

Original Research

Investigating how cultural attitudes contribute to gender disparity through radio serial drama

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Abstract

This study intends to investigate the ways in which cultural ideas underpin gender inequality in Ethiopia by presenting evidence from intercultural communication regarding the role that radio serial drama plays in educating and entertaining the public about gender issues. Using a qualitative study methodology, the researcher investigates some of the major topics of the once popular serial radio drama Yeken Kiginit. The serial drama has depicted the real problems that Ethiopian women confront by emphasising their disadvantages in many areas, especially when it comes to control and resource availability, as well as their involvement in decision-making in general, including at home. The focus of the intercultural communication-based radio series is gender inequality and how it impacts women's ability to contribute to the development of their nation. Ten episodes were selected by a systematic random selection approach for in-depth investigation in order to guarantee diversity in content and message. Qualitative content analysis and qualitative interviews were combined to get more understanding of the intended messages of the serial play. The main area of discussion was Hofstede's "masculinity versus femininity" (intercultural communication dimension), which focuses on the dynamics between men and women and what behaviours are appropriate for each gender. According to Hofstede, this dimension is more about expected emotional gender roles than it is about specific people. In communities that are viewed as masculine, biological sex is usually perceived as the basis for distinct obligations for men and women. As such, men are expected to be powerful, ambitious, and competitive, and women to fulfil roles of support, nurturing, and submissiveness. The results of the study imply that cultural stereotypes that are reinforced by society could increase women's susceptibility to male chauvinism.

Key words: intercultural communication, gender inequality, radio serial drama, cultural values

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Introduction

In modern Ethiopia, gender-related issues continue to be a major concern. Numerous researches have revealed that gender inequality is a feature of Ethiopian society and that women in Ethiopia face numerous disadvantages in life (Bogaletch, 2005; Assefa, 2006). In rural areas, the situation is even more challenging for women, according to a UNDP assessment from 2001. Scholars feel that one way to address these issues is by educating the public through the media and increasing public awareness of the importance of fostering gender equality and women's empowerment (Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Real, 1996). One example of an educationally entertaining media programme is the once-popular Yeken Kiginit serial radio drama, which addressed the pressing subject of discrimination and gender inequality in modern Ethiopia.

Yeken Kiginit, which translates as "Looking over One's Daily Life," aired in Amharic in 257 episodes on Radio Ethiopia and FM Addis 97.1 between June 2, 2002, and November 27, 2004. After gathering a significant number of proverbs and sayings from the local population to use in the play, Population Media Centre (PMC), the drama's producer, attributed the success of the production to the programmes' consideration of local values and traditions in their structure and writing (Negussie, 2004). In fact, most academics concur that without first researching and comprehending a people's intercultural communication; it would be pointless to try to present a story that may inspire strong demands for change.

The main ideas of Yeken Kiginit are examined in this research paper, along with the ways in which the serial illustrated the topic of gender inequality by illustrating the long-standing cultural norms in Ethiopian society, which is ruled by men. In light of an intercultural communication approach, the researcher thinks it's necessary to examine how PMC-Ethiopia employs radio entertainment programming to spread particular socio-cultural values among the target population. This study intends to investigate the ways in which cultural ideas underpin gender inequality in Ethiopia by presenting evidence from intercultural communication regarding the role that radio serial drama plays in educating and entertaining the public about gender issues.

Conceptual framework

The gap

The media may be very important in creating or promoting beneficial cultural values in contemporary society, especially when it comes to advancing gender equality (Barker, 2005). Although PMC describes Yeken Kiginit as a story that addresses a wide range of socio-cultural concerns through its message, the researcher solely looks at the ways in which a one-way radio programme has educated its audience about accepted practices and conventions that affect women and how it has communicated. Therefore, the researcher's efforts to

investigate the tendency of constructing cultural values associated with gender inequality as observed in one of the most well-liked dramas broadcast on Radio Ethiopia.

Many thought that the drama was crucial in bringing attention to issues facing women (Assefa, 2006). From the perspective of social responsibility, the media ought to cover topics that are pertinent to people's daily lives. And this can primarily occur when media programmes that are meant to develop the cultural values of the society in different ways are given the attention they need.

If our everyday lives are shaped by the media landscape, as Real (1996) contends, since we discuss and think about it frequently, then it can also influence how we think and behave towards women, particularly when we live in a patriarchal culture that oppresses them. In a culture that tolerates male dominance and discriminates against women, the media can draw attention to these problems by expressing the opinions and conversations that the public is having on the subject.

Cultural values versus gender issues

Every community has a set of guiding principles, a collection of connected notions, customs, and ideals to which people have strong feelings. For example, Brown (1963) claims that we are aware of no civilization in which people are solely focused on achieving material goals. However, there are values that are frequently so strong that people will sacrifice their comfort, well-being, or even their life itself: pride, familial loyalty, status, religion, and love of nation. Naturally, there isn't a single agreed-upon definition of "value" in the social sciences. Wilson defines values, for example, as preferences that seem justified; they are norms or rules that endure across time and have an undercurrent of the desirable rather than just the desired. Wilson offers another definition of a value that is among the most well-known:

A conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means and ends of action. (1979, p.2)

Wilson (1979) explains that although the concept of values occupies a critical position in analysis of human behavior, it is by no means a standalone concept but is surrounded by other concepts of attitude, need, norm, and belief. He pointed out that people can acquire new values and related behavioral dispositions through trial and error, through personal observation and understanding of a situation, by perception of another's response, by observation of the outcome of another's actions, by verbal instruction, or by a combination or sequence of such learned experiences. In short, culture is the way we collectively express ourselves, while cultural values are the governing ideas and guiding principles for thought and action upon our culture.

The majority of the facts listed on acquiring value can be found in the television series *Yeken Kignit*, if we were to base our understanding of culture

and cultural values on the aforementioned reasons. The coordinator, Mesfin Assefa, states that one of the main objectives of this serial drama is to ensure women's equality by enlightening and entertaining the public. In order to make sure of this, PMC has carried out earlier research projects on how 'Yeken Kiginit' can use the values they provide their culture to bring about the desired outcome for the community.

The researcher has attempted to examine how cultural values are reflected in the lives of the characters and how the drama introduces them to the listener in an effort to affect certain cultural attitudes regarding gender views in the message analysis of the radio serial drama.

The role of the media (radio) in tackling the burden of women

Today, the media, especially the radio, is believed to play a paramount role in ensuring the rights and privileges of women in developing countries, including Ethiopia. This role is expected to be more effective through the use of entertainment media, as it has proved to be a better mechanism in influencing public attitudes and bringing about a meaningful change among a society. This role for entertainment media was also recognized at the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994.

It is no wonder why the PMC chose the radio as an effective tool to transmit its serial drama, as this means of communication is the best way to reach the mass at large. Although radio could play a paramount role in sensitizing the public particularly in relation to the gender issue, some journalists and program producers have been criticized for letting their opinions or biases become part of the reportage or the program they produce. That is why PMC claimed to be very concerned in undertaking a formative study on the choice of medium and its program preparation as women in the developing countries are underprivileged in having equal access to air their voice to men. In this respect, Real says that the muteness of women in the media, their lack of voice, and the dominance of male gaze have risen from and provided crucial support for men's privilege in the patriarchal culture (1996).

A recently published article in a UNFPA publication also shares the same view with Real with regard to media bias, especially in the affairs of women, stating that the gender biases of journalists and editors creep into the way they gather information, interview sources and report on news and issues. Thus, journalists and media personnel must be trained to be aware of the gender biases inherent in their work and in the final media product and to work towards the objective of being balanced in their coverage of news and issues (2005).

One way of addressing women's issues using the media is by tackling the negative cultural beliefs that exist in women by providing educational and entertainment programs. Higgens (1989) explains that the media shapes people's self-schemas, extending their basis of experience, establishing alternative ideals and enabling reflection based on situations and ideals that they do not meet in

everyday life. In this way, the media affects people's image of themselves the way they are, the way they would like to be, as well as the way they should be. At present, the media throughout the world are expected to act as a cultural force in terms of gender relations, rather than merely reflecting simple social reality. In this sense, the important role of radio in giving women and men equal opportunities and opportunities to address gender disparities and discrimination is currently being witnessed in Ethiopia, especially in its entertaining and educating programs.

Theoretical grounding

This research is theoretically informed by one of the six dimensions of culture identified by Hofstede (Hofstede, 2001) that pertains to intercultural communication: the "masculinity versus femininity" paradigm. According to Hofstede's thesis, feminine characteristics are caring for others, fostering connections, and having a high quality of life, while masculine attributes are assertiveness, competitiveness, power, and material achievement.

As was already said in the opening statement, men predominate in Ethiopian society, particularly in the Amhara regions where *Yeken Kiginit*, a serial play, is set. The researcher has also identified Miguel Sabido's theory of entertainment education—that is, a theory created to write and produce a serial drama based on a culture of a specific group of people using the media—for analysis purposes within the larger framework of cultural and media studies (Barker, 2004). This theory was also developed by integrating previous theoretical elements of communication mainly from Albert Bandura, Eric Bentley, Carl Jung and other scholars in the field.

The Sabido Methodology is an approach used in the development of mass-media serial dramas. Even though his methodology was drawn basically from five theories of communication and behaviour change, this researcher would only focus on the first two theories here, as they are most relevant in the Ethiopian context. These two theories are: Eric Bentley's Dramatic Theory and Carl Jung's Theory of Archetypes and Stereotypes (Singhal, 2004).

The dramatic theory of Bentley describes the structure and effects of five genres of theatre: tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, farce, and melodrama (Sabido, 2004). Among these genres, melodrama presents reality in a slightly exaggerated sense in which the moral universes of good and evil are in discord. Sabido employed Bentley's structure of the melodrama genre as a basis from which to design plots and characters. 'Good' characters in Sabido-style serial dramas accept the proposed social behaviour, and 'evil' characters reject it. Plots are then constructed around the relationships between good and evil characters as they move closer to or farther away from the proposed social behaviour (Barker, 2004). Based on the adoption of Sabido's methodology, this researcher will attempt to analyse how the good and evil characters in *Yeken Kiginit* battle in

gender relations in analysis. Additionally, this theory will be used to illustrate how cultural attitudes can create gender disparities within a community.

Carl Jung's Theory of the Unconscious was one of the communication ideas incorporated into Sabido's methodology. The primary subjects of this philosophy are stereotypes and archetypes. Characters that mimic a myth in any serial drama are archetypes, while characters that mimic real life are stereotypes. Character design for instructional and entertaining dramas benefited greatly from this classification, which was based on Jung's methodology (Sabido, 2004). Sabido depicted these archetypes as either good or negative stereotypes, signifying the target audience's cultural norms.

Methodology

The main purpose of this research is to assess how the radio serial drama, Yeken Kiginit's messages conveyed gender issues and attempted to modify already established cultural values. Therefore, qualitative content analysis, which can be used both as a methodology and as a method in qualitative research, is the main instrument applied to carry out the study. By definition, content analysis is a technique used for gathering and analyzing the content of texts and how they are combined. Content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated (Deacon et al., 1999).

Data collection procedures

The researcher employed a range of procedures, including document analysis, observations, and interviews, as part of the qualitative data collection procedure to get non-numerical data. Understanding people's or groups' perspectives, experiences, and behaviours is the goal of this type of data collecting (Creswell, 2013).

Of the several techniques available for gathering data for a qualitative study, the researcher has employed two distinct approaches. Interviews and document analysis are these. Document analysis is the process of collecting data by looking through textual or visual resources like letters, diaries, photos, or films. With time, this approach can shed light on people's or groups' experiences, sentiments, and ideas. Conversely, interviews entail posing a series of questions to people or organisations in order to learn more about their backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences. Depending on the degree of flexibility and control the researcher desires over the discourse, interviews can be conducted in an unstructured manner (Creswell, 2013).

Sampling method

The data collection methods are to collect episode scripts of the serial drama using systematic random sampling, as well as in-depth interviews with the producers. To systematically sample Yeken Kiginit episodes for inclusion in this study, systematic random sampling was employed. This sampling method is often used to 'obtaining a representative sample' in any media coverage based on issues, dates or periods that should be analyzed. (Hansen & Cottle, 1998) This

depends, according to these scholars, on whether the subject of analysis relates to a specific event, or whether it concerns the mapping of some general dimension of coverage such as the portrayal of women, race, violence, etc. in a media.

On the other hand, as systematic random sampling provides a less laborious method for random selection of sample units (Deacon, 1999) the researcher employed it to analyze the message in the 10 of 257 episodes of the Yeken Kiginit serial drama. Therefore, the researcher divides 257 episodes (the sampling-frame total) by 10 (the required sample number) to have a sampling interval. Then the researcher selects a random number, i.e., the first episode of the drama, and the next value, which is the 25th – the starting point for the selection of the rest, of the serial to be analyzed and ends at the 225th episode of Yeken Kiginit.

The sampling frame was based on understanding how the gender issue was entertained in the serial drama by looking at how our male dominating culture is denying the rights and privileges of women in the society. The researcher also used the sampling method to show how cultural values were depicted in the drama through characters at various times and in different settings.

Data analysis methods

Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis, in this research study, is adopted as an interpretative approach that seeks to explore the ways in which messages are presented in the drama and the meanings that are embedded as opposed to looking at the frequency of particular themes as a reflection of phenomena which is characteristic of quantitative content analysis. Because the analysis of texts is concerned with their meanings, the ten episodes were analyzed in terms of their representations and contextualization of women in the serial drama, and in terms of the producers and writers ideas, what the stories highlight or ignore.

Qualitative content analysis is not only enough to depict fully how the messages were portrayed in a media program, as Fairclough (1995) argues, the analysis should also identify what is included and what is excluded, what is thematicised, and what processes and types are drawn upon to represent events.

Qualitative in-depth interviews

The researcher employed a second study method in addition to text analysis based on theme categorization. To that end, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted. Unstructured interviews were held with the writers and producers of the serial drama. This indicates that in a somewhat openly prepared interview setting as opposed to a standardised interview or questionnaire, the interviewees' viewpoints are more likely to be communicated.

Lindolf (1995) proposed that these kinds of interviews are more appropriately referred to as "conversations with a purpose" because of this. Additionally, given its qualitative nature, Fontana and Frey stated that

unstructured interviewing offers a wider range of information than the other methods. ... [It] is employed in an effort to comprehend the nuanced behaviour of people in society without imposing any preconceived classifications that would restrict the scope of the investigation (1991).

The interview conducted with the producers and writers of the serial drama mainly focuses on how gender issues in the drama were raised, and the technique or the methodology applied to write and produce the drama in order to be effective in delivering the intended message. All interviews were conducted in Amharic, the official Ethiopian language, and two journalists carried out the transcription and translation process. Therefore, all audio taped interview data were transcribed. The important parts of the verbal transcripts that can show the focus of this study were translated into English and included in the analysis part. The interview questions and the replies given by the interviewees are included in the appendix of this research study.

Discussion

This researcher believes that by exposing the difficulties faced by women in modern Ethiopia, the Yeken Kiginit serial drama has demonstrated to be a potent tool for entertainment education that can affect particular human behaviours as well as associated cultures and social conventions. Throughout its 2.5 years of radio broadcast, the drama has endeavoured to portray the ways in which women are disadvantaged in their pursuits, their ability to make decisions, their control over their lives, and the ways in which their male counterparts' prevailing cultural attitudes deny them equal opportunities.

Yeken Kiginit in its long serial not only attempted to exhibit how women are maltreated by men, but it has also depicted men's strong attachment to their cultural upbringing. Most of the men's characters developed as enthusiastic proponents of their culture and tradition in the drama. These cultural attachments that most male characters exhibited have helped the serial drama to discuss the social problems faced by women in the rural parts of the country. In short, culturally sensitive issues that appeal to audiences' needs were raised in Yeken Kiginit by portraying male characters, which are strongly attached to their cultural upbringing. The drama has also addressed gender disparities and discrimination. Based on these facts, the following are the findings of the researcher while analyzing the message of the Yeken Kiginit serial drama.

Manifestation of men's strong attachment to their culture

To address the issue of societal problems facing women in Ethiopia today, it is vital to consider the value that members of society, especially men, give to their culture. By doing this, media programs such as Yeken Kiginit can play their role by showing how those values can have a negative impact on women's daily life. These negative impacts could be early marriage, marriage by abduction, rape, sexual harassment, and other issues that affect the rights and privileges of

women. And these problems, directly or indirectly, are seen as the manifestation of our culture or cultural attitude.

The researcher believes that any culture has its own value to those who practice it, as long as it dictates them to think and believe the same way. Catton (1993) defines cultural values as 'conceptions of the desirable' and in acquiring these cultural values, the media can play an important role:

Values are acquired in the socializing process. To the extent that the mass media are involved in socializing human personalities, there is an inherent possibility that these media can affect the way people acquire values and the kinds of values they acquire (p.335).

A significant component of this research study demonstrates how the status and dignity of women in Ethiopia are impacted by men's strong connection to their traditional values, as portrayed in the serial drama *Yeken Kiginit*. Producers of serial dramas have taken this approach, creating cultural value grids and attempting to demonstrate through their messaging how these efforts affect women's rights, particularly with regard to how their cultural attachment keeps them from competing on an equal footing with men.

The Ethiopian culture has made men biased towards women and their important role in the development of the nation. For instance, such a strong attachment of men to their culture is practiced in their preference of having a baby boy than a girl in their family. Most men are not happy when their wives give birth to a baby girl, and are usually consoled by their friends for encountering such 'a misfortune'. The researcher believes that the whole issue of women's inequality starts right from parental desire of having a baby boy rather than a girl. And it is common to see in many Ethiopian families, especially in the rural areas, that a father would be congratulated if he had a baby boy and he would be consoled if he were blessed with a baby girl. That is why boys are privileged for every right that girls are denied in many Ethiopian families. Unless and otherwise such a strong attachment to culture is changed and a man starts to believe in having a baby girl as a blessing, there is no chance of bringing girls in to equality when they grew up.

Benedict (1960) argues that the problem of social value is intimately involved in the fact of different patterning of cultures, and each individual is the product of that culture he grew up with. In reality, society and the individual are not antagonists. His culture provides the raw material for which the individual makes his life (1960).

As Benedict argues, (1960:219) no individual can arrive even at the threshold of his potentialities without a culture in which he participates. That is what the researcher witnessed in most of the male characters of *Yeken Kiginit* as they manifest the strong cultural attachment they have with their culture. A manifestation of such a strong cultural attitude of men was depicted in the serial drama *Yeken Kiginit* through the life of Merne, a man who considers himself as

an unfortunate person for being 'blessed' with four daughters. (Merne has been married for many years.

But he considered himself as an unfortunate person for having four girls in a few years, and he blames his wife for this incident in the family. Even his friends mocked him by saying 'Merne, father of many girls'. The following dialogue between Merne and his friend Worotaw depicts how men manifest a wrong attitude towards having a baby girl due to their cultural upbringing. They were attending a marriage ceremony in their village and as everyone sang, drank and shouted, Merne sat on his chair depressed. And this bothers his friend Worotaw, who asked him to relax.)

Worotaw: You look so sad.

Merne: Ahh! Don't worry... I am enjoying it.

Worotaw: I know you very well (laughing at him) ... Ever since you heard about Ayal's death, you look very disturbed.

Merne: How could you talk about death while we are in the middle of such joy? But I am again worried about my future fate. My wife is nine months pregnant and I am happy to have a baby boy. That happiness makes me sad.

Worotaw: How could you know that she will give birth to a boy?

Merne: I know... She was 'hatching' so many girls in previous years... If she did that again there must be something that has been done behind my back.

Worotaw: Ah! What are you saying?

Merne: She knew that there is someone in our area who plotted to kill me. I need a boy who can protect me as a shield. If she gave birth again to a baby girl, she is also my enemy.

Worotaw: At least it is better to be a father of girls than sitting idle.

Merne: Don't try to comfort me.

The above dialogue between Merne and Worotaw shows that having a baby girl in the family is not desirable for a man in the house, as he does not give equal value to girls and boys. The strong attachment to his culture has already led Merne to believe that by becoming a father to a boy, everyone in the community would respect and fear him. That is why he also considers himself an unfortunate person for not having such respect and admiration from his surroundings. Even his neighbours did not pay him the proper regard as they gave to other men in the area because of the cultural attitude of disrespecting 'a father of girls'. Such types of strong attachment to culture and beliefs aggravate the problem of inequality between men and women in our society.

Opposition of cultural and modern values to seeking the 'missing voice'

Most of the people in rural and sometime seven urban areas of Ethiopia believe that if married couples cannot have a child, the reason for their

misfortune will be the woman, not the man. One of the episodes of *Yeken Kiginit* focused on exhibiting on how this traditional value in the society clashes with the modern value, i.e., men could also be infertile. The cultural belief that women are the sole cause of infertility has resulted in the breaking of many marriages throughout the nation. The break-up of marriages have usually a devastating impact on the lives of women due to their economic dependency on men. Previous research on this issue has also confirmed the fact that one of the reasons that we notice so many rural girls practicing prostitution in many urban centres is due to such kind of cultural beliefs valued by the society and that results breaking up of marriages (Bogaletch, 2005; Assefa, 2006). Script writer Mesfin Getachew also agrees that men's attitude of looking at women as inferior beings is the result of their understanding of the culture they grew up with, and that was one of the intended messages in the serial drama *Yeken Kiginit*.

Mesfin Getachew: Of the many issues addressed by serial drama, the biased attitude of our societies and its impact on women's lives was exhibited quite apparent in many episodes of serial drama.

When we look at the life of Wubalem, despite the fact that she has someone who she loves and adores, she was abducted by Chane. But people like Fikerte and her lover Mekuria have fought that culture as well as the people who supports the actions of Chane as justifiable. Even Irgete, Wubalem's father, has supported Chane's action when his daughter was abducted. That was one instance of the serial drama to depict the clash between the old and modern tradition and culture through its characters like Chane, Irgete and Damtew on one side, and Fikerte, Wubalem, and Mekuria on the other.

Indeed, *Yeken Kiginit* gave quite a considerable space and time in its episodes to depict the impact of the negative cultural attitude of men in the life of many woman characters such as Anguatch, Tariqua and Wubalem. The following scene of *Yeken Kiginit* shows how our culture doesn't easily accept the idea that a man could also be infertile, and the clash between the two polarized ideas of the old and modern cultures.

The thinking of being barren has traumatized Anguatch as she takes all the blame for the misfortune. Her trauma has been aggravated as her mother-in-law, Imagela, frequently criticized her as 'a disrupting factor in the continuation of the family line'. Anguatch has been suffering for three years and has started to consider herself 'a cursed woman' who brings such misfortune to the family of the man she loves in her entire life. She had never had the slightest suspicion that her husband Demlew might be the reason for their misfortune.

As usual, one afternoon Imagela came to the house of Anguatch and started conversation by indirectly attacking her. She also suggested the idea of bringing another woman to her son who can bring a child to Demlew. The following dialogue can reveal the fact that, due to culturally biased thinking among society, family life is being disrupted and women exposed to become victims of HIV or flee urban areas and engage in sex work.

Anguatch: You better sit on the 'Medeb*'. The stool is not comfortable. (*'Medeb' is a place made of mud and stone and serves as a sofa in rural homes)

Imagela: You better worry about yourself... I am comfortable here.

Anguatch: /tries to swallow her anger/ please forgive me. I thought you were tired and needed a good rest.

Imagela: How could I get rest when my mind is burning down due to my unfortunate circumstance?

Anguatch: Shall I bring you some food?

Imagela: Ayal served me nice food at her house. I am very thirsty and I need 'Tela *' if you have it at home. (Ayal is the lady that Imageless wished to sleep with Demlew and blessed her with a grand child), (*Tela is a local beer made in the rural parts of the country).

Anguatch: (pouring the 'Tela' in her glass) I have baked a bread... I also have it.

Imagela: (she seems to ignore Anguatch and started enjoying her own fantasy) Ayal is indeed a blessed woman. In fact, the Virgin blessed her with a handsome boy.

Anguatch: (murmuring to herself) Oh! Angel Michael! Please shut the mouth of this lady at least for this moment.

Imagela: I am desperate to have a child now. I always cry when I look at someone's child on the street.

Anguatch: Why don't you try to ignore it?

Imagela: When are you going to show me my grandchild's eyes? I don't want to go to my grave with tears in my eyes.

Anguatch: I never had tired of trying to have a child. I prayed to God since I married your son to fulfill our desire.

Imagela: If God could not answer your prayer, why don't you try something else? My son married you to raise his child, not to envy the blessings of other families.

Angatch: I am a poor woman who has no helper except God.

Imagela: / rising from her stool with anger/ Then I will help my son in my own way. (She leaves the house murmuring)

This dialogue simply shows the fact that in Ethiopian culture, being barren is a curse from God that befalls women only. And the solution is entirely left to the man. He either divorces his wife or conducts sexual intercourse with another woman and has a child. In the developed world, this could be considered as

committing adultery or having an infidel character. But in Ethiopia, the man would be encouraged to have another sex partner not only to get a child, but also to be admired as a 'man'. In the next episodes of the drama, Imagela has encouraged her son Demlew to sleep with Ayal. Ayal is a woman who buried her husband after a prolonged illness.

Although Demlew slept with this lady, he and his mother could not get what they wanted. Instead, he got infected with the HIV virus and became bedridden. The drama finally punished the cultured character Demlew and Imagela for their undesirable act over Anguatch by rewarding her for promoting the modern way of cultural attitude in the society. In general, Yeken Kiginit has played an important role in seeking 'missing voices' by depicting the clash between old and modern cultural attitudes through its message. In fact, the researcher believes that the Yeken Kiginit serial drama attempts to address at least most issues that affect the rights and privileges of women in this country.

Modification of established cultural values

Yeken Kiginit has tried not only to expose but also to modify established cultural values that result in women's inequality by blending messages into the story. Women have suffered long due to the prevailing cultural values of inequality and imposition in Ethiopia. These values, which were exhibited in serial drama as a manifestation of our culture, are still considered by most men in rural areas as invaluable. This researcher has learnt that the serial drama writers have received a proper training on how it was important to be familiarized with the culture and norms of the characters as well as the settings in the drama before starting the writing job. Based on the training they received, the writers have indulged themselves in modifying the already established cultural values that have a negative impact on the rights and privileges of women through the positive characters such as Fikerte and the transitional characters such as Sereke, Shashe and the health officer.

Yeken Kiginit was designed and produced using the Sabido style, a style which has been accepted in many countries as an effective method in bringing about behavior change among different audiences through cultural modification (Sabido & Barker, 2005). The post-intervention survey conducted by Birhan Research and Development Consultancy, an organization subcontracted by PMC-Ethiopia to evaluate the implementation of the radio serial drama, has verified the fact that the drama achieved its target by bringing behavioral change among a large portion of audience members. And the researcher believes that one of the reasons that the serial drama was able to influence the beliefs and emotions of its audience was because its message was based on their culture and traditions.

The drama has developed positive characters to embody positive values on the value grids and to be an ideal to which the audience could aspire. The aim of creating such aspirations among the audience is bringing behavioral changes in real life situations that encourage them to accept gender equality and also impede them practicing antisocial values that could result unequal gender relations.

To examine this fact in Yeken Kiginit, the researcher analyzes two episodes of Yeken Kiginit that focus on how the chauvinistic attitude of men resulted from their cultural outlook affects the lives of women and how it was attempted by the producers to modify such attitude to the culture. One of the issues that Yeken Kiginit is intended to bring cultural modification among the society through its message is by exposing the grim facts of wife-beating. Wife beating has been witnessed in Ethiopia, causing long-term physical and psychological damage to women's lives. And one of the manifestations of the prevailing unhealthy attitude (in most areas it is taken as an accepted norm) that belittle women in Ethiopia is wife beating (Assefa, 2005). But such practice, according to the drama producers, is not regarded as wrong act in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas.

Serial drama writer Mesfin Getachew says that wife-beating has been a common phenomenon in our culture, especially in places where abduction and rape are rampant. 'After all, the aim of such serial dramas is to expose how our culture dominates the rights and privileges of women, and we have attempted to exhibit the grim facts of wife beating and rape through Shashe and Sereke.' he told the researcher in an interview. Such kinds of attitude and behaviour were frequently reflected in serial dramas. In the following episode, the serial writers probably attempt to show how the life of millions of women in Ethiopia is affected by rape, a crime which is out of control in the rural parts of the country. (Shashe is the owner of a local bar in Tena Adam, a place that has no development infrastructure, and harmful traditional practices like abduction and rape are widespread.

Sereke is an elementary school teacher who is always disappointed in the attitude of local men who consider themselves superior to women and commit rape and abduction on a regular basis. The physical damage seen on Wubalem's body, resulting from the beating and rape of her husband Chane, was not regarded by other local men as a wrong action, and even most of them justified him as a husband who has the full right to do it. If a woman left her husband due to his harassment and beating, they would blame her as a failure in marriage. By then, Shashe and Sereke start discussing the grim fact of how women are abused in the area.)

Shashe: Is it fair to say such things to a woman? Is she not the creation of God like them? Because she couldn't defend herself, how could she incur all those physical damages?

Sereke: Ignore them!

Shashe: How could I ignore them, teacher! ...At least they have a mother, a sister, or at least a relative. Abduction, rape, marriage without the consent of the two partners, early marriage... could happen to their sisters, daughters, and even to their mothers.

Sereke: That is their ignorance!

Shashe: Teacher! ... I don't know why a man becomes shy of using the condom when committing adultery. I don't even know why a man, who raped a woman, ignores that that would also one day be the fate of his sister.

Sereke: I can understand your anger, and we should try our best with a sober mind at least.

Shashe: How can I be sober looking at all these tragic events?

Sereke: Don't get desperate. Until those who commit these crimes become desperate, we shouldn't be either.

Women can be beaten by their husband for different reasons, says Dr. Assefa Haile-Mariam of AAU in his post-intervention survey on the effect of Yeken Kiginit and Dhimbiba serial dramas among listeners. According to Dr. Assefa, the reason that most husbands beat their wives is: 'if she goes out without telling him; if she neglects the children, if she argues with him; or if she refuses to have sex with him.' (PMC Publication, 2005:118) What was exhibited in the lives of different characters of Yeken Kiginit, such as Shashe and Sereke, seems to emanate from a prior understanding of the culture of the people by the script writers. In the above episode, even if Sereke tried to encourage Shashe, she could not hide her desperate feeling of getting a solution for male dominance in the society. What she has been left with was the blame for the culture that exposed her for all the bad happenings that surrounded her.

In Ethiopia, especially in rural areas, girls have been taught since childhood not to discuss or even think about sex or whom to marry. Therefore, for girls and young women, having a life partner of their own choice is unthinkable. Rather, they consider themselves as a sex object made to please the man.

In this respect, the Yeken Kiginit serial drama has attempted to exhibit this fact through the life of Wubalem and modify the existing cultural values among the society. (Wublaem, a 16-year-old girl, who highly desires to pursue her education and later marry her lover Mekuria. But her father, Irgete, put pressure and even forced her to marry Chane, a wealthy farmer in their surroundings. Chane, who is old enough to be Wubalem's father, has six children from two previous marriages. Chane promised to offer me a plot of land if he agreed to give me Wubalem's hand.

Even the priest of the family was involved in this case and urged Irgete to fulfill Chane's desire or a curse would fall upon the family. Wubalem discussed the issue with her mother Minda, as the mother has no knowledge of what was going on between her husband and Chane. Even if she knew the fact, she has no power to save her daughter from being taken by Chane.)

Wubalem: My father has decided to give me to Chane. (She is crying)

Minda: /shocked/ how do you know?

Wubalem: The priest was here a moment ago.

Minda: What did he say?

Wubalem: He has sent a message.

Minda: Whose message has he sent?

Wubalem: It was Chanes.

Minda: This will never happen!

Wubalem: He already told the priest that I will marry him.

(Irgete enters the house in the middle of the discussion.)

Irgete: /in an angry voice/ Wubalem!

Wubalem: Yes, father.

Irgete: Go and bring the children.

Irgete: Why is she lamenting?

Minda: What was the reason for the priest's visit today?

Irgete: You better serve me food first before asking questions that are not your concern.

Minda: But you asked me why she cried.

Irgete: I know the reason. It is the joy of marrying Chane.

Minda: Why do you want to offer your daughter to a man like Chane, who is so rude and manner less than his previous wives?

Irgete: He is notless mannerly as you think. He proved himself as my good friend when I was in trouble.

Minda: So you gave him Wubalem as a favor.

Irgete: Can you find a better husband for him in terms of wealth and family background?

Minda: What about his bad manners... you know how many times he married and divorced.

Although Wubalem's mother tried to pursue her husband to change his mind, he became furious and warned her not to mention the issue again. He has already made up his mind to give his daughter the hand to Chane. But before a marriage ceremony took place, Chane abducted Wubalem and put her in his house as a prisoner. Abduction is one of the issues addressed by Yeken Kiginit in its different episodes to show how women's rights are violated in Ethiopia. After being abducted by Chane, Wubalem was severely beaten and exposed to long-term physical and psychological abuse. However, fortunately, she managed to escape Chane's house and returned home. But her father Irgete resisted, letting her into the house, fearing that Chane would be disappointed if he did. Wubalem also suffered in her marriage with Chane as the decision about when a daughter

should marry or not is best left to the man of the family alone. She was given to Chane without her will simply to fulfill her father's ambition. He desired to gain from his marriage, and he also fears that the curse of the priest would come up on him.

We are today witnessing that in most rural parts of Ethiopia women's life partners are chosen by their family. Due to this fact, a woman who enters into wedlock with a man, without knowledge of his past life experience, often suffers a lot. Simply by fear of curse from her parents or for being rejected by her family, she would enter into such a relationship and suffer the consequence. Sabido argues that most girls in developing countries suffer in their marriage because the father is the sole decision maker in the life of his daughter. (Sabido & Barker, 2005).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) report (2003), the grave consequence of early marriages by women and the denial of choosing their life partners are witnessed today in many developing countries:

Social expectations often put pressure on girls to marry and begin to have children before they are ready. Despite a shift toward later marriage in many parts of the world, 82 million girls in developing countries are now between the ages of 10 and 17 will be married before their 18th birthday. Early marriage jeopardizes the health and limits the opportunities afforded to women, usually disrupts their education, and often violates their human rights. (2003, p.65)

And due to this fact, many girls and young women in Ethiopia die of early pregnancy or fled to urban areas and became prostitutes. This problem is also being witnessed in the lives of women characters in the Yeken Kiginit serial drama. Sabido argues that in order to bring a desirable change in the lives of women, entertainment-education programs such as Yeken Kiginit, has a paramount role in exposing the deprived situation of girls especially in developing countries such as Ethiopia and modify the existing norm and tradition by bringing behavioral change among the target audience. (Sabido & Barker, 2005).

Mesfin Getachew, one of the serial drama script writers, also argued that such a culture of marriage is exposing the lives of millions of women to underage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, pregnancy-related diseases, and even death, and that was the reason for emphasizing the topic in the serial drama, as it needs to be altered forever.

Mesfin Getachew: Currently, in many parts of the country, the traditions and cultures of marriage by abduction are being considered as crime. And Yeken Kiginit has played its own role to bring such attitudinal change in every community by exhibiting the impact of abduction on the lives of girls and young women.

This researcher, from the message of the above episode, have come to realize that even priests may play a role in fixing such a marriage, which could

bring a devastating result on the life of the woman. In Ethiopian culture, if a girl resists accepting the request of a clergy man, she will be considered as an inviter of a curse upon herself. It also seems to this researcher that Yeken Kiginit is calling religious organizations to be involved in modifying the cultural attitude manifested by men, which negatively affects the lives of millions of women in Ethiopia.

In general, the researcher believes that men often are the sole 'beneficiary' of Ethiopian culture, and showing the negative impact of our culture on the daily lives of women means that the culture has to be modified or even sometimes changed forever.

Role models of Yeken Kiginit in depicting cultural values

Yeken Kiginit characters are designed based on the value grids that emanates from the culture, norm, and traditions of the society. The story emerges from the likely interactions of the different characters with regard to those values. The producers claim that Yeken Kiginit relied on extensive formative research to identify the culture of a specific group of people in order to develop an archetype in the drama. Then, those archetypes that represent the cultural and social values (or the antithesis of these values) will be addressed in the serial drama. Sabido says that if the formative research upon which the serial drama is based is done properly, the scriptwriters will be able to develop archetypical characters with which audience members will be able to identify. (Sabido, 2005).

Any media entertainment program has role models portrayed as bad or good men and women (positively vs. negatively valued), or sometimes they can even be both. These role models in the drama have a great impact on the audience by playing a motivating or discouraging role. In this respect, Yeken Kiginit has developed the three kinds of character - the positive, the negative, and the transitional – in order to convey its messages through them. Throughout the analysis of the selected episodes of Yeken Kiginit serial drama, three kinds of character appear, the positive, Fikerte and Anguach, the negative, Damte and Irgete, and the transitional, Demelew and Minda in Yeken Kiginit serial drama. These characters play an important role in familiarizing the audience with the story – the positive by their good impressions, the negative by their evil deeds, and the transitional by their patience to learn the truth.

Each of the above three groups of characters will move during the course of the serial drama towards or away from the pro-social behavior and be appropriately rewarded or punished. According to Barker, these movements, rewards, and punishments are carefully plotted according to the number of episodes in the serial drama in order to sustain the drama and to tell the story. Of course, all the characters are aimed to serve their purpose and create among audience members change of behaviors.

In the following, the researcher attempts to look at some of the characters from different episodes of Yeken Kiginit and how they manage to appear as role

models of the society using the following categorization of characters on the role they are expected to demonstrate in the serial drama.

Positive characters

According to Sabido, positive characters exhibit admirable or pro-social behavior – perhaps promoting the education of girls, delaying marriage, or planning the spacing of their children. (Sabido & Barker, 2005) In addition, they are expected to manifest positive values that are to be more human, caring, and sensitive than the ordinary person, and to be humble people who care for the world around them to be rewarded consistently for their positive deeds.

In this category, the researcher finds that Fikerte is one of the main positive characters who embodied positive values in Yeken Kiginit serial drama. Fikerte serves the purpose of demonstrating positive behavior in Yeken Kiginit that could account her as an icon to the audience. All parts of the drama that transmit the message of the issue of women's equality were mainly demonstrated by their firm belief in the cause. In most rural parts of Ethiopia, girls are expected to be housewives. Therefore, they are not allowed to go to school and manage their own lives using the knowledge they acquire at school. They are expected to be dependent on men economically, socially, and even in family affairs.

Fikerte's name, too, defined her role in the Yeken Kiginit serial drama as a woman who represents the right and privileges of a woman in every sphere. She fights abduction, rape, and marriage without the consent of the other partner and men who have a chauvinistic attitude. She promotes girls' education and general empowerment. In most rural parts of the country, and sometimes even in urban centers, too, parents do not provide education equally to both girls and boys. Some parents do not allow their daughters to go to school because of the cultural belief that women are not as intelligent as their male counterparts.

Fikerte are used to promote good values, such as girls' education, in Yeken Kiginit. (Fikerte is a strong proponent of girls' education, as she is also well educated and advised Wublaem to go to school. In contrast, Wubalem hesitates to accept Fikerte's advice because of fear of being considered a rude and indecent girl by her father and even by the community, too. The following dialogue between Fikerte and Wubalm could reveal how women such as Fikerte could stand and fight for their rights.)

Fikerte: Why are you crying?

Wubalem: Do I have any other alternative? [Father] is not always happy when I go to school. I have been absent for several days now.

Fikerte: I know... (She takes a long breath)

Wubalem: I have decided not to go again as long as it makes him unhappy.

Fikerte: That would not be a wise decision.

Wubalem: What shall I do then? Whenever he sees me reading a book, he rebukes me. I am fed up with his harassing words.

Fikerte: I have decided now to take you home and you will go to school there.

Wubalem: It would be a great opportunity for me, but my father will not allow you to do so.

Fikerte: Leave it to me.

We can see from this dialogue that many girls are denied the rights to go to school and to become self-reliant economically and psychologically. In most societies such as ours, the place of a woman is considered to be in the kitchen, and nowhere else. Such types of beliefs by society were strongly resisted by the positive character Fikerte as she decidedly expressed her idea of taking Wubalem with her to enroll her into school. The researcher has an opinion that Fikerte in the serial drama became instrumental in challenging the existing cultural scenario of male resistance to change their attitude towards their culture. She fights for unequal gender relations and values in society in terms of educating girls and young women. Later she strongly argued with her father that educating Wubalem means not only changing her life to better, but also having a help support for himself in times of need.

Fikerte, in this sense, played a crucial role in helping shape, rather than merely reflecting, the social reality of men and women. Sabido says the following in developing positive characters such as Fikerte in a serial drama intended to entertain as well as educate the society: Positive characters exhibit admirable, or pro-social, behavior – perhaps promoting the education of girls, delaying marriage, or planning the spacing of their children. (2002).

Indeed, Fikerte has exhibited all those pro-social values to the cause of gender equality by becoming more human, caring, and sensitive than an ordinary person in real life. The message that blends seamlessly into her was so strong and can motivate the member of the target audience to recognize and accept the vital role of women in society. Script writer Mesfin Getachew, too, agrees on this fact and believes in showing the real scenario that women are facing today through the life of Fikerte.

Mesfin Getachew: When we first discussed on the formative research study, the writers and the producers came to consensus that the drama should manifest, as far as possible, all the problems of women in the country. And the best option that we find to show the severity of the problem is to divide it according to the role that the characters were given in the drama. And there was no exaggerated fact in Yeken Kiginit with regard to what women are facing today especially in rural areas. But we also manage to make women victorious in their struggle for gender equality, some by themselves and some with the help of Fikerte.

According to the Social Learning Theory, which was developed by Albert Bandura and applied in the Sabido methodology, positive characters in a radio serial drama serve as a model to the audience members and may have a great effect in motivating their listeners to follow their path.

Positive rewards have a vicarious effect on the observer (in this case, the audience) and can motivate audience members to practice similar behavior (s). Punishing a role model for practicing a socially undesirable behavior likewise provides a vicarious experience for the observer and can inhibit his or her practice of the same behavior. This adoption is called modeling because it is based on the behavior of the role model. (Bandura, 1977, p.79)

Fikerte represents the positive character role in the audience by exhibiting a socially desirable behavior in the Yeken Kiginit serial drama. Although Fikerte grew up in her uncle's home in Addis Ababa, she became an archetype that represents the positive cultural and social values, and fights the negative cultural attitude of men in rural areas. The analysis of the selected episodes shows how Fikerte's life not only demonstrates positive values on the value grids, but also indicates the existence of a relatively better opportunity and freedom for women who live in cities than in rural areas in Ethiopia.

Negative characters

Negative characters can also be archetypes, embodying antisocial values and receiving appropriate punishment for their behavior. According to Sabido, (Sabido & Barker, 2005, pp.48-49) negative characters manifest the following characteristics in the serial drama: demonstrate behavior that illustrate the negative values in the values grid have negative behavior which is slightly exaggerated, are regularly punished for their bad behavior occasionally suffer internally and regret their actions, but do not change. By adopting the Sabido methodology, Yeken Kiginit serial drama attempts to show the chauvinistic attitude of men by exhibiting negative characters such as Irgete and Damte. The next episode from Yeken Kiginit attempts to show how women are underprivileged in their societies, and also how those responsible for their misery are punished accordingly. (Irgete treats his wife Minda as his servant. Minda has no right to speak about her siblings or any other family affairs, as we have seen in the engagement of Wubalem to Chane. Here also Minda appears to be the sole decision maker in the life of his son Ababu.)

Minda: Please! Let him stop his cattle herding job and continue his education.

Irgete: (He laughs) the tail of a goat cannot cover anything. Who is advising you such a rubbish idea? And don't forget that I am the man in the house, the decision is mine.

Minda: Is not my child as well?

Irgete: Keep quiet! You don't have a business doing such things. Your place is in the kitchen, and I know that Fikerte is the one who instigates you to talk like that to me.

This dialogue is intended to show that the right of women to participate in the decision-making process is denied even at the household level. One of the issues addressed by the Yeken Kiginit serial drama was promoting women's

equality at every level, including decision making from elementary (such as small purchases) to major household decisions that affect the lives of the members of the household. Dr. Negussie Tefferra claims that one of the fundamental aspects of Yeken Kiginit is bringing into light how women suffered for long in their marriage life, and that was successfully conveyed to the target audience using characters that reject the pro-social values.

This researcher believes that negative characters such as Irgete have an equal role to positive characters in depicting some of the main gender issues that were widely advocated and addressed by the drama, such as education for girls, improving the status of women, equal job opportunities and equal participation in all aspects of developmental activities, spousal communication, and respect for women's reproductive health rights. Sabido says that the negative characters that reject the pro-social behavior embody social stereotypes that are likely to impede people in the target audience from practicing the proposed behavior. (Sabido & Barker, 2005:48) Indeed, the negative characters in Yeken Kiginit such as Irgete, Damtew, and Chane have exhibited behaviors that illustrate the negative values in the value grids of PMC such as rape, abduction, belittling women, and philandering.

From the demonstrated behavior of the negative character Irgete, it appears that unless and otherwise women's access to sources of income through employment and other income-generating programs is improved, they would remain to be considered by male chauvinists as beings fit only for the kitchen.

Transitional Characters

Transitional characters, according to the Sabido methodology, demonstrate movements from negative to positive values during the course of the serial drama. By doing so, they become role models of attitude and behavior change for members of the audience to emulate. According to Sabido characteristics who are expected to be manifested by transitional characters of the serial drama oscillate between good and bad values have interests, ideas and tendencies that are in conflict with those of others are the ones closest to the audience, ordinary people struggling through life are rewarded and punished appropriately.

A good example of exhibiting such transitional character behavior in Yeken Kiginit is Wubalem's husband Mekuria. Mekuria tried to impose his idea first on the basis of his cultural background, but he later surrendered himself to the idea of the positive character Wubalem. One of the cultural value grids of PMC that was intended to be promoted in this serial drama was that: 'It's good that mothers limit the number of children they have to bear.'

As the burden of the child's bearing is mostly the sole responsibility of the woman, her decision to carry or not carrying a child is also very important. But our culture would not allow her to have the opportunity of limiting the number of offspring's in the family. It is a fact that women in most rural parts of Ethiopia have no right to space or limit the number of their children they give birth to. As long as the man wants to have a child, she has to bear one. The following scene is

a typical example of how women in rural Ethiopia are denied their status in the family due to the cultural attitude of men.

After getting her father's consent to leave her tyrannical husband Chane, Wubalem married her lover Mekuria. Soon after their marriage, Wubalem becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby girl. Wubalem's older sister, Fikerte, encourages Wubalem to use family planning to postpone having her next child. But Wubalem was facing the same trend of male dominance again by her husband Mekuria. Fikerte's advice incites the following conversation between Wubalem and Mekuria.

Mekuria: You pay too much attention to the crazy words of your sister,

Fikerte. You listen more to her advice than to mine. You give less weight to my position as the head of the household. You received the order from your sister to limit the number of our children.

Wubalem: Let's live according to our means...that's what I say. I know what having many children is like. It results in suffering, and I don't like that.

Mekuria: I am a hard-working farmer. I have all the energy in the world. I can feed others' children, not to mention my own... There is no reason for me to hold myself back from having as many children as I like.

Wubalem: Listen to me, Mekuria. My father was as strong as you when he started to have so many children, but what legacy did he leave behind for us? What did he gain from it himself in the first place?

Mekuria: Don't compare me to your father.

Wubalem: Many brave men in our area produce numerous children and leave because they have nothing to feed them. They cannot stand their suffering. They cannot listen to their cries. What I am saying is that we have to take the necessary precautions. Why don't you learn some lessons from your friend Awgichew, who lives a good life? Look at his home.

Mekuria: Stop, I say stop!

As a transitional character in the drama, Mekuria first resists the idea of Wubalem, who wants to limit the number of their children in the family. But, based on the Sabido-style serial dramas, Mekuria demonstrates behavior of a transitional character who finally surrenders himself to the idea of the positive character.

In analyzing the message of this serial drama, the researcher has reached to an understanding that all the three types of characters formulated by Sabido were developed in the Yeken Kiginet serial drama. Among those, this researcher has come across in its message analysis: positive (Fikerte and Anguatch) exhibit admirable prosocial values such as promoting girls' education; the negative (Irgete and Damte) embodied antisocial values that emanated mainly from the culture and tradition of the society such as denying equal rights

to the wife in family affairs; and transitional (Mekuria and Gezmu) oscillate and finally overcome barriers to change themselves from believing bad cultural values, such as believing in marriage with the consent of the two couples rather than marriage by abduction, respect of the wife and accepting the role of women in family affairs.

Due to the fact that the cultural upbringing has made most men consider themselves superior to women, men will not allow anyone to interfere with any issue that concerns their belief. Yeken Kiginit serial drama attempts to depict this fact through its transitional characters, Mekuria and Gezmu, in the above episodes. In general, the characters in the Yeken Kiginit radio serial drama developed in their personalities and beliefs, as they are the main transmitters of the intended message to the audience through dialogue. And by developing such characters, the listener may find an archetypical essence of himself or herself that interacts with the social message.

Conclusion

One of the several issues pertinent to Ethiopia that the serial drama dealt with was how the male chauvinistic attitude affects women's equality in every aspect of life. Most male characters in the drama are representatives of the chauvinistic attitude practiced among the society in real-life situations. These attitudes that emanated from the cultural background of men were manifested in the drama resulting in marriage by abduction, rape, female genital mutilation, wife beating, and other antisocial activities. Such practices were given a considerable time in the drama with the intended purpose of manifesting a male-chauvinistic attitude.

This researcher believes that the drama has achieved its intended goal by exposing most of the cultural factors that affect women's status in society through the fictional lives of the characters. The researcher has also observed, in doing the message analysis of Yeken Kiginit that women were denied their right to participate in decision making, including at a house hold level. Decisions such as when and with whom the daughter marries, whether the wife will be allowed to work outside the home, and about family planning were made by men and men only. This is also a reflection of the chauvinistic attitude of men that prevails in society.

This researcher believes that Yeken Kiginit has played a key role in depicting the real picture of the status of women in society. Women were deprived of their rights and privileges for long, and one way of exposing these scenarios is by giving them a chance to speak for themselves how they are maltreated, abused, and suffered at the hands of their male counterparts. Based on this fact, producers of Yeken Kiginit serial drama have succeeded in finding the 'missing voices' by putting the proper emphasis on reflecting the reality facing women today in society.

This research concludes that Yeken Kiginit in terms of using the intercultural communication dimension of masculinity versus femininity largely

succeeded in exposing the real problems of women in Ethiopia by illustrating with familiar examples how many women are disadvantaged in many aspects of life. This researcher recognizes the fact that serial dramas such as Yeken Kiginit can play a paramount role in depicting the various socio-cultural problems that exist in our Ethiopian society.

Recommendations

It is a fact that women's involvement in decision making at different levels will determine their status in the family and in society at large. But it should be supported by all concerned bodies including the government organs, not only by passing laws, but also by helping them achieve their rightful place in the society. For instance, the Constitution of FDRE Article 35: 2 and 8 say the following on the rights of women in marriage and in employment: Women have the same rights as men in marriage as prescribed by this constitution. Women shall have a right to equality in employment, promotion, pay, and transfer of pension entitlements.

Even though the different laws and policies issued by the Ethiopian government encourage women's participation in the country's development efforts, they should be supported by other methods that can create awareness among the community. That is why Sabido argues that serial dramas such as Yeken Kiginit 'should not create values, but reinforce pre-existing pro-social values, attitudes, and behaviors'. The moral framework (for a Sabido-style serial drama) ensures that the social message corresponds to issues that are officially sanctioned and that it is relevant to an agenda articulated by national policy makers (2005).

As this research study has discussed and illustrated, Yeken Kiginit largely succeeded in exposing the real problems of women in Ethiopia, showing in an entertaining but yet educative manner how women often are disadvantaged in many aspects of life. It is assumed that by applying different methodologies that include a local approach to local challenges in their message in the production of serial dramas, such as Sabido's, other NGOs engaged in media related activities can also achieve a satisfactory result. Based on the experiences of the Yeken Kiginit serial drama and its research-based entertainment education, it is believed that this format could serve as a model for other Ethiopian dramas in the future.

Limitations of the research

Due to time and resource constraints only 10 of the 257 occurrences are examined in this study endeavour. Ten episodes may not be sufficient to provide a comprehensive and representative overview of the show, but the researcher is adamant that the samples chosen can accurately portray the drama's intended message as a whole because they were carefully chosen to demonstrate the drama's intended message, which is about how a fun and educational media programme like Yeken Kiginit can support women's rights by highlighting societal attitudes towards gender inequality and cultural stereotyping.

However, as was already indicated, due to time and resource limitations, the research solely looks at the text message of the serial drama from the standpoint of gender and culture. Consequently, this could be this research's additional restriction.

Declarations

Declaration of statement

This researcher declares that this thesis is an original work and that all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Ethical Considerations

The graduate school of journalism and communications at Addis Ababa University gave its consent to the research, which was also carried out in accordance with university regulations.

Conflict of interest

The author confirms that there is no conflict of interest.

Informed consent

The author has obtained the informed consent of all participants.

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