the reasons stated which leads to irresponsible sexual behaviour among the youth are: influence from the media more so the television and other programs which contributes 40%, peer pressure 25%, drug abuse 20%, and 15% other factors. Inadequate material and social resources all rounds can seriously lead to influence of sexual behaviour among young people.

These force the youth to resort to alternative strategies, mostly sexual promiscuity alongside crime and others. The youth living in poverty are at higher risk of engaging in irresponsible sexual behaviour.

Table-1: Response to Question one.

Percentage	Cause	Rating
40%	Influence from the media	1
25%	Peer pressure	2
20%	Drug abuse	3
15%	Other factors(poverty etc)	4

Source: research data

What are the sexual behaviours that the youth acquire as a result of watching soap operas?

The respondents were asked to air their thoughts about the question. Most respondents strongly believe that television programs, soap operas and this case among others that taught them various habits. Such behaviours as casual sex, commonly referred to as ‘no strings attached’ have bad made acceptable via soap operas. Besides, the youth also pointed to various types of dress cord as what they acquired from soap operas. The youth who are involved have got an attitude towards people who are created in a particular way.

They are obsessed with perfection in their mates as they have viewed perfect mates in the soaps. Besides, they become so receptive to some of the acts that they view in the soap opera, for instance, greed and obsession of material wealth. Besides, actions like abortion is displayed as an act that is very okay and there is no education on the use of contraceptives if we don’t consider the abstinence as the right thing.

Casual sex is approved in the soap operas and at times they move to the extreme when these relationships become incestuous by involving family members or related people a forward in the soap operas as having no consequences. Early marriage is also another effect as the youth ape what they view in the soaps. Alongside that, demonstration effect has taken toll on the youth.

Other aggressive behaviours such as cold blood murder are also becoming common. Suicides are on the rise as they are being portrayed via soaps as an option that people turn to when they are jilted and have got no other choice.

According to the research conducted, 45% of the respondents believe that watching soap operas via the TV is the core cause of the factors influencing the behaviour of the youth in Maasai Mara University. 32% believe it is peer pressure, while 13% believe it is family influence, 8% believe that drug abuse is the cause and the remaining 2% believe that it is other reasons including poverty, personal choices, lack of morals and ignorance.

It is evident that watching soap operas has emerged top in the two questions giving a reason to believe there is a relationship between viewing soap operas and the sexual behaviour of the youth.

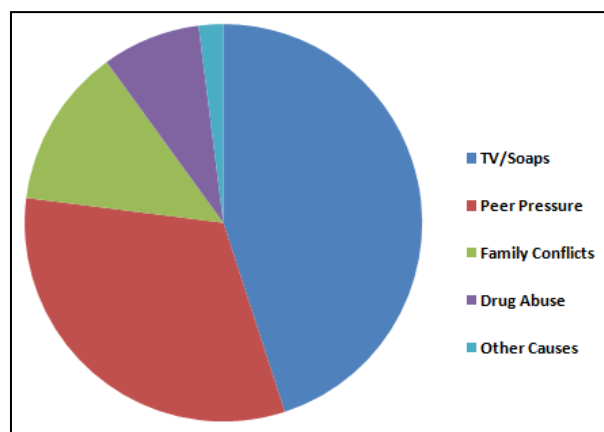


Fig-2: Response to Question two.

What are the ways in which soap operas can be used to teach responsible sexual behaviour?

Responsible sexual behaviour includes abstaining from pre-marital sex, use of protection

during sexual encounters, use of contraceptives to control conception and right information regarding sex education. Majority of the respondents advocates for protection and the use of contraceptives as the most effective forms of sex education that can succeed if incorporated in the soap operas.

Some advocate for abstinence but this is for a very small fraction of the respondents. 58% of the respondents strongly agree that the use of contraceptives and other protective measures can succeed via the soaps as they rule out abstinence as being impossible. 24% disagree that soap operas cannot be used to promote responsible sexual behaviour among the youth, while 18% of the respondents dismissed the question as not knowing.

Majority argue that, youths in rural settings are less likely to be influenced by soap operas as they have little exposure in terms of lifestyle and education. Most of the respondents who were the youth voted soap operas as having the ability to teach them responsible sexual behaviour. This claim was strongly refuted by the older people who took part in responding to the questionnaires.

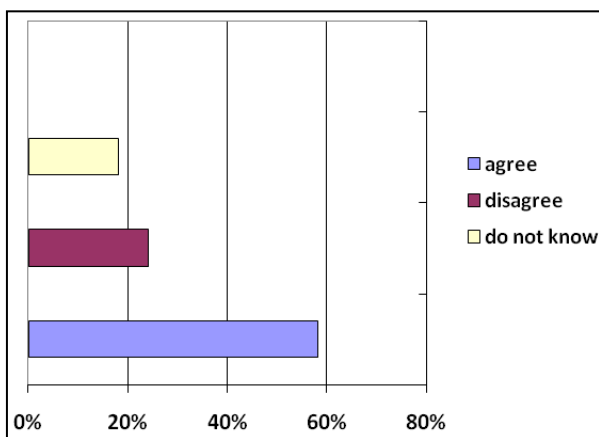


Fig-3: Below is a bar chart showing the response to question three.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research therefore concludes this chapter having given the analysis of what was found out. The analysis of each of the three research questions have been handled in this chapter. Each question has been accompanied by an appropriate data analysis method.

CONCLUSION

In sum, the relatively few existing studies of the selection, interpretation, and application of sexual content in the media suggest that the mass media can affect awareness of, beliefs about, and possibly actual sexual behavior. More research is needed to say more precisely with which audiences, under what circumstances, and with which content effects occur.

Such research is especially relevant as access to increasingly explicit sexual material increases and other potential perspectives on sexually responsible behavior, such as parents, schools, and faith communities, remain relatively reticent.

this study have indicated there is a relationship between watching soap operas and the sexual behaviour of the youth and other factors like poverty, family conflict, peer pressure, drug abuse and viewing other TV programs among other factors. As a direction of future research, one may use a different approach for example including data from a different area other than Maasai Mara University.

Community treatment methods are seen to work to improve the situation while parenting roles are said to have a negative impact on the youth by people from Maasai Mara University. There is need to create projects and programs that will increase awareness and guidance and counselling for the students in Maasai Mara University. This will help the youth to be more informed about the after math of irresponsible sexual behaviour hence being more careful about the media influence. The youth will benefit as they will be well provided for and they will gain access to sex education plus other benefits which will help curb falling victims to the negatives of irresponsible sexual behaviour.

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