

## ABSTRACT

Television soap operas could have dominated and become the most popular genre in the local television networks despite the presence of other genres in the Kenyan media. It's possible that the growing rate of broken marriage in Kisumu city could be due to the way marriage and married couples are portrayed in soap operas. There has been a lot of studies on soap operas and the influence they have on their audience in general. However the perception of influence of the soap opera *The Legal Wife* on marriages in Kisumu City has not been documented. This study analyzed the perception of influence of the soap opera *The Legal Wife* on marriage and it focused on married couples and how they are portrayed in the soap opera as compared to reality of Kenyan Marriages. The soap opera aired on KTN, weekdays from 6pm to 6.50pm with repeats weekdays from 9am to 9.50pm and it was the second most watched soap opera in 2015/2016. The broad objective was to determine the perception of influence of the soap opera *The Legal Wife* on marriage in Kisumu city. The specific objectives were; to examine the portrayal of marriage in television soap opera *The Legal Wife*, to determine the perception married couples in Kisumu City have towards the television soap opera *The Legal Wife*, and to assess whether the television soap opera *The Legal Wife* has influence on how married couples in Kisumu city perceive marriage in real life. This research was based on Albert Banduras Social learning theory and cultivation theory which states that human beings learn through observation of models such as television soap operas and may end up imitating the behaviour observed after long time exposure to these soap operas. This research adopted Analytical research design which focused on how and why things happen. The study comprised of 180 married couples whereby Krejcie and Morgan formula was used to determine the sample size of 123 married couples. Qualitative and quantitative data was obtained through questionnaires administered to married couples and interview with Kenya Television network program management who were selected through purposive sampling. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data and thematic analysis was applied to analyze qualitative data. The study found that the content of the television soap opera *The Legal Wife* focused on problems faced in marriages such as infidelity, violence and betrayal. The perception shared was that married women were more likely to be influenced by the soap opera due to the repeated exposure to its content. It is recommended that local television programme managers should choose soap operas with positive portrayal of marriage or broadcast programmes produced in Kenya, by Kenyans containing Kenyan culture and values on marriage. In conclusion, it's suggested that film and broadcast policy makers should implement policies that encourage airing of programmes that discuss effects of infidelity such as HIV & AIDS, domestic violence, and other factors affecting marriages in Kenya.