

انطباع صورة المرأة في الاعلام : دراسة حالة الكويت

لبنى أحمد القاضي
هبة المسلم

ملخص: نحن ندرك أن وسائل الاعلام قد تدخلت في وعينا في طرق كثيرة سواء من خلال المذياع ونحن في طريقنا إلى العمل أو الإنترنت أو التلفزيون في أوقات الفراغ. ونعلم أن هذه الوسائل أو الأشكال هي ردة فعل للعالم الخارجي. وهذه الورقة هي دراسة لعينة مؤلفة من 600 من الشباب، ذكور وإناث، وذلك لدراسة مدى تأثير وسائل الإعلام على مواقفهم تجاه المرأة، وفيما إذا كانت وسائل الإعلام لديها تحيز بين الجنسين من وجهة نظرهم.

استبانة وسائل الإعلام المستخدمة في هذا المسح مكونة من 25 سؤالاً، وقد سعت للإجابة عن فروض الدراسة الحالية: (1) الشباب الكويتي، الذكور والإناث يتصورون المرأة بشكل سلبي بسبب وسائل الإعلام. (2) بسبب التلفزيون فإن الرجال والنساء ينظرون للزواج بشكل سلبي. (3) المسلسلات الخليجية تعطي صورة نمطية نموذجية، وصورة غير واقعية للنساء اللاتي يعشن في منطقة الخليج (4) التغطية الإعلامية الجديدة منحازة لقضايا المرأة.

مستوى قياس الاستبانة يتألف من حالة وصف النفس self-descriptive. التي استجاب لها المشاركون على مقياس مؤلف من 5 نقاط، تراوح بين 5 = أبداً، 4 = نادراً، 3 = أحياناً، 2 = غالباً، 1 = دائماً.

في هذه الدراسة يرى كل من الذكور والإناث أن الصحف اليومية والإذاعة تعطي الوقت الكافي لقضايا المرأة ولكن اختلف الذكور مع الإناث في الدراسة على صورة المرأة في البرامج الحوارية؛ حيث إنهم يرون المرأة أكثر كفاءة فيها وفي الدراما التلفزيونية أكثر حساسية، باعتبار أن ذلك لا يعكس الواقع.

على كل يوافق الذكور والإناث على أن المسلسلات الدرامية تؤثر في وجهات نظر

الناس في الزواج، ويمكن أن تكون كعامل مثبت لجيل الشباب نحو الزواج، كما أن البيوت المفككة والعنف الأسري يتم عرضهما في الدراما العربية عامة والخليجية خاصة.

المصطلحات الأساسية: الكويت، المرأة، الصورة، التلفزيون، الدراما، الإعلام.

The Perception of Women in Media: Case Study of Kuwait

*Lubna A. Al-Kazi**
*Heba K. Al-Musallam***

Abstract: Media intrudes on our consciousness in more ways than we realize, whether it is through the radio while commuting to work or through the internet or the television during our leisure time. We know that it shapes our reaction to the outside world. This paper is a survey of 600 young males and females in Kuwait to study the extent of influence media has on their attitude towards women and whether media has a gender bias in their viewpoint.

In this study both male and female respondents felt that the daily newspapers and radio were giving sufficient time to women's issues. There is a general consensus that mass media influences people's perception of appropriate roles for women and girls. These gender stereotypes then influence the cultural expectations of the viewer and blur the social reality as reflected on TV, reinforcing them as the norm. Men watched talk shows a great deal and 46% of the men in the study sample watched always or often. Thus, the image of women in the talk shows is very important; both men and women agree that talk shows presented women guests as educated (73% of male respondents and 61% of female respondents). However, in television serials, which men watched more than women, 67% of male viewers saw women as arrogant while 42% of female viewers saw women's image as realistic. This further emphasizes how television can influence perception and reinforce it as reality. On the other hand, both men and women agreed that these serials and dramas were influencing people's views on marriage and could be a factor discouraging the young generation as broken marriages and domestic violence were always sensationalized in Arabic drama, in general and Gulf drama, in particular.

* College of Social Science, Kuwait University.

** College of Art, Kuwait University.

Key words: Kuwait, Women, Image, Television, Drama, Media.

Introduction

With the innovation in communication technology, people are spending more time interacting with media than ever before. Moreover, it is no longer restricted to the traditional radio, television and daily newspapers, as electronic media on hand held mobiles, laptops, etc. have gained popularity influencing viewers who are watching the World through the lenses of the media. With the images of men and women regularly projected on the screen, it is highly unlikely that we would be immune to its impact on our own sense of identity or our perception of reality.

In the early sixties, television had just entered the homes of the Arabian Gulf societies. Only local stations were broadcasting, and usually families had only one television that everyone watched together. Now, most families in Kuwait, as in other Arabian Gulf countries, have at least two or three televisions and watch channels from all over the World.

Kuwait is an oil rich country in the Arabian Gulf with a population of 3.5 million according to 2010 statistics (Ministry of Planning, 2011). The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$51,497 (Data: <http://www.worldbank.org/indicators/GDP>). Television is a commodity affordable by all. In 2000, there were 624 radio and 486 television sets for every 1,000 persons in Kuwait (Kuwait-Media.org). Furthermore, according to the statistics of 1998, there are 13 television satellite stations and 17 radio stations broadcasting in Kuwait. Except for KTV, the others are privately owned. It has four stations controlled by the Ministry of Information (Kuwait-Media.org).

Youngsters can watch TV on the Internet or even on hand held devices, thus the majority of the younger generation have the freedom to watch TV on their own, and they can choose the programs they want to view.

In the last three decades, Kuwait has witnessed a tremendous change in the role and progress of women in the society. Political rights which were recently granted to women in 2004, led women to campaign and lobby in the media. Though women have free access to media outlets, it is known that media can sometimes engender bias or promote negative behavior. When women activists were campaigning for political rights in

the nineties, some newspapers like Al-Watan favoured the Islamist position and published their articles, where Islamist MPs like Tabtabaei depicted these suffragists as bourgeoisie women, who were idle spinsters with nothing better to do. They made women and men believe that if these women had families, they would have no time to lobby for these rights. AlMughni and Tétrault(2007) said that the media distorted the true reality of different groups of women working together for political rights. After the Amir's decree, they found that even the supportive pro-women daily Al-Qabas featured a series of interviews with suffragists implying that they hadn't been able to work strategically together (Al-Mughni & Tétrault, 2007). These articles served to convince readers that women did not have a united front. Therefore, printed media by putting interviews in a biased context can influence public opinion. When the vote was defeated in the Parliament "portrayals of the women's movement across Kuwaiti media outlets supported anti-suffragist assertions that the suffragists themselves were responsible for the defeat of the Amiri decree in 2006" (Al-Mughni & Tétrault, 2007).

Previous studies:

Literature on women and media since the 70s has shown that women's relationship to media has been "uneven and contradictory" (Byerly, 1999). With the rise of feminism, light was shed on how women were marginalized and misinterpreted in media content. Feminist media scholars have attempted in their research to unravel the causes of these problems and offer strategies to rectify what Gallagher (2001) called "Women's unfinished story".

In *Women and media: A critical introduction* (2006), the scholars show that "contemporary media coverage of women is providing more diversity than two decades ago as women's progress must eventually be mirrored in the large and small screen" (Byerly & Ross, 2006). However, soap operas and films still reinstate stereotypes and objectify women as sexually motivated characters or victims of male violence. Stories of women successful in their careers or as leaders are rarely shown in media.

Describing women and girls on TV since the 1990s and into the 21st century has been problematic as different satellite channels portray females according to their own culture. However, there is a general consensus that mass media influences people's perception of appropriate

roles for women and girls. Women are often shown on TV in traditional roles such as housewives, mothers, secretaries, teachers, while men are shown as husbands, fathers, doctors, business tycoons and political figures. Whether in Kuwait or in the West the portrayal of women and men on TV is largely traditional and stereotypical. These gender stereotypes then influence the cultural expectations of the viewers and blur the social reality as reflected on TV, reinforcing them as the “norm”. While the older generations may watch News or cultural programs, the younger generation prefers Reality Shows or Soap Operas. As Dr. Pamela Rutledge said in media psychology “social media is changing the way people interact with information and how that impacts their behavior” (Rutledge, 2005). This objectifying of women or making them victims to the predatory males on soap operas makes the viewer see these behaviors as common place and not unacceptable. Some scholars see religious talk shows in these Arab stations emphasizing patriarchal fundamentalism in their discourse through their hosts, or, music stations and soap operas using women as commodities to sell fashion, music.. etc. While some others like Mernissi (2005), Amin (2001) and Sakr (2007) see satellite television as a medium to remove archaic notions of women and instead educate the audience on the progress made by women in the region through inviting women to use these channels as a platform to voice their ideas and defend their issues, thus being a means for empowerment and enlightenment. But others like Abu-Lughod (2005) and McLaughtlin (2002) warn of political or economic powers that control media and may influence or constrain women’s dialogue on the air.

Theoretical perspectives:

With the development of communication technologies, the study of its effect on human behavior has gained momentum. This discipline relied on three other major fields of study - Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology. It relied on Psychology to study human behavior, on Sociology to study the society and the social processes and their interactions with the media, and on Anthropology to examine how communication has led to cultural change or has been affected by cultural change.

Two major theoretical approaches have been utilized by researchers to study the social effects of mass media. Cultivation theory is a social

theory that was developed by George Gerbner and Larry Gross in the 70s to evaluate the role of television on the perception of people of the World around them. This theory suggests that exposure to television over time “cultivates” viewers’ perception of reality. Gerbner and Gross (1976) believed that television as a medium socializes most people into standardized roles and behaviors. Its function is “enculturation”.

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli (1986) argued that while religion and education were the major agents of socialization earlier and had an impact on social trends and mores, at present with the popularity of media, televised images and messages cultivate preferences and predispositions from infancy into the consciousness of viewers. Here, the concern is that “if the media presents female characters with only a limited range of attributes, skills and abilities, viewers will develop equally limited assumptions about the sexes” (Ward, 2005). According to Miller (2005) critiques of cultivation theory state that demographic variables such as age, gender, education can influence the impact of television on the viewer’s perception. For example the influence of media is greater on the younger viewers. Teenagers view television for at least 4 hours and the real world gets blurred as they absorb the programs, and negative values are easily transmitted into their World view (Saleh, 2009). In brief, cultivation theory states that the content of television influences the beliefs people hold about the nature of the world (Miller, 2005).

The other major theory is the Social Cognitive Theory developed by Albert Bandura in the seventies. He stated that mass media played an influential role as an agent of socialization. One of the premises of this theory is that children absorb and imitate modeled behaviors (Bandura, 1977). He added that the accessibility of television and the amount of time spent viewing television affects behavior. The potential influence of television is greatest during adolescence since gender identity is being formed at this stage and dominant gender images on TV can shape their characters. Teen vocabulary has been shaped by the verbal messages in media whether in songs or in soap operas. In the nineties in Kuwait, the portrayals of youth taking drugs in serials like “Droob Al-Shaq” and “AL-Kader AL-Maktum” or violence against women in “Shar Al-Nafus” led to modeling or imitation by some viewers who perceived these behaviors as acceptable or as the social reality of their culture. In the summer of 2014, there was a shift in Kuwaiti drama, where women’s

issues were tackled realistically in a different way from the sensational drama shown in the past (*Further discussion after Table 8*).

Furthermore, media can also have a positive effect on social cognition as we witnessed in the debates held between female political candidates which were aired on television and radio in 2009 in Kuwait. They showed the viewers that women have knowledge and skills. This shaped many viewers' beliefs of women's political roles and influenced voting behavior to elect four female MPs in those elections.

In the new millennium, electronic media are coming to play an increasingly influential role as transcultural advances in the technology of communication are transforming the nature of reach, speed and loci of human influence (Bandura, 2002). YouTube and electronic sites now shape public opinion. Reality shows such as "the Biggest Loser" were transcultural and motivated viewers to a healthier life style. Talk shows have allowed viewers to call and discuss sensitive issues that were considered taboo earlier. Therefore, films, reality shows and soap operas can either bring about positive social change through its character or instill fear about marriage, by portraying violence, divorce, etc. To sum up, in social cognitive theory, the major premise is that viewers learn by observing others and this affects their attitudes leading to new styles of conduct and emotional responses.

Methodology

Data Analysis:

A descriptive approach was selected to address the research questions. Descriptive analyses were conducted to provide information about the sample and find the means, standard deviation and range of scores. The media questionnaire used in the survey consisted of 25 questions, which sought to answer the current study hypotheses: (1) Youth, both males and females perceive women negatively due to the media; (2) Due to television, men and women view marriage negatively; (3) Gulf serials give a stereotypical unrealistic image of women living in the Gulf region; (4) Media coverage is biased on women's issues. The questionnaire scale consisted of self-descriptive statement, to which participants responded on a 5-point scale ranging from 5 = NA; 4 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Mostly; 1 = Always.

Research sample:

A sample of 600 respondents participated in the study. A random sample was chosen of 300 males and 300 females. In some instances, the questionnaire was given to men to complete in their Diwanias [where men gather to chat], and in some other cases, workplaces were visited randomly to get respondents as well as randomly asking students across various university campuses (Kuwait University & Private Universities). On average, the participants were 27.78 years old at the time of the study. Of the total sample, 72.5% were younger than 30 years old. 21.1 % were between 31 and 49 years old, and 6.4% were above 50 years old. 51.4% of the sample were male and 48.6% female. The majority of the participants were Kuwaitis and only 6.0% were non-Kuwaitis. In the sample, 53.3% comprised of students, 34.8% employed, and 9.8% housewives.

Results:

In Table 1, the demographic characteristics of the sample are outlined as follows:

Table 1

Demographic characteristic	N (%)
Age	
< 30 years old	416 (69.3%)
31-49 years old	121 (20.2%)
> 50 years	37 (6.2%)
Gender	
<i>Male</i>	302 (51.4%)
<i>Female</i>	285 (48.6%)
Nationality	
<i>Kuwaiti</i>	555 (93.9%)
<i>non-Kuwaiti</i>	36 (6.1%)
Occupation Status	
<i>Student</i>	320 (53.3%)
<i>Employed</i>	209 (34.8%)
<i>Housewife</i>	59 (9.8%)

Table 2: Amount of Time Spent Watching Programs by Males and Females

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	News	M	78 (26.5)	55 (18.7)	60 (20.4)	72 (24.5)	29 (9.9)	3.769	.438
		F	59 (21.1)	46 (16.5)	63 (22.6)	82 (29.4)	29 (10.4)		
2.	Serials	M	101 (35.1)	80 (27.8)	49 (17.0)	45 (15.6)	13 (4.5)	22.268	.000
		F	93 (32.9)	88 (31.1)	78 (27.6)	21 (7.4)	3 (1.1)		
3.	Films	M	142 (48.5)	76 (25.9)	44 (15.0)	23 (7.8)	8 (2.7)	22.115	.000
		F	93 (33.0)	69 (24.5)	60 (21.3)	43 (15.2)	17 (6.0)		
4.	Talk Shows	M	47 (16.4)	62 (21.7)	78 (27.3)	65 (22.7)	34 (11.9)	13.114	.011
		F	46 (16.5)	75 (27.0)	92 (33.1)	52 (18.7)	13 (4.7)		

In Table 2, a statistical difference was found between men and women with respect to the amount of serial programs that they watch ($X^2 = 22.268$, $p = 0.000$). Men watch more serials than women (see Table 2) [35.1% of the men compared to 32.9% of the women]. Moreover, a statistical significance was detected between men and women with respect to the amount of films that they reported watching ($X^2 = 22.115$, $p = 0.000$). The amount of films that the participants reported watching is described as follows: 48.5% of the men compared to 33.0% of the women said they watch films “Always”. Also, a statistical significance was found between men and women in regard to the amount of talk shows that they watch ($X^2 = 13.114$, $p = 0.011$). Women watch talk shows more than men, as the topics are often relevant to females, 11.9% of the men and 4.7% of the women said they do not watch talk shows.

Table 3: Amount of Time Spent Watching Kuwaiti TV Stations by Respondents

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	News	M	51 (18.8)	49 (18.1)	58 (21.4)	73 (26.9)	40 (14.8)	11.507	.021
		F	59 (21.1)	46 (16.5)	53 (18.3)	78 (27.0)	29 (10.0)		
2.	Songs	M	80 (27.9)	77 (26.8)	54 (18.8)	35 (12.2)	41 (14.3)	31.856	.000
		F	41 (15.0)	49 (17.9)	61 (22.3)	70 (25.6)	52 (19.0)		

In Table 3, A statistical difference was found between men and women regarding their habit of watching Kuwaiti TV channels such as news channels ($X^2 = 11.507$, $p = 0.021$) and songs channels ($X^2 = 31.856$, $p = 0.000$). More women watched Kuwait news channels than men. On the other hand, from table 3, songs channels in Kuwait are watched always by 27.9% of the men compared to 15.0% of the women, and 26.8% of the men compared to 17.9% of the women said “Mostly”. This table shows that Kuwaiti women are keen on knowing what’s in the news.

Table 4: Opinions by Gender about Whether News on Television Covers Women’s Issues Sufficiently or not:

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	Sufficient	M	78 (28.4)	76(27.6)	67(24.4)	32(11.6)	22(8.0)	61.802	.000
		F	20 (7.4)	56 (20.7)	117 (43.3)	62 (23.0)	15 (5.6)		
2	Limited	M	39(15.2)	91(35.5)	71(27.7)	33(12.9)	22(8.6)	14.369	.006
		F	32 (11.9)	100 (37.3)	103 (38.4)	25 (9.3)	8 (3.0)		
3	Insufficient	M	54 (21.4)	51(20.2)	51(20.2)	51(20.2)	54(21.4)	17.554	.002
		F	54 (20.8)	82 (31.7)	57 (22.0)	43 (16.6)	23 (8.9)		

A statistical difference was found between men and women’s opinions regarding whether news presents women’s issues sufficiently ($X^2 = 61.802$, $p = 0.000$), limitedly ($X^2 = 14.369$, $p = 0.006$), or insufficiently ($X^2 = 17.554$, $p = 0.002$). Whether or not participants considered that news presented women’s issues sufficiently, the participants responded as follows: 28.4% of the men compared to 7.4% of the women said “Always”, while 11.6% of the men compared to 23.0% of the women said “Rarely”. Results show that women perceive a bias in news coverage. This perception of bias is universal.

In this survey, Tables 5 and 6 below show that respondent’s had a favourable opinion of Talk Shows and women’s image. Also, many shows like *TawAlail* and *6/6* have both men and women guests, and the discourse is unbiased, giving all speakers a chance to express their opinions. These shows often tackle controversial issues such as corruption, lack of women in leadership, women and political office.

Table 5: Opinions by Gender about Whether Talk Shows Present a Positive Image of Women!

Gender	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	X ²	Sig
Male	212 (73.1)	78 (26.9)	8.833	.002
Female	172 (61.4)	108 (38.6)		

A statistical difference was found between men and women's opinions regarding talk shows on TV such as *6/6*, *Sira Wn Fatahat*, and *Behind Doors* and whether they present women in a positive image ($X^2 = 8.833$, $p = 0.002$). Among the women, 61.4% believed that talk shows present a positive image of women compared to 73.1% of the men. On the other hand, 38.6% of the women believed that talk shows did not present a positive image of women compared to 26.9% of the men (Table 5).

Table 6: Gender Opinions Regarding Women's Image on Talk Shows

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	Educated	M	139 (49.1)	85 (30.0)	40 (14.1)	15 (5.3)	4 (1.4)	19.017	.001
		F	92 (33.5)	116 (42.2)	55 (20.0)	11 (4.0)	11 (4.0)		
2	Ignorant	M	34 (12.7)	50 (18.7)	52 (19.5)	74 (27.7)	57 (21.3)	22.616	.000
		F	12 (4.5)	35 (13.0)	73 (27.1)	103 (38.3)	46 (17.1)		
3	Thinker	M	66 (24.6)	96 (35.8)	70 (26.1)	31 (11.6)	5 (1.9)	12.362	.015
		F	39 (14.4)	95 (35.2)	100 (37.0)	32 (11.9)	4 (1.5)		

A statistical significance was found between men and women's opinions about how the talk shows present the image of women as educated ($X^2 = 19.017$, $p = 0.001$), ignorant ($X^2 = 22.616$, $p = 0.000$), thinker ($X^2 = 12.362$, $p = 0.015$).

Whether or not participants believed that talk shows presented women as educated, the participants responded as follows: 49.1% of the men compared to 33.5% of the women said "Always"; 30.0% of the men compared to 42.2% of the women said "Mostly". However, when asked whether or not they believed that talk shows presented women as ignorant, the participants responded as follows: 12.7% of the men compared to 4.5% of the women said "Always".

Whether or not participants considered that talk shows presented women as thinkers, the participants responded as follows: 24.6% of the men compared to 14.4% of the women said “Always”; 35.8% of the men compared to 35.2% of the women said “Mostly”. Thus, talk shows were seen as conveying a positive image of women as a considerable number of the respondents had the impression that women were presented as educated thinkers during the discussions of these talk shows aired on TV.

Table 7: Gender Perceptions on Women’s Image in Television Serials

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	Arrogant	M	71 (43.3)	41(25.0)	37(22.6)	11(6.7)	4(2.4)	14.606	.006
		F	42 (26.9)	40 (25.6)	41 (26.3)	27 (17.3)	6 (3.8)		
2	Heartless	M	38 (23.2)	36(22.0)	53(32.3)	22(13.4)	15(9.1)	9.439	.051
		F	22 (13.9)	35 (22.2)	53 (33.5)	38 (24.1)	10 (6.3)		

A statistical significance was found between men and women’s opinions regarding women’s image in Television serials with respect to the two following traits: arrogant ($X^2 = 14.606$, $p = 0.006$), and heartless ($X^2 = 9.439$, $p = 0.051$). Whether or not the participants considered that TV serials presented women as arrogant, the participants responded as follows: 43.3% of the men compared to 26.9% of the women said “Always”. The participants’ opinions on whether TV serials presented women as heartless: Table (7) above shows that 23.2% of the men compared to 13.9% of the women said “Always”; 22.0% of the men and women said “Mostly”. Thus, men saw women more negatively in Television Serials.

Table 8: Gender Perceptions of the Realistic Image of Gulf Women as Presented in Gulf TV Serials

Gender	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	X ²	Sig
Male	154 (52.7)	138 (47.3)	21.701	.000
Female	94 (33.5)	187 (66.5)		

A statistical difference was found between men and women’s

opinions regarding whether Gulf TV serials presented a realistic image of women ($X^2 = 21.701$, $p = 0.000$). Among the women, 33.5% believed that Gulf TV serials presented women realistically compared to 52.7% of the men. On the other hand, Table (8) shows that 66.5% of the women believed that Gulf TV serials did not present women realistically compared to 47.3% of the men.

In tables 9 and 10, both men and women agreed strongly that television drama has had a negative impact on how marriage is viewed (64.2% of women and 62% of men). In fact, nearly 73% of women believed that the depictions of broken marriages, quarrels between couples have discouraged men from getting married. Marital relations are shown in drama to be suffering from constant conflicts.

Table 9: Women's Views on Marriage Due to Television

	Yes N (%)	No N (%)
Do you think women view marriage negatively due to Television?	183 (64.2%)	101 (35.4%)

Table 10: Impact of TV Drama on Men's Negative Perceptions of Marriage

Gender	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	X²	Sig
Male	186 (62.0)	114 (38.0)	7.857	.003
Female	207 (72.9)	77 (27.1)		

Table 11: Gender Opinions about TV Impact on Men's Perceptions of Women

Gender	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	X²	Sig
Male	260 (87.5)	37 (12.5)	11.122	.001
Female	267 (95.4)	13 (4.6)		

A statistical difference was found between men and women

regarding their opinionson whether men were affected by TV's image of women ($X^2 = 11.122$, $p = 0.001$). Among the women, 95.4% believed that men were affected by the women's image on TV compared to 87.5% of the men. Only 4.6% of the women believed that men were not affected by the women's image on TV compared to 12.5% of the men (Table 11). Thus, the majority acknowledge the influence of television on shaping our perceptions of people.

In this study, 35% of men and 25% of women said that televisionportrays women as housewives (significance of.001) (see Table 12 below).

A statistical difference was found between men and women's opinions about how TV portrays women as housewives ($X^2 = 18.272$, $p = 0.001$), as friends ($X^2 = 21.436$, $p = 0.000$), and as working women ($X^2 = 11.592$, $p = 0.021$). The following responses describe the participants' opinions about how TV programs portray women as housewives: 35.9% of the men compared to 25.1% of the women said "Always"; Participants opinions about how TV programs portray women as "friends", is described as follows: 24.7% of the men compared to 13.6% of the women said "Always"; Their opinions about how TV programs portray women as "working women", is described as follows: 32.2% of the men compared to 35.9% of the women said "Always"; 34.3% of the men compared to 34.9% of the women said "Mostly"; (Table 12).

Table 12: Television's portrayal of women

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	Housewife	M	103 (35.9)	70(24.4)	54(18.8)	47(16.4)	13(4.5)	18.272	.001
		F	70 (25.1)	91 (32.6)	79 (28.3)	32 (11.5)	7 (2.5)		
2.	Friend	M	71(24.7)	99(34.4)	91(31.6)	20(6.9)	7(2.4)	21.436	.000
		F	38 (13.6)	123 (43.9)	83 (29.6)	35 (12.5)	1 (0.4)		
3.	Working women	M	92 (32.2)	98(34.3)	65(22.7)	23(8.0)	8(2.8)	11.592	.021
		F	101 (35.9)	98 (34.9)	72 (25.6)	8 (2.8)	2 (0.7)		
4.	Daughter	M	71 (25.1)	83(29.3)	72(25.4)	36(12.7)	21(7.4)	7.844	.097
		F	72(25.8)	93 (33.3)	81 (29.0)	23 (8.2)	10 (3.6)		

Table 13: Gender Opinionson How Daily NewspapersDiscuss Women'sIssues

		Gender	Always N (%)	Mostly N (%)	Some- times N (%)	Rarely N (%)	NA N (%)	X ²	Sig
1.	Realistically	M	82 (30.4)	81(30.0)	75(27.8)	22(8.1)	10(3.7)	21.954	.000
		F	41 (15.3)	83 (31.0)	104 (38.8)	34 (12.7)	6 (2.2)		
2	Neutral	M	41(15.5)	96(36.2)	82(30.9)	30(11.3)	16(6.0)	18.736	.001
		F	21 (7.7)	81 (29.8)	123 (45.2)	38 (14.0)	9 (3.3)		
3	Biased	M	53 (20.2)	65(24.8)	77(29.4)	77(29.4)	77(29.4)	1.323	.857
		F	47 (17.6)	47 (17.6)	47 (17.6)	47 (17.6)	47 (17.6)		

A statistical difference was found between men and women's opinions on how the daily newspapers discussed women's issues ($X^2 = 8.532$, $p = 0.002$). Men believed that daily newspapers had sufficient coverage of women's issues. However, women disagreed with only 15% of them approving that women's issues were always in the newspapers.

Table 14: Gender Opinions on Radio Programs Coverage of Women'sIssues

Gender	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	X ²	Sig
Male	176 (55.2)	102 (42.7)	8.532	.002
Female	143 (44.8)	137 (57.3)		

Among the women, 57.3% believed that radio stations did not give enough time for the discussion of women's issues compared to 42.7% of the men. And 44.8% of the women said that radio stations "Rarely" gave enough time to discuss women's issues compared to 55.2% of the men (Table 14). Radio broadcast is important as most people in Kuwait listen to these radio stations while driving to work.

Discussion:

In the study sample, more women than men watched the news on television but they felt there was a bias while portraying women in the news or covering their issues. This is supported by other studies such as the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP).

In the one-day study, conducted by the Global Media Monitoring Project every five years, the marginalization of women in the news was reported. Even though the women subjects in the news increased from 17% in 1995 to 21% in 2005, they were briefly included in the broadcast (GMMP, 2005, p. 30). Even in stories of great concern to women such as gender-based violence, in which women are portrayed as victims, male experts are called to express their opinions and give their comments. The report added that “Women make the news not as figures of authority, but as celebrities (42%), Royalty (33%)..... Only 21% of news subjects - people who are interviewed or whom the news is about... are females” (GMMP, 2005, p. 31-32). One of the Arab countries that was included in the report was Egypt. The result of monitoring news on Feb. 16, 2005 showed that only 40 women appeared in the news compared to 260 men (GMMP, 2005, p. 80). “Arab women can be seen in the news as anchors or presenters but rarely as political leaders or experts” (Ibid, p. 80). In fact, the report stated that “The World we see in the news is a world in which women are virtually invisible” (GMMP, 2005).

The White House Project of 2005, which conducted a survey of Sunday Morning News on five major networks ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox and NBC, found that more than half of the news broadcast did not include a single woman” (White House Project 2005, p. 7). Furthermore, there is a media bias prevalent all over the World when covering political campaigns of female candidates. In *Women for President: Media bias in Eight Campaigns*, Falk (2008) found that women got unequal coverage and were often presented as incapable or unviable for political office. In the landslide labour victory in Britain in 1997, the number of women members of Parliament doubled from 63 to 120. But in the “gender quake” in British politics, the media’s role was in its typical encrusted pattern of minimizing female candidates. They reported on their clothes and hairstyles instead of their political agenda (Ross & Sreberny, 2000). In the 2009 elections in Kuwait, where four women won seats to the National Assembly, the four candidates reported when interviewed that they were asked questions about their family unlike male candidates, as if to portray them as giving precedence to their political career over their family obligations. Male candidates were never subjected to such questions. Their clothes and style were also in the news more than their answers in the interviews. Ross and Sreberny (2000) found that women

journalists would often “resort to an even more macho reporting style than their male colleagues as if to prove their professional mettle. After giving a speech in the White House upon an invitation from then the First Lady, Hillary Clinton, the author of this paper was interviewed by an Arab American female journalist for the “Washington Post”. Before concentrating on the author’s earlier White House reception speech, the journalist reported on the author’s clothes and style. This manner trivializes the act of reporting when women are the subjects of these reports.

The number of women working as news anchors has increased all over the world. Nevertheless, they are often chosen for their looks and asked to wear rather revealing attire. This was the case in the Lebanese LBC and Future TV stations, when the satellite channels first began. However, in a survey of eight Arab countries in August, 2004, viewers of both genders named Khadija bin Qenna of Al-Jazeera Channel and Muntaha Al-Ramahi of Al-Arabiya Channel among the five most preferred television anchors (Talgat, 2005, p. 28). Thus, viewers have acknowledged the professionalism of a growing number of female news anchors.

No one can deny that satellite broadcasting has provided an extensive array of talk shows that give Arab women the opportunity to access information and express their opinions by calling in, a freedom that was not available two decades ago. Daoud AlShirian, on MBC 1 has a talk show that tackles problems not previously discussed in Saudi society. He brings experts, both male and female and if the topic concerns women, veiled women from different strata’s are invited to sit on the panel and discuss their plight on the air. Callers also participate in this talk show which is very popular as it gives a fairly realistic image of the Saudi society. Besides encouraging liberal discourse, “the participatory nature of many satellite talk shows encourage viewers to exercise their right of self-expression on a variety of topics that were considered taboo and not discussed before. Yet programs in the Arab World have to conform to cultural sensitivity. Though some programs began to discuss issues on sex matters and answer questions about them on TV like Hala Sirhan’s show on Dream Channel in Egypt in 2001, and Fawzia AlDura’a on AlRai TV in Kuwait in 2001, they were cancelled within a few years.

Among the study's respondents, more male respondents than female respondents perceived female guests on such shows as educated thinkers. Talk shows are very important because they can change people's perceptions and attitudes. However, a critical factor in this concern might be related to the method of choosing the speakers and the moderators of the discussions for these programs. It may be a platform for removing bias and raising awareness, or it could be a means to reinforce the agenda of the producers or the bias engrained in the show presenter. One such example was the Oprah Winfrey show that had a very large spectrum of viewers. On 28th September, 2009, Oprah had on her show the very famous and popular Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram, who was at the time named as "Goodwill Ambassador". Oprah presented the Lebanese society as being deeply conservative and showed a documentary that intentionally photographed women wearing the veil while ignoring the mainstream public. She contrasted these veiled women with Nancy Ajram's modern dance moves and styles. This was done while, in fact, the ESCWA statistics, which was conducted a year earlier, showed that 75% of Lebanese women did not wear the veil (ESCWA, 2004: 19). Therefore, Oprah's bias misrepresented Lebanese women, who were educated and cosmopolitan, and gave a western stereotypical image of Arab women.

In this study, more women than men believed that Gulf serials distorted the image of women through showing the negative models. In his study of Kuwaiti television, AlQahas (2013) found that 55% of the female characters were portrayed as housewives even though working women have increased in Kuwaiti society over the last three decades reaching 47% in 2010 [Planning Ministry Data, 2010]. He studied the image of men and women in Kuwaiti Television Drama. In his survey, AlQahas found that 12% of female characters were portrayed as illiterate compared to 1% of male characters. According to AlQahas, this percentage did not reflect the reality of Kuwaiti society in which illiteracy rate among Kuwaiti women is less than 9%.

One of the earliest studies on women in Egyptian Drama was conducted by AlHadidi (1977). This study surmised that women were portrayed negatively as sex symbols and that rural women were shown as less educated or as simpletons compared to their counterparts in the cities. AlHusseini (2005) found that Arabic Drama portrayed men as

more educated than women and had better professions. Ridha (1993) found that women were usually housewives in Arabic drama, and the working mother was always portrayed negatively as negligent of the family's needs. A new image of women as mothers, wives and agents of change in society should be promoted (Obeidat, 2002).

Despite all this, women's issues were an essential part of the Gulf drama serialsin Ramadan of 2014. Kuwaiti drama tackled issues that had affected women in the Gulf region for a long time, such as the trials and hardships facing Gulf women after being married to foreigners, women who were victims of violence and abuse by family members, and women who were deprived of love due to their husbands' indulgence in their own private interests. The actress Suad Abdulla played the role of "Thuraya", a Kuwaiti woman who got married to a non-Kuwaiti college mate, and due to circumstances, her husband had to leave Kuwait and return to his own country, leaving her behind with a child. After a while she got married to another foreigner and had two more children from him. This new foreign husband eventually passed away leaving her alone as a single parent taking care of her own children who were considered foreigners. Like many other women in similar situations, Thuraya convincingly revealed the difficulties and the suffering that these women had to face. Hayat Alfahad, another well-known actress played the role of "Rihanna", who was a victim of violence by her brother. Her brother's abuse caused her impairment that prevented her from completing her education. However, in this case, Rihanna turned her negative experience into a positive one by converting her house to a home, where support groups can gather and provide counseling and emotional support for women suffering from abuse.

In the serial *Mantaqa Muharrama* "Forbidden Area", Huda Hussein plays the role of a woman who is married to a person that neglects her because he is too engrossed in his writings and private interests. She tries patiently to attract his attention and eventually gains his affection. All these three serials show strong women facing their hardships positively. The drama highlighted the problems in their personal lives, but unlike the past dramas, these women were not weak or shrewish in their treatments of their husbands, but each one of them was trying to find solutions and a meaning for their lives. This survey was conducted over two years. The summer of 2014 saw a change in Kuwaiti dramas aired on TV such as

“*Rihana*”, “*Thuraya*” and “*Mantaga Muharrama*”, which convincingly depicted the true life tribulations of today’s women. In fifty interviews conducted with women during the summer of 2014 on their impressions of the Ramadan Kuwaiti dramas, the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the roles played by the women in these stories were enacted with empathy and real pathos. They felt that these characters could be positive role models, unlike earlier dramas like “*Zawarat Alkhamees*” in which *Ilham AlFadhala* steals her sister’s husband, and *Suad Abdulla* plays the role of the sister who is too good a person to see the conjuring ways which her sister uses to gain her husband’s affection. *Suad Abdulla* is emotionally broken when she finds out. Though a riveting story, it portrays one woman as too good to see what’s going on while the other woman selfishly ruining her sister’s marriage. Arafat and AlKuwari (2005) studied Qatari dramas and found that negative values were projected by the principal male and female characters, such as lying, deception, the importance of appearances, and materialistic life. Both men and women agreed that the constant quarrelling and negative deception of married life in television drama have discouraged the youth from getting married.

As Cultivation Theory suggests, exposure to television influences our perception of the World around us. Therefore, the portrayal of marital conflicts in Kuwaiti Drama has led to a fear of getting married. 64% of women and 62% of men of the respondents in this study believe that television has made them view marriage negatively. The violence within family, in particular, is an added fear. This view is supported by Abdul Aziz Mohammed (1994), who found that violence was used as a means for resolving domestic problems in Egyptian drama and that financial problems were usually the root of such conflicts. Taher (2003) found that there were 4 scenes of violence in every hour on average on Egyptian TV. Either verbal or physical abuse was used against women (Tahar, 2003). In a study conducted on 270 students, whowere shown films in which violence was practiced against women,Malamuth and Check (1981) found that male subjects were more accepting of interpersonal violence against women. AlQahas (2013) found that more than half of Kuwaiti Dramas portrayed broken marriages, in which the characters chose divorce instead of problem resolution. Therefore, it is not surprising that the respondents were pessimistic about marriage.

Conclusion:

In this study, both male and female respondents felt that the daily newspapers and radio were not giving sufficient coverage of women's issues. However, women respondents disagreed with the male respondents on the image of women in talk shows. They saw women on talk shows as more knowledgeable but were more critical about television drama, stating that it did not reflect reality. Both men and women agreed that these serials and dramas were influencing people's views on marriage and could be a factor discouraging the young generation from getting married as broken marriages and domestic violence were always sensationalized in Arabic dramas, in general, and Gulf dramas, in particular. The fear of the impact of negative depiction of women on the consciousness of the viewer has been supported not only by the respondents of this survey, but also by Husseini (2005), who stated that the negative values portrayed by the characters in television dramas can often influence social behavior. In her study, Othman (1992) found that the majority of her sample respondents believed that the values projected in drama are also the values in the social reality around them. In their study "The Scary World of TV", Gerbner and Gross (1976) had shown that the youth are especially susceptible to media as they view television more than the social reality around them. Nowadays, the influence of social media has dominated most of their waking hours, whether viewing the traditional television shows or through social media via YouTube, etc. Furthermore, Women respondents felt that their issues were not given sufficient coverage in the newspapers and radio. Nevertheless, they felt that talk shows were unbiased and gave them a platform to air their views. Thus, media has a responsibility in projecting an unbiased, realistic image of women as it shapes public opinion and influences social issues.

The media is no longer merely entertainment and a portrayal of social events. Its effect on viewers' consciousness influences the way people arrange their priorities and changes their attitudes and behavior. This is also the premise of social cognitive theory that media has grown as an agent of socialization. In this study, 42% of women and 41.5% of men responded that they viewed television for 3 to 4 hours daily and 9% of women and 10% of men watched television for more than 4 hours. Therefore, the importance of media on our lives cannot be undermined.

Control of television stations is still in the hands of a male majority, who try to retain the patriarchal notions of a woman's place in society by censoring and overruling programs that are perceived as breaking the cultural status quo. However, in the GCC countries, social media has helped women to bypass such control by having blogs and writing in electronic news sites. A growing number of female journalists across the region are active on news coverage, and they have large numbers of followers.

In order to improve women's image in media and discuss their issues rationally and without bias, we need to involve not only the government but also the private sectors since ownership of satellite stations has moved into the private sector. In order to have equitable exposure on media and fair coverage, there should be monitoring projects in all Gulf countries similar to the global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), in which a one-day annual survey is conducted by a reputed company to review the various television outlets. Research should also be conducted on the representation of women and their issues by media specialists. Regional and international conferences should be held to evaluate the situation and discuss training for television and radio presenters on how to be unbiased on their programs. Furthermore, Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) can act as pressure groups who can lobby if negative coverage is given on women's issues since it can affect a wide spectrum of the society.

Reference

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2005). On and off camera in Egyptian soap operas: Women, television and the public sphere. In *On Shifting Ground: Muslim women in the Global Era* (Ed.) F. Nourai-Simone (pp. 17-35). New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York.
- Al-Hadidi, M. (1977). "Analytical study of the image of women in Egyptian Films and the social impact of it" Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, College of Media, Cairo University cited in AlQahas, Khalid (2013) "The Image of Men and Women in Kuwaiti Television Drama". *Annals of Arts and Social Sciences, Kuwait University*, 33, Monograph 374. (in Arabic).
- Al-Husseni, A. and Omar (2005). Television Drama and its impact on our children's lives. *Alam Al-Kitab*, Cairo. (in Arabic).

- Al-Mughni, H. and Tétreault, M. A. (2004). Engagement in the public sphere: Women and the press in Kuwait', In N. Sakr (Ed.), *Women and Media in the Middle East: Power through Self-Expression* (p. 128), London.
- AlQahas, K. and Al-Humaidi (2013). The image of men and women in Kuwaiti television drama'' *Annals of Arts and Social Sciences*, 33, Monograph 374, Kuwait University. (in Arabic).
- Amin, H. (2001). *Arab women and satellite broadcasting*. <<http://tbsjournal.arabmediasociety.com/Archives/Spring01/Amin.html>> (6th ed.).
- Arafat, S. M., AlKuwari, R., and Bin Sabah (2005). The Role of Qatari Drama in solving Problems in Qatari Society: A field study'', *Egyptian Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Cairo University. (in Arabic).
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social Learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J. Prentice Hall.
- Barakat, A. M. (1994). The image of the Egyptian Family as reflected in Television serials'' *Journals of the College of Education in Domyaat*, Number 21, part II, (in Arabic).
- Byerly, C. M. and Ross, K. (2005). *women and media: A critical introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, UK.
- ESCWA, (2004). Economic and social commission for Western Asia, 12 January, 2004.
- Falk, E. (2008). *Women for President: Media bias in eight campaigns*. University of Illinois Press, U.S.A.
- Gallagher, M. (2005). *Global Media Monitoring Project*. www.who-makesthenews.org.
- Gerbner, G. L., Morgan, M., and Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with Television: The dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.). *Perspective on Media Effects*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp. 17-40.
- Gerbner, G. and Gross, L. (1976). The scary world of TV's heavy viewer', *Psychology Today*, 10(4) 41-89.
- Giddens, A. (1994). A phenomenology of globalization. *European Journal of Communication*, 9(2) 149-172.
- Jameel, M. and Taher, S. (2003). The: An image of violence depicted in relations between men and women in Arabic Drama on Egyptians

- Television analysis. Master's Thesis (unpublished) College of Media, Cairo University. Cited in AlQahas, Khalid (2013) "The image of Men & Women in Kuwaiti Television Drama", *Annals of Arts & Social Sciences*, No. 33, monograph 374. Kuwait University. (in Arabic).
- McLaughlin, L. (2002). Something old, Something new: lingering moments in the unhappy marriage of marxism and feminism, in *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media* (Eds.) Eileen R. Meehan and Ellen Riordan, University of Minnesota Press (pp. 30-37).
 - Malamuth, N. and Check, J. (1981). The effect of mass media exposure on acceptance of violence against women: A field experiment. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 15(4), 436-446.
 - Mernissi, F. (2005). The Satellite, the prince, and scheherazade: The rise of women as communicators in Digital Islam. *On Shifting Ground: Muslim women in the Global Era* (Ed.) F. Nourai-Simone (pp. 3-16). New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New Work.
 - Miller, J. G. (2005). The essential role of culture in developmental psychology. In R. Larson & L. Jensen (Eds.), *New Directions for child and Adolescent development* (pp. 33-41). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
 - Obeidat, R. (2002). Content and representation of Women in the Arab Media. EGM / Media. EP. 11. United Nations, Division or the advancement of Women (DAW) Expert group meeting, Lebanon (pp. 12-15).
 - Ridha, A. S. (1993). The image of the father and mother in Arabic Television serials. *Dar AlFikr Al Arabi*, Cairo. (in Arabic).
 - Ross, K. and Sreberny, A. (2000). Women in the house: Media representations of British Politician. In Annabelle Sreberny and Liesbet van Zoonen (eds.) *Gender, Politics and communication*. Hampton Press (pp. 79 - 110).
 - Rutledge, P. (2005). *Media Psychology*. www.pamelaroutledge.com.
 - Sakr, N. (2004). *Women and media in the Middle East*, I. B. Taurus, London.
 - Sakr, N. (2007). *Arab Television Today*, I. B. Tauris & Co. UK.
 - Surveyed by Aylin Talgar of Washington-based Inter Media in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and

the UAE, See Aylin Talgar, “Ignoring MENA women is no longer an option’, The Channel 8/4 (September 2005), p. 28.

- Ward, L. M. (2005). Children, adolescents, and the media: The molding of minds, bodies, and deeds. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 109, 63-71.

Submitted: November 2014

Accepted: July 2015

