

Chapter 9

Streotyping Femininity and Masculinity in Television Drama Shows: A Case of Kenyan Citizen TV's Papa Shirandula Drama

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ABSTRACT

The world deals with the issue of stereotypes in every area and every way of life, from gender, race, tribe, to religious affiliation. This is amplified when media comes into play. Television drama series has far reaching effects on the viewers' perceptions of social issues in every culture and society. This is because the television drama series construct a reality that the viewers believe to be true or ideal. The purpose of this study was assessing of Papa Shirandula TV drama in stereotyping femininity and masculinity on the viewers in Kakamega. This research was carried out among the residents of Kakamega municipality who are audiences of Papa Shirandula TV show. The results show that femininity was portrayed in terms of a woman being a housewife, homemaker, and mother—ignorant, inferior, emotional, and dependent on men—while masculinity was portrayed in terms of a man being a breadwinner, head of family, superior, non-emotional, independent, and decision maker.

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INTRODUCTION

Masanet and Buckingham (2014) posit that the effectiveness of television drama series anchors on how real, acceptable and plausible the story appears to the viewers; the value depends majorly on the level to which viewers judge it as realistic. In other words, television drama series may really not be a recreation of society's experience. But then events as captured by the television drama show convince the viewers' that it is real. Hence television drama series contents construct a reality which may be true or untrue to the viewers' culture.

Television drama series have an impact on the perception of both women and men through stereotyping masculinity and femininity. Typically, men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships (Kivel & Johnson, 2009). According to Kim (2008), whose research focuses on masculinity in children's television shows, television typically shows males as "aggressive, dominant, and often engage in exciting activities in which they receive rewards from others for their masculine accomplishments" (p. 392).

According to Khan and Manzoor (2013), "Television drama series have been largely blamed for a wide scope of various societal trends and individual effects, including but not limited to the distortion of reality, violence and more so stereotyping". It is, therefore, clear that television drama series, influence and their ability to construct social reality cannot be contented with.

Similarly, other studies reveal that the majority of men in television drama series are independent, aggressive, and in charge, (Wilson, 2008). Television drama series disproportionately depict men as serious, confident, competent, powerful, and in high-status positions. Gentleness in men, which was briefly evident in the 1970s, has changed as new male characters are redrawn to be tougher and distanced from others. These stereotypes do affect the viewers' perception of masculinity in men and femininity in women because such framing of men and women are taken to be a reality by the viewers, hence emulated in their daily relations.

According to a study conducted by Lau (2015), when portraying a woman, media follow three coordinates: the image (if she subscribes to the ideal of beauty), the private life (if she has a partner, if she has children), and the career (how talented she is in her work). This scheme is useful for manipulating women's attitudes towards the alternative models of femininity as our culture is centered on image and leisure time, therefore personal image and private life appear to be more important than any relevant activities in the public space.

In Africa, particularly in Ghana, telenovelas have influenced gender perception of behaviour in men and women. Research was conducted by Akorfa Adia (2014) to find out the exact content of television drama programmes, making it so important to many people, especially women and men. She concluded that telenovelas have

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