

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION AND AUDIENCE RESPONSES

THE CASE OF *MENTA-MENGED* RADIO

SERIAL DRAMA IN ETHIOPIA

BY

ADERAW GENETU

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Serial Drama in Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to explore entertainment-education (E-E) radio drama audience responses/reactions, their motivating factors in writing letters to the drama and the relationship between audience responses and over all program goals of the drama, *Menta Menged* (Crossroads), in Ethiopia. Because entertainment-education mass media programs which aim at promoting pro-social behavior attract huge audiences both in listening and participating due to their entertainment and educational functions, this study explores these audiences' feedback with the aim to understand the kind of relationship that exists between audiences and the radio drama. The data was collected through a textual or qualitative content analysis of audience letters, and focus group discussions with audience members; and it was qualitatively analyzed and discussed. The data showed that audiences typically have four kinds of reactions: commentaries, appreciations, associations and reflections with the drama, characters and actors. Furthermore, a number of motivating factors, in addition to the drama (both the messages and model characters), influenced audiences to respond to the drama and involved in the writing of letters. Interestingly, their reactions are mixed when compared to the program's intended outcomes on audience behaviors.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CIA	-	Central Intelligence Agency
CSA	-	Central Statistics Agency
E-E/EE	-	Entertainment Education
HAPCO	-	HIV/AIDS Prevention & Control Office
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MOH	-	Ministry of Health
PMC	-	Population Media Centre Ethiopia
STI	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
STD	-	Sexually Transmitted Disease

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to indicate the importance of audience reaction/response, motivating factors and the relationship of these responses with program goals, in the study of entertainment education program evaluation or effects studies. In doing so, it analyses data from audience letters and focus group discussions. Hence, this introductory chapter aims at setting the research agenda and introducing subsequent chapters of the study. It begins with providing a short background on the problem of HIV/AIDS and other social issues in Ethiopia and the mass mediated efforts to tackle the problem. The main focus is the youth aged 15-25.

1.1. Background to the Study

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is the greatest health challenge of our time. It affects people of all race, age, color, sex etc. Every year thousands of people die all over the world.

Ethiopia is among the most AIDS affected nations in the Sub-Saharan Africa. National estimated figures show that the adult (15-49) prevalence rate is 2.1 in 2007, remaining constant for the past three years but increasing to 2.4 in 2010 (Ministry of Health [Ethiopia] (MoH) & HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office [Ethiopia] (HAPCO), 2007). The urban epidemic is at an unacceptably high prevalence level of 7.7% and prevalence of behavioral indicators such as condom use are not at optimal levels. Moreover, the prevalence rate in rural areas is rising while a stabilized figure or a very gradual decline is shown in

urban cities (MoH/HAPCO, 2006; Hladik et al., 2006). AIDS also accounts for an estimated 34% of all young adult deaths 15-49 in Ethiopia and 66.3% of all young adult deaths 15-49 in urban Ethiopia. This makes AIDS now the leading cause of morbidity and mortality among adults in Ethiopia (MOH, 2005).

The Youth (15-24), which constitutes about 18 percent of the Ethiopian population, is the most at risk group for HIV/AIDS. The Ethiopian demographic and health survey for the year 2005 shows that among sexually active youth, 6 percent of women and 37 percent of men were engaged in higher-risk sexual activity over a 12 month period. Only one-quarter of these women and just under half of these men reported condom use in their last higher-risk encounter (Central Statistical Agency (CSA), 2006).

Intervention efforts to tackle the problem, on the other hand, has been unsuccessful or achieved very little in changing the risky behaviors of at risk people for many years (for example Cho and Witte, 2005). However, recently new communication strategies are being applied that target specific sections of the population with the aim of changing undesired behaviors. Entertainment based mass communication strategies targeted at the youth are one of these new communication strategies.

Despite the difficulties of disaggregating the media's impact over the role of other institutions on the youth and HIV/AIDS, population communicators who used media for communication about reproductive health including HIV/AIDS claim a significant share of these changes of knowledge and behavioral practices among the youth in recent years. The following quotation from Population Media Centre Ethiopia publication illustrates these kinds of claims:

Listening to *yeken kignit* [a radio serial drama on health related issues that run for about two and half years] has led to increased exposure to information and level of knowledge of STIs [Sexually Transmitted Infections] and HIV/AIDS, particularly among those aged 24 years or younger. A marked difference was noted among rural respondents in this regard between listeners and non-listeners (Population Media Centre (PMC) 2005: 8).

The literature on the new strategy called entertainment education (hereafter also EE/E-E) which often uses serial dramas on radio and television to communicate social issues, shows the success of the strategy in influencing audience members' knowledge, attitude and behavior in a socially desirable direction. It is also identified as the most effective means of behavior change communication on HIV/AIDS related health issues across the globe (see for example McKee et al., 2004; Melkote and Steeves 2001; Singhal and Rogers 2001; Singhal and Brown 1995).

At this time, radio and television entertainment education programs work in many countries all over the world. Serial dramas dealing with social and health problems are broadcast in many developing countries. India has a number of success stories in E-E since the 1980s. In Africa, similar success stories have been documented in Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and The Gambia, to name a few. Ethiopia, with a number of social problems, recently began to use the strategy. Beginning in the past decade, E-E interventions have been implemented to fight health and social problems such as HIV/AIDS, family planning and other traditional practices (see E.g. Law and Singhal, 1999; Rogers et al., 1999; Singhal et al., 2006; Valente et al., 1994; Farr et al., 2005; PMC, 2002).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Audience reactions toward EE programs that seek behavioral change from the target audiences have not been investigated in relation to the motivating factors behind their reactions and its relationship with program goals.

Audience reaction or response is a key component in the study of EE impacts or effects on audience behavior. Large scale surveys, conducted by either program producers or hired external evaluators, have not been sufficient to collect detailed individual response data on the effects of an EE radio program such as serial dramas. Singhal & Rogers (2002) write "Most past research on entertainment education effects relied mainly on audience surveys ..." (129). These surveys usually overlook these details of personal responses and inner feelings and present a 'superficial' data from sample groups that often are generalized to the total population (Gunter 2000). But still they are often regarded as indicators for program impact.

Moreover, it is believed that a lot of factors are involved for audiences to respond to an EE program, e.g. through letter writing. These motivating factors may stem from an outside stimulus that has no relationship (at least directly) with a program's impact.

In addition, program producers have goals that they intend to achieve at the end of a program which they set at the beginning of designing the program. These goals indicate the most desired outcomes expected from the audiences. This creates a strong relationship between audience behavior after a program is executed and the goals designed at the beginning of the execution.

While the motivating factors determine the outcomes i.e. the type, level, and extent of audience reactions, the program goals help to analyze whether the reactions were the desired ones or not. This is to say that the motivating factor(s) that forced/influenced audiences to react/respond may or may not be the program itself. Moreover, if the external stimulus has a significant role then a massive reaction by itself can not be a measurement for impact of a program.

Hence, it is crucial to investigate the relationship between intended behaviors and the actual behaviors of audiences. This investigation should include the factors that motivated audiences to respond or behave in certain ways in order to determine the level of program impact on audiences.

As Law and Singhal (1999) observed, the direct feedback of audiences to an entertainment education intervention is an important data source for the study of the effects of the program. This data is important because it is provided by “the actual consumers themselves” (355).

This study analyses audience letters written to an Ethiopian EE radio serial drama *Menta Meged* (Crossroads) to understand the types of audience responses and self-reported behaviors on one hand and interview groups of listeners to find out what motivated them to respond and/or behave in those ways on the other hand. Taking these results, it analyses their similarity and difference with the sought behaviors by program designers (producers) to estimate the levels of impact of the program.

Hence, this study argues that surveys are insufficient to explain the effects of media programs. Second, massive response or reaction of audiences cannot be taken as a measurement for program effect or

impact before it is critically analyzed. Finally, a mass media program has to be evaluated with respect to its goals and/or intended outcomes after clearly isolating unintended outcomes.

1. 2.1 Research Questions

To address the above problems, the research specifically raises the following major questions:

1. What kinds of reactions do *Menta Menged* audiences have toward the drama?
2. What are the major reasons (or motivating factors) behind the reactions/responses?
3. What associations exist between the program goals (intended outcomes) and audiences' reactions/responses?
4. What do the reactions imply about current practices and future directions?

1.2.2 Objective of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore the reactions of audiences toward *Menta Menged* radio serial drama in Ethiopia. A tentative broad definition at this time for audience reaction is: any response given by an audience member that indicates their life was affected/influenced due to the messages in the drama. The overall aim of the study is to assess as to what audience reactions relate to the objectives set by the drama producers and to analyze whether the producers' goals are met.

The input data used in the study comes from two sources: a qualitative content analysis of audience letters written to the producers of *Menta Menged* drama and from answers given at focus group discussions by drama listening groups in Addis Ababa.

1.2.3 Specific Objectives

The study has the following specific objectives. These are:

1. identifying the kinds of reactions given as a response for *Menta Menged* radio drama
2. identifying potential reasons behind the reactions
3. analyzing audience responses to the drama vis-à-vis to the general objectives of the program.
4. suggesting potential directions for designing EE dramas

1.3 Significance of the Study

A successful completion of this study will benefit a variety of groups and individuals that have direct and indirect relations with development communication activities in general and EE programs in particular. Practitioners, researchers, policy makers, donors and others in the field of development communication will find the results of this research of paramount importance for their activities.

Radio serial drama designers and producers might benefit the most out of this study more than any other beneficiaries. The success of designing popular EE radio drama depends, among other factors, on the quality of the formative research conducted before implementing a project. The purpose of such research is to give the designers a clear

picture of the target audiences and their needs and preferences in relation to media (Fossard, 2005).

In this regard, this study contributes a significant role by identifying the reactions of *Menta manged* radio serial audiences, the motivating factors behind their responses, and analyzing the findings in respect to the program (drama) objectives in order to suggest potential directions for future programs. Hence, program designers and producers can incorporate the findings of this study with their formative and/or baseline research findings to produce highly popular dramas in the future.

Donors and policymakers in health, education, development and media communications, to name a few, the researcher believes, will find this study very useful in the process of decision making over where and how to best use their resources both to meet audience needs and achieve the most out of it.

Furthermore, it is the researcher's belief that this study will enrich the body of knowledge and literature of development communication and contributes to enlightening issues associated with EE audiences and programs.

1.4 Research Assumption

This study accepts the assumption of the stimulus-response model that predicts, other things being equal, the occurrence of a response (verbal or behavioral act) according to the presence or absence of an appropriate stimulus (message). In other words, with in a certain constant environment, the kind of behavior that audiences perform depends on the type of messages delivered to the audiences.

It also takes the model's presumption of a more or less direct behavioral effect in line with the intention of the initiator and consistent with some overt stimulus to act in a certain way which is built into the message (McQuail, 2000; 2003).

However, the researcher is aware that this model is too simplistic to represent the nature of human communication and hence, needs a modification to represent features such as selective attention, interpretation, response and recall which may result in unintended effects on audience behavior. Moreover, the researcher is also careful and restrictive not to refer (assume) to this model as a *magic bullet* or *hypodermic* model in which the audiences are perceived as passive and venerable to any influence.

Therefore, the researcher, in the analysis of data in this study, takes EE interventions as intentional, carefully planned and an anticipated activity with their aim to influence the target audiences' behavior towards the communicators' (message producers') desired objectives.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is a small-scale research of audience reaction to an EE radio serial drama to understand audience views, motivating factors and assess the relationship between audience responses and program goals. For audience reactions, data is from qualitative content analysis of sample audience letters and views from focus group discussions. The letters were a purposeful sample, selected from all letter stacks written to the drama producers during the transmission and immediately after it is ended. The participants of the focus group discussion were youth listening groups of *Menta Menged* drama in

Addis Ababa. The selection was based primarily on the convenience of handling the discussion and for their ease of accessibility. The purpose of the focus group discussion was to compliment the data from the letters.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

The study has five chapters. The first chapter deals with introductory concepts such as, the background of the study, the problem and objectives of the study, its main significance and the research assumption. The theoretical part of the thesis is dealt in chapter two. Clear discussions to the concept EE, as a tool for development communication, and the audience perspective and related studies have been made.

Chapter three is entirely dedicated to the discussion of methods of data collection and analysis. Data presentation and discussion follows this chapter under the heading of chapter four. The last chapter, chapter five is for the summary and conclusion of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2. Introduction

In this chapter, there is an intensive discussion of entertainment education, entertainment education audience research, and radio serial drama both around the world and in Ethiopia. The concept of the EE strategy, with its begging and popularity, is viewed as a potential tool for development communication. The main theories used in the strategy are also reviewed, before the discussion on audiences and research. Next is a panoramic view of EE audience research and some studies that have focused on audiences of radio serial drama. Towards the end of the chapter, radio serial drama is reviewed as a main tool for entertainment education communication in developing countries, including the practice in Ethiopia. The chapter begins with a definition of the term entertainment education to clear up confusion associated with it.

2.1 Entertainment Education and Social Change

Mass communication channels influence our knowledge and social behavior in different ways. In mass communication theory this statement has been a centre for arguments from the earliest *magic bullet* to the *minimal effects* and to the recent *uses and gratifications* theorists. The recent view i.e. the uses and gratifications perspective

puts audience members active selectors of "media products to satisfy a range of needs: new information, entertainment, news, relaxation, and more" (Melkote & Steeves 2001: 139).

At this centre of needs is entertainment. Entertainment, the largest business in the world over the last century, has been an integral part of human life throughout human history. Entertainment has a special pleasing power that holds the attention of audience members. This potential has appealed to many development thinkers and artists to work together to use entertainment to disseminate socially desirable messages. Their joint effort produced a strategy known as entertainment education.

2.1.1 The What of Entertainment Education

Entertainment Education (EE) has also other names: infotainment, edutainment, and enter-educate (Fossard, 1996). However, the most common name in recent years is entertainment-education (Papa et al., 2002). Though the name varies, the meaning they represent is similar and it stems from the two coined words - *Entertainment* and *Education*.

The English word *Entertainment* came from the Latin *intertenerere* meaning *to hold or command attention*. Similarly, *Education* is also from the Latin *educere* which means *to lead a person forward*. Hence, the combined word *entertainment-education* can mean "commanding the attention of the audience while encouraging their growth and development" (Fossard 2005:7). The term has now a wider meaning and use. It stands for any communication presentation that

deliberately places an educational message (content) in entertainment formats (Singhal & Rogers, 2002; Papa et al., 2000; Fossard 2005).

Singhal and Rogers (1999; 2003) provided the following comprehensive and conceptualized definition for EE that many writers in the field have used:

Entertainment education is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitude, shift social norms, and change the overt behavior of individuals and communities. The larger purpose of entertainment- education programming is to contribute to the process of directed social change which can occur at individual, community, or societal level (Mckee et al., 2004: 239).

The above definition is important because it gives the depth, the process, and specifies the intended outcomes of interventions. It also emphasizes that it is a conscious activity of integrating together and balancing both the entertainment and educational functions of mass media, that were previously separate areas. Moreover, it identifies the purpose of using the strategy to contribute to the process of social change.

2.1.2 EE and Development Communication

Entertainment-education has emerged as one communication strategy in development communication which is used to disseminate positive values through the media. It has been repeatedly applied in health and agricultural communications to maximize the reach and effectiveness of media messages across the globe.

2.1.2.1 The Beginning of EE

The idea of combining entertainment and education is not a new phenomenon in most cultures around the world. People, for thousands of years, have used music, drama, dance and various folk media for enjoyment and to disseminate pro-social values (Melkote and Steeves, 2001). As Singhal and Rogers (2001) wrote, it “goes as far back in human history as the timeless art of storytelling” (344).

However, EE, with its concept of deliberate use to foster social objectives is relatively new. Its conscious use in radio, television, storybooks, theater, and animated films has received attention in the past few decades (McKee et al., 2004; Singhal and Rogers, 2001).

It seems that there are two perspectives on how EE came to work as a strategy in development communication. The first perspective advocated by many prominent scholars in the field (eg see Singhal & Rogers 2001; 2002) is the accidental discovery by Miguel Sabido in 1970s. Sabido, observing the strong effects of a television drama, *Simplemente Maria*, on audiences in Peru, studied it and developed a methodology for similar programs that he himself applied to the Mexican audiences. Sabido's methodology of developing an EE drama was unique and provided a clear difference between the new genre and the old conventional soap operas which are melodramatic, highly exaggerated, and in many ways, 'unreal' (Fossard 2005).

The second perspective states that EE is the result of the development of the entertainment media industry and the technology. The growth of entertainment media supported by favorable technology resulted in a shift of audiences to the consumption of entertainment media over educational channels. This led communication scholars to think up a

way to use this opportunity for social purposes (Melkote & Steeves 2001).

In this regard, Waisbord (2000) identified two main premises for the development of the strategy. One of these is that populations around the world are widely exposed to entertainment media content. This heavy consumption of entertainment media messages suggests that the media have an unmatched capacity to tell people how to behave in socially desirable ways.

Another central premise is that education does not necessarily need to be dull but it can incorporate entertainment formats to generate pro-social attitudes and behavior. This could solve the problem that audiences find social messages uninteresting and boring, and prefer to consume entertainment media.

However, these perspectives are not mutually exclusive. There is a possibility that one could have contributed to the development of the other. In that case the growth of the entertainment media could have facilitated the production of the first observed television drama, *Simplemente Maria*, which Sabido deconstructed and studied. In support of this argument, Melkote & Steeves (2001) wrote how the development of technology and the entertainment industry "have provided a fertile ground for the growth and popularity of entertainment-education programs"(139).

Singhal and Brown (1995) strengthen this assertion by pointing out the main conditions of the time on the ground that facilitated the emergence of the strategy. According to their analysis, there was recognition that mass media was limited in fostering national development and that the more participatory development theory had emerged, stressing the importance of community involvement,

interactive two-way communication, and small media. Moreover, they argue that the rapid globalization of media and rise in entertainment programming, together with unanswered questions about media's ubiquitous influence, accentuate the potential evils and potential benefits of mass media. The potential benefits were strongly associated with entertainment programming and application at different scales continued in different countries to influence audience members' knowledge and behavior.

2.1.2.2 The Popularity of EE

Today, EE is a popular strategy in development communication to influence audience members towards socially desirable behaviors. McKee et al., (2004) quoted Kincaid (2002) and Singhal and Rogers (2003) and listed three reasons that made EE appealing and powerful. These reasons are:

1. Human beings are natural story tellers and like to employ a narrative logic rather than didactic messages in processing discourse.
2. Entertainment is a pleasurable activity; people like to be exposed to suspenseful drama, conflict and its resolution.
3. EE appeals to the emotions of audience members, even to the extent that they feel they have a personal relationship with the characters with which they identify most strongly (239).

Communication strategies designed using this power of entertainment has been applied in many countries to influence audiences for pro-social development. Evaluations of these studies have documented that it is an effective strategy to influence behavior.

However, some scholars have doubts about conclusions of the effectiveness of the strategy, which they argue overlooks possible limitations. They question that both theoretical and research analyses do not show the variability among EE interventions and possible resistances. Singhal and Rogers (2002) for example, write that "current theoretical debates do not acknowledge the substantial resistance to entertainment education"(122). What is more, 'effects' studies are limited in portraying the level of changes that occurred at individual, group and social levels. They also pointed out that it lacks methodological pluralism or has "methodological drawbacks which make claims of media-induced behavioral change somewhat suspect" (Singhal and Brown, 1995:10).

Whereas the rises of such doubts are interesting both theoretically and practically in clearly determining the level of the effectiveness of EE interventions, they are also not sufficiently supported yet by research and theory. Hence, current discussions on EE seem to be limited only to its roles in fostering positive values, with some attempts to theorize how it influences audience members' behavior (Singhal and Rogers 2002).

2.1.2.3 The Goals of EE

EE combines entertainment and education in the strategic applications with the surface-level objective to both entertain and educate. These surface- level objectives aim to:

- a) provide or increase knowledge about an issue such as HIV/AIDS;
- b) change or create favorable attitude towards the issue;
- c) change behavior (at least the overt behavior); and

- d) reinforce behavior and/or attitude towards the issue(s) at discussion.

Singhal and Rogers (1999, 2003) in their definition of EE (see above section 2.1.1) identified the "larger purpose" of the strategy as to "contribute to the process of directed social change, which can occur at individual, community, or social level'. Hence, the goal of EE interventions is to facilitate social process towards a certain desired direction using mass media.

2.1.3 EE Practice around the Globe

EE is a well positioned strategy across the globe. It is "currently widespread and growing...today a map of the world would show E-E almost everywhere" (Singhal et al., 2004; PP 1&8). From the industrial nations such as US to developing countries like Ethiopia are using it to foster social, health and development issues. However, the objective and they way it is used differs as the social, cultural and economic needs and living standards of nations are different. In the US, for instance, EE is used mainly for health promotion purposes, such as to raise awareness about breast cancer (Cheney, Kohler, and Muilenburg, 2006; Wilkin et al., 2007), to address media stigma for people experiencing mental illness (Ritterfeld & Jin, 2006), to tackle HIV/AIDS (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF), (2004). Nevertheless, in less developed and developing countries it is used for all social, health and economic development purposes.

India is in the forefront in this regard. India produced EE radio and television serial dramas as early as in 1980s. In 1984-5 a popular EE drama called “*Hum Log*” (We People) in India which focused on the promotion of the equal status of women, family harmony, and family planning was broadcast and generated a huge audience for its educational and entertainment qualities (Singhal and Rogers, 1989). Following the success of *Hum Log*, a number of radio and television EE dramas were produced.

In Africa, South Africa and Tanzania have earlier success stories in using the EE strategy for prosocial purposes. *Soul City*, both a television and radio serial, which also integrates other mass media activities, was introduced in 1992 to promote HIV/AIDS, TB, and other social issues such maternal and child health, housing and urban reform, drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence etc. *Soul City* was rated as the number one television drama series in South Africa. The reach of *Soul City* extends beyond South Africa. In partnership with UNICEF, which considers the *Soul City* experience as a “best practice,” *Soul City* materials are distributed in neighboring Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and Zambia (Singhal and Rogers, 2001).

In general, Everett Rogers (in Salmon, 2000; pp. 15-16) summarized the main factors that made international EE efforts successful in a report to the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. Evaluative research indicates that the success of international EE efforts is contingent upon five primary factors.

1. First, research on audiences indicates that different audience segments interpret EE messages differently, and that no uniform “reading” or interpretation of the pro-social message is likely to be achieved. Further, the readings that occur are more

likely to be cognitive rather than behavioral in nature; consistent with much of the literature on media effects, audience members are more likely to acquire information and learn of new opportunities than to change personal habits or behaviors.

2. In terms of organizational factors, research indicates that multiple “champions” of social change must buy into EE for it to succeed, and that collaborations among organizational stakeholders- health officials, broadcasters, religious leaders, commercial sponsors-are often critical as well.
3. Research on the media environment in which EE occurs indicates that the effects of EE programs are enhanced when accompanied by supplementary messages.
4. Critical to the success of all EE efforts is extensive use of theory and evaluation.
5. Research on program-specific factors identifies a number of important that influence the success of EE efforts.

2.1.3 Main Theories behind EE Strategy

EE is a strategy that uses theories from other social sciences. A number of theories have been used to explain the process of communication in EE interventions. Among them, health communication theories on behavior are most used. Fossard (1996) identifies four major behavior communication theories - Persuasion, Social Learning, Diffusion and Reasoned Action - which are relevant to radio drama for social change. However, recently other relevant theories such as drama theory and likelihood model are added to the list. In this review, I only focus on persuasion and social learning theories from Fossard (1996) and drama theory from Kincaid (2002),

as these are most to my discussion and analysis of audience reactions.

2.1.3.1 Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura's social learning/cognitive theory (1977, 1989) is one of the earliest theories used in EE programming and research. The theory assumes social modeling as an important concept for learning and adopting new behavior (Bandura, 2004; Rosenstock; Strecher; and Becker, 1988). Though it emphasizes the social aspect of communication, the unit of analysis is the individual- "how individual people make sense of the social environment and decide what to do" (Fossard, 1996: xv). The theory says people learn by:

- Observing what other people do;
- Considering the consequences experienced by those people;
- Rehearsing what might happen in their own lives if they followed the other peoples' behavior;
- Taking action by trying the behavior themselves;
- Comparing their experiences with what happened to the other people;
- Confirming their belief in the new behavior.

Miguel Sabido used social learning theory to produce the earliest television serial dramas in 1970s. According to the theory, role model characters are necessary in a serial drama as they demonstrate desired and undesired behaviors. Positive models demonstrate desired behaviors and actions, while negative models show undesirable behaviors and transitional (from negative to positive or neutral and then to positive) models change over time to adopt positive practices. Model characters are there to let audience members take them as role models and learn from their behavior and activities.

One dilemma in this theory is the use of negative characters or models in a drama. On one hand the absence of these characters lowers the confrontation/conflict that should be in the storyline to hold the attention of audiences. On the other hand they can be attractive in some way, and may spur negative behavior among the audience. This dilemma is known as the unintended effects dilemma (Singhal and Rogers, 2001).

2.1.3.2 Persuasion Theory

The other cognitive theory which has strong application to entertainment education strategy is persuasion theory. The focus of persuasion theory is the psychological characteristics that a person's perception of and response to messages. These include:

- Knowledge and skills;
- Attitudes towards behavioral and social issues;
- Predisposition or preferences;
- Beliefs and concerns about the behavior and its consequences;
- and
- Attitudes towards the source of the message.

There are two important concepts/factors that need attention in persuasion theory concerning influencing the audience - message factors and the source factors.

Message factors are the characteristics of a message that make it appropriate and effective for a particular audience: how long or complex it should be, what language or vocabulary is best, in what order the messages should be presented, whether one side or both sides of an issue should be presented, how much repetition is needed to get the message across, and whether the message should use fear, humor, or logic to make its point (Fossard 1996: xiii).

The message factors recall the differences of audience preferences for message style. This is to mean that there will not be a single choice for message style among the audience. Different audiences will have different preferences.

The other factor is the source factors which explain the type and characteristics of the source of messages. The characteristics of the message source can make messages interesting, relevant and persuasive for a particular audience. In drama, the character is the source who delivers the message. The following are the most influential source factors:

- **Credibility** – Is the character believable as the bearer of the message?
- **Attractiveness**- Is the character attractive or appealing?
- **Similarity**- Does the character have anything in common with the listeners?
- **Authority and expertise**- Does the character have the authority or expertise to be spokesperson for the promoted behavior?

2.1.3.3 Drama theory

The above two theories of communication are cognitive and individualistic in nature. They focus on the socio-psychology of characters and audiences. Lawrence Kincaid's (2002) drama theory on the other hand, focuses on how the social relationships and emotions displayed in a drama affect audience behavior. Its main objective is to explain how emotion can change social relationships. It argues, "By observing such changes in a drama some members of the audience will undergo the same kind of change themselves" (140).

According to Kincaid, drama has a greater effect on an audience than many other forms of communication because,

1. It tells an engaging story,
2. It involves the audience emotionally and
3. It depicts changes in characters with whom the audience identifies.

More importantly, drama appeals to emotion and that leads to action both in characters and audience:

The essence of drama is confrontation, which generates emotion. Emotion is the motivational force that drives the action of the characters, leading to conflict and its resolution. By means of involvement and identification, the confrontation and emotional response of the characters generate a corresponding emotional response in the audience (150).

All the three theories use the audience as their unit of analysis. The first two, social learning and persuasion theories which are cognitive in nature, place emphasis on the classical ways of persuading audiences with vicarious experience and with a directed effort of sending messages to win the hearts of audiences respectively. The third one, drama theory, emphasizes the role of emotion in persuading drama followers.

2.2 Entertainment Education and Audiences

EE is mainly a mass media communication activity. Mass media reaches a variety of audiences with a varying degree of exposure and influence. Because EE 'abrogates' the two mass media programming - entertainment and education - it "has the strength to combine a

variety of audiences" (McKee et al., 2004: 240). However, EE needs a carefully designed research that could clearly identify the characteristics of audiences and their media preferences and evaluations that assess the effects (Singhal and Rogers 2001; Fossard 1996; McKee et al. 2004).

2.2.1. EE Audience Researching

EE programming heavily relies on baseline and formative research on audiences. Before designing any project of EE inventions, a baseline research that indicates the audiences' media preference, knowledge level, perceptions and beliefs, attitudes and values, private and public uses of language for issues should be made (McKee et al., 20004). Based on these findings specific goals (short term and long term) can be identified and media can be chosen with respect to, the strength and weakness of a medium and on the reach and accessibility to the target audiences.

Second, formative research is required to draft stories and scripts to measure: comprehension, interest, and entertainment value; characterization; cultural sensitivity; conflict resolution or solution and potential to engage audiences in change activities (Singhal and Rogers 2001; McKee et al., 2004). Moreover, formative research is also useful in "identifying the high-priority target subgroups by providing data regarding which categories of individuals at risk, which are most receptive to media persuasion on the topic, and which are in a position to influence high-risk persons interpersonally" (Atkin and Freimuth 2001:130).

In addition, Atkin and Freimuth (2001) suggest the use of pretesting that helps systematically gather target audience reactions to

preliminary versions of messages before they are produced in final form. "Pretesting can help [producers] determine which of several alternative ideas or draft messages are most effective, or it can identify strengths and weaknesses in single messages"(136).

These research findings can also help to determine the characteristics of the whole program. For example in a radio drama , they can be used to decide on the length of the drama, the length of each episode, the frequency of the episodes - in a weekly or daily basis - and the repetition of educational messages in episodes.

2.2.2 EE Evaluation and Audience Response

Evaluation is an important component of a mass media intervention to determine the combined effects of the intervention. A communication intervention without evaluation may be subject to debate and criticism.

Valente (2001) defines evaluation as a:

systematic application of research procedures to understand the conceptualization, design, implementation, and utility of interventions. Evaluation research determines whether a program was effective, how it did or did not achieve its goals, and efficiency with which it achieved them. Evaluation contributes to the knowledge base of how programs reach and influence their intended audiences so that researchers can learn lessons from these experiences and implement more effective programs in the future (106).

According to the above definition, evaluation in communication campaigns improves the probability of achieving program success by

forcing intervention programmers to specify the goals and objectives of the campaign.

As audience research is inevitably important in EE programming, evaluations also determine the degree to which the intervention reached its objectives, help planners and scholars understand how or why a particular campaign worked and provides information relevant for planning future activities.

Audiences have been the primary sources of media influence studies. Atkin (2001:52) wrote, "Strategists must anticipate the array of likely audience reactions to campaign messages. In responding to media stimuli, individuals proceed through the basic strategies of exposure and processing before effects can be achieved at the learning, yielding, and action levels".

Communication evaluation is made to measure the impact that media or its program had on the audiences. However, in a media environment where other media programs work, evaluating a single program or media needs a careful control of audience exposure to other media and programs. A classical example in this case is an EE project in Zambia which showed two different results. An evaluation by the project implementing agency on audiences who listened to a radio drama on HIV/AIDS found significant changes in AIDS-related knowledge, attitudes, and intentions to change behavior. However, "After an independent evaluation team controlled for audience members' overall exposure to mass media, the main effects of the specific program disappeared." (Murphy, 2005; pp. 486-487).

Valente (2001) observed that communication interventions' "true worth is not measured by the degree people like them... but rather, in the program's influence on the communities and stakeholders it is

created to benefit" (105). His remark suggests that audiences should be the centre for researching for media influence because research results from audience satisfaction and appreciation could contribute an alternative means of studying the impact of media programming.

2.2.3 Studies on EE Audiences

Many of the studies on EE focus on the effects of EE programs: whether EE interventions have brought desired effects or not (Singhal and Rogers 2002). Hence, their methods of research are surveys and experiments and quasi-experiments. Few have used content analysis and group discussion to accompany the survey results.

Though limited, there are a few research projects that address audiences from the perspective of how an EE intervention influenced their behavior and their responses to these interventions. Law and Singhal (1999) studied letters and the efficacy of letter writing to an EE radio serial in India. They argue that letters are "both a medium of communication as well as the message." (p. 360). Acknowledging the varied motivations for writing letters, they found many listeners write to "celebrate and identify with a favorite radio program or with certain actors."(p. 361). Thus, they conclude that letter writing, whether voluntary or prompted, is an important activity by listeners and can be a "key to an enhanced understanding of extension of issues central to their lives that the mass media intervention seeks to mediate and change" (p. 361).

Sood and Rogers (2000) studied the dimensions of parasocial interaction by letter-writers to a popular EE soap opera in India. The focus of their study was to research why audiences wrote the letters.

They found that high degree of involvement in three dimensions: affectively, cognitively, behaviorally, and interaction in two dimensions: referential and critical. Their conclusion shows higher degree of audience involvement as a measurement for effectiveness of EE programs in order to bring about behavior change. They write, "Audience individuals who engage in parasocial interaction identify and emphasize with media characters, and thus their behavior is affected" (P. 410).

In a similar vein, Michael J. Papa and his associates (2000), conduct an observational case study in an Indian village coupled with a content analysis of audience letters to understand the process of social change initiated by an entertainment education radio drama. Their specific interest was to analyze parasocial interaction, social learning, collective efficacy and the presence of paradoxical communication at a social level. Their finding suggests that "entertainment-education programs can prompt changes in the thinking and behavior of audience members in several ways" (Papa, et al., 2000; p. 50). The audience letters in the study helped them provide insights on the level of audiences' involvement in the drama though they used them as "secondary" data (p. 40). This research is unique to others in that it was done by prominent scholars of EE such as Arvind Singhal, Everett Rogers, Sweety Law, Suruchi Sood, Saumya Pant, Corinne L. Sherner-Rogers and Michael J. Papa who together extensively conducted other similar research on audiences and their letters both qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Likewise, Saumya Pant with Arvind Singhal and Usha Bhasin (2002) studied audience feedback to an Indian EE radio serial drama *Dehleez* to understand the message production, reception, and transcreation of the drama's message by its audiences. Of their seven methods of

data collection and analysis, three of them included the analysis of different types of audience letters. One of their main focuses was studying the “nature” of audience reactions. Audience feedback was the main source for their study.

2.3 Radio Serial Drama

The EE strategy uses different formats of entertainment to achieve the promised goals. These include: television and radio drama, variety and quiz shows, music concerts and music videos, community theatre and puppet shows, storybooks, comic books, and animated films etc. Though all formats have been used for social communication, serial dramas on radio or television are prime examples used to address multiple social behaviors because they capture attention and emotion.

Fossard (2005) observed that the use of radio drama to further social objectives is undergoing rebirth. In the earliest days of radio, it was common to use radio to communicate useful messages for agriculture in some countries such as Canada and South Africa.

However, the first radio serial drama with a format of entertainment education occurred in 1951 in England to broadcast agricultural developments. This radio drama, about a farm family, ran for decades and played an important role in agricultural development in the UK (Fossard, 2005; Singhal and Rogers, 2001).

With the coming of television, however, "interest shifted to visual soap operas featuring highly exaggerated characters and emotional, and radio drama went into decline"(Fossard 2005:26).

After Sabido developed a methodology for designing an entertainment education drama for television, it was proved that the methodology can also be used as effectively in radio as it is for television to bring audience members towards socially desirable behaviors and attitudes.

2.3.1 The Nature of the Medium- Radio

Radio as a mass communication medium has strengths and weaknesses. These characteristics have their own impact (both positive and negative) on a communication that occurs using the medium. The analysis of these characteristics of the medium then helps to better understand radio communication. Boyd (2001), McLeish (1999) Mayeux, (2000) and Fossard (2005) have identified the following main strengths and weakness of radio:

1. Radio transcends time and distance- radio can cross time and space with out limit. It can reach a remote village for instance with out a problem at all time of the day.
2. Radio is easily accessible and portable- its price is cheap relative to other mediums such as television. Its size is small enough to hold at almost any places and it also uses battery (dry cell) and can be used in places where electricity is unavailable. This nature has made radio to be the most widely used medium in the Third World countries like Ethiopia.
3. Radio is a personal medium. Although it can reach millions of listeners at the same time, radio nevertheless has the power to speak to each listener individually.
4. Radio is an imaginative medium. Listeners can imagine to the best of their capacity, the pictures and actions of characters just only by listening the sounds.

As there are strengths, however, radio has also weaknesses and /or limitations as a medium. It has limitations in communication compared to other mediums such as television that makes communication less effective. Below are the main limitations of radio:

1. The total experience of radio is received by the ear alone. This is in contrast to the multisensory perception of everyday life. Hence, Gunter (2000), added that recall of radio listening tends to be more difficult than for other media
2. Listeners are accustomed to using radio as a background to their lives, without paying full attention to what is being broadcast.
3. Radio is limited at teaching some subjects that needs additional sensory support such as visual aids.
4. A radio story or message is heard only once. The radio cannot be rewound like an audio cassette or tuned back like the pages of a book.

Apart from these lists of radio's strengths and weaknesses, the cost of production for a radio serial is less expensive to a similar format and length television serial. Regardless of the weaknesses, these above characteristics made radio the most widely used medium in many Third World countries including Ethiopia, to foster social development.

2.3.2 Radio in the Third World

EE projects and radio are closely related in the Third World. The shortage of infrastructure and other constraints for other media such

as television, make radio the most convenient medium. Sypher et al., (20002) observed that radio is a medium of choice in the third world:

“Given the financial, technological, and literacy constraints commonly found in developing countries, radio is well positioned as the medium of choice for disseminating information aimed at heightening awareness and changing behaviors that lead to more healthy communities.” (p. 193).

As Sypher and her associates observed, radio is also easily accessible, portable and can be operated using a battery. Using radio for health and other development communications in the Third World allows producers to reach as many audiences possible with little cost.

2.3.3 Radio Serial Drama in Ethiopia

It was the John Hopkins University which introduced the first radio serial drama, *Journey of life*, which has a more or less an EE serial drama format to educate the Ethiopian audiences mainly about HIV/AIDS. Then Population Media Centre Ethiopia (PMC) introduced the first popular full format radio serial drama, *Yeken Kignit*, in 2002 that lasted for two and half years and that generated lots of audience responses including 15 thousand letters.

Following the end of *Yeken Kignit*, and encouraged by its effects, PMC introduced another youth focused radio serial, *Menta Menged* (Crossroads) in 2005. Currently PMC Ethiopia is producing another radio serial drama, *Sibrat* (“Trauma”) which was launched in September 2007 following the end of *Menta Menged* in July, 2007. The main themes of the program are female genital mutilation/cutting, gender equity, and child abuse (PMC, 2008).

2.3.4 *Menta Menged Radio Drama*

Menta Menged (Crossroads) is an entertainment education radio serial drama that focuses on the youth and HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia. It was broadcast for 27 months from April 2005 to July 2007. The drama was broadcast twice a week (Sunday and Wednesday evening) for about half an hour on the Ethiopian Radio for the nationwide audience and it is repeated on FM Addis 97.1 (every Monday and Thursday at 3:00 p.m.) to Addis Ababa and the surrounding audiences.

In order to relate to a larger audience, the drama unfolds in three settings: Segenet, Amoza and Tay Bete. Each place has a different level of infrastructure, standard of living, cultural/ethnic groups, as well as rural and urban neighborhoods.

The drama depicts the life of two groups of youth who, with their parallel views towards life, engage in constant conflicts or confrontations. The two groups are led by two antagonistic youth characters who knew each other since childhood: Abinet and Leul.

Abinet, a 17 year old is a strong-willed youth who strives to change his life for the better. He attends school half-day and works in a store for the rest of the day. Coming from a poor rural family, Abinet demonstrated admirable qualities and has earned a good name in the community. Leul, same age as Abinet, but is of a 'bad' personality or displays behaviors which are antagonistic to those of Abinet. He attends school with Abinet in same class but hates learning and working. Having grown up in an aggressive family with insults, bullying and disapproval of his parents, Leul developed a dangerous character based on inflicting harm to others. He spares no effort to tarnish the good name of Abinet and put obstacles in his way. The

confrontation of these youth and their supporters both at school and in the community including their relatives keeps the drama moving forwards. The serial ended after several episodes with Leul's death caused by HIV/AIDS and Abinet's success in going to university.

The objective of the radio serial drama was to bring about social change through public participation in community life. Specifically, it aims:

To enable young people acquire knowledge, values, skills and experiences through dialogue and capacity building, in order to enable them act collectively to solve HIV/AIDS, reproductive health problems and to contribute to youth development and other related social issues in the country (PMC 2006).

The target audiences for the drama were in and out of school youth and men and women of reproductive age. The drama aimed to reach the youth at the national level.

The issues raised in the serial drama were issues identified as the main problems of the youth from the previous two similar radio serial drama evaluations.

The main communication strategy of the serial drama is the Sabido methodology - teaching through models. The drama has role models of different issues or problems that the models advocate through their actions. This provides the listeners to identify model characters based on their perceived similarity so that they can follow the models' behavior (Teffer, 2008). This strategy provides dual opportunities: audience involvement in the storyline of the serial drama and vicarious experience and learning from the media or drama characters.

Summary

Entertainment-education fundamentally focuses on bringing behavioral and attitudinal changes of audiences towards socially desirable life styles. Radio and radio serial drama are effective ways to reach larger audiences particularly in Third World countries like Ethiopia. The program impact or audience behavioral change/or influence by the radio program should be evaluated from the perspective of audiences. Audiences are central to assess a program effect or its effectiveness. And proper methods of analysis are needed to assess these program impacts and audience behavioral changes or influences which could expose audiences' inner feelings and reactions that probably leads them into change in behavior and/or perception.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As noted in chapter one, this study investigates the reactions of entertainment education radio serial drama audiences in Ethiopia, their motivating factors for their reactions and the relationship of their reaction with program/drama goals. The purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss the two methods of data collection and analysis - qualitative content analysis and focus group discussion - used in this study. It is a presentation of theory and practice of my research.

3.1 Why Qualitative Research

Gunter (2000) observed that there is "a growing recognition that audiences should be allowed to express their thoughts and feelings about media content in their own terms and; qualitative methodologies... [are] best equipped to facilitate this type of investigation." (p. 54). Even earlier to Gunter, Lindlof and Tylor (1995: p. 10), similarly wrote that, "Many communication scientists now acknowledge that inquiries based in the contingencies of meaning can produce insights about the human condition. And qualitative methods are more suitable than quantitative methods for addressing..." these issues.

In the history of mass communication, quantitative research on audience behaviors had been the dominant methods of social inquiry (Gunter 2000). Qualitative audience study emerged as an alternative

to the weaknesses of quantitative analysis but then it grew up as an independent philosophy towards the media and audience relationship (Flick, 2002). Now, it has got its own place as the most useful methodology to describe and understand the relationship between media and audiences qualitatively.

Broadly, qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena of the world we live in; why things are the way they are. In other words, it is concerned with finding the answers to questions which begin with: why? how? and in what way? Hancock, (1998, 2002) states that qualitative research is about opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals and producing subjective data.

Lindlof and Tylor (2002) define qualitative studies with what researchers do and intend to find out. Qualitative researchers “seek to preserve and analyze the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations” (p. 18).

Hence, the design of qualitative research follows a relatively unique procedure compared to quantitative research. Plans sometimes change, and adjustments in methods and problem focus may continue right up to the time that one leaves the field. Hence, it is "known for being primarily inductive, emergent, and well, somewhat unruly. Very little is linear about it. Very little of it can be controlled in the strict sense." (Lindlof and Tylor , 2002 :pp. 65-66).

Moreover, qualitative research is open-ended, and, unlike quantitative research, is unbound by predetermined variables. It can be contextual, and is summarized by narratives rather than numerical

statements. Sample size is often small and the qualitative method is characterized by observations and in-depth interviews. (Gunter, 2000; P.360)

Going back to Gunter's and Lindlof and Tylors' observation, for their flexibility, suitability to study audience reactions or responses and philosophical stand, qualitative methodologies are chosen as the main tools of data collection and analysis in this study.

3.2 Research Design

Of the many kinds of qualitative designs, qualitative text analysis and a focus group discussion with listeners are selected for data collection and analysis, and the two are discussed in the ensuing units.

3.2.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

a) Background

Content analysis is predominantly a quantitative method of data collection and analysis. But with its own procedures and standards, it is now one of the methods in qualitative studies as well. Hancock (1998; 2002) defined content analysis in qualitative studies as it is a procedure for the categorization of verbal or behavioral data, for purposes of classification, summarization and tabulation. In qualitative content analysis,

the interest centers not just on the appearances that are made by certain themes, information sources, or categories of actor or incident, but with the way they are presented, the choices that are made (i.e. the selection of certain sources or actors, the omission of others), and the way themes, sources or actions are juxtaposed (Gunter 2000: 91).

Gunter further remarks that, since content analysis is used to understand audience reaction, and/or to draw inferences about media effects, it is vital to utilize a form of analysis that will be able to reveal the full range of potential meanings being conveyed by media content (serial drama in this case). Qualitative content analysis is highly dependent on media texts such as written texts, audio and video materials. Lindlof and Tylor (2002) emphasized the importance of personal texts such as letters like other media texts:

To the qualitative analyst, documents are very important because they are the 'paper trail' left in the wake of historical events and processes... The personal documents of individuals- for example, letters, diaries, journals, notes, scrapbooks- can provide insights into the construction of personal beliefs, identities, relationships, and communicative styles (Lindlof and Tylor , 2002 :P. 17, my emphasis).

Hancock (1998, 2002) classifies content analysis into two levels -- the basic and the higher level. The basic level of analysis is a descriptive account of the data: this is what was actually said with nothing read into it and nothing assumed about it. Some texts refer to this as the manifest level or type of analysis. The higher level of analysis, on the other hand, is interpretative: it is concerned with what was meant by the response, what was inferred or implied. It is sometimes called the latent level of analysis (Ibid).

In this regard, both levels of analysis are used in this study. On the one hand, descriptive analysis provides a descriptive account of who the writers of the letters are and of what the contents or topics of the letters are. On the other hand, interpretative analysis gives information beyond the written words so as to look the intentions and needs behind the letter writing and how they view the drama as well as themselves.

This description of qualitative content analysis provides the ground to state the reason for the choice of the method (content analysis) in this study. Letters of audiences are written by audience members themselves, i.e. in their own way choosing their own language and words, and even in their own time and place of their choice. There is no interference by the researcher in any of these choices. Though the motivating factors vary, letters represent audiences' internal feelings, what they want to say to whom and even in what way (Law and Singhal, 1999 as reviewed in chapter two). Hence, the meaning that is extracted from these letters is believed to represent audiences' knowledge, attitude and behavior towards the issue. This in turn supports the choice of the method of data collection and analysis to the research questions raised in chapter one of this study.

b) Data collection and analysis

Roughly more than 3,000 letters were received by the Population Media Center (PMC) Office in Addis Ababa in response to the radio serial drama– *Menta Menged*. On average, the Center received 40-50 letters from listeners every week for every two transmitted episodes. The Center doesn't have a telephone system for the public to send comments; it only communicates through postal messages. Because telephone density is too low in Ethiopia (the national tele-density in 2004, for example, was 0.68 lines per 100 people though there are reports of aggressive development in the sector in the following years as Adam, (2005); Simon, (2006); and CIA, (2005) reported), postal communication is the ideal means of distance communication for most Ethiopians.

Letters written to *Menta Menged* radio serial by its listeners can broadly be categorized into two groups. The first group of letters includes those written in response to the questions asked by program producers three times during the whole drama broadcasting. These letters are primarily for competitions that are accompanied by prizes. Hence, they are labeled as *response letters*. The other group represents those letters written for various reasons but without the request of program designers. These are much more a commentary type and hence they are named as *commentary* letters. Many external motivating factors are expected to play roles in the writing of this group of letters.

A survey of the thousands of letters was made systematically first identifying the two broad groups as response and commentary. Since, the Population Media Centre (PMC) Monitoring Department has compiled all letters into packs of 500-550 letters numbering each letter; it was possible to categorize all of the letters as commentaries and responses. Then based on the survey, selection criteria were developed. For the commentaries, 37 letters were first selected purposely for the issues they contain looking at their headings. But when refining, 13 letters were discarded due to illegibility and for being least important. The 24 individual letters were selected purposely for the issue(s) they contain. These issues are cases that represent phenomena not samples (like in quantitative research) to represent the population. Finally, four bigger categories that include: appreciation, association, commentary, and reflection were identified.

The response letters, which constituted roughly two-third of all letters, on the other hand, are composed of letters from all three competitions. Three questions were asked at each competition during the drama broadcasts. Equal proportion of letters from each

competition was selected. That constituted a total of 18 letters, six from each competition.

Letters were analyzed on what writers say and why? At times, how they said it was also considered to reveal their internal feelings and behavior. In general, a thorough description of the contents, stated and unstated factors or motivations and their relationship with program goals have been analyzed.

3.2.2 The Focus Group Discussions

a) Background

The other method of data collection in this research is the focus group method. Strelitz (2005: P.122 quoting Lunt and Livingstone 1996) provide a concise definition for the concept: “Briefly, the focus group method involves bringing together a group, or, more often, a series of groups, of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator.”

Though the focus group method was used since 1940s in other disciplines, it is in the 1980s that it emerged with critical and interpretive media research perspectives as an audience research tool “to represent their theoretical views about the ways audiences respond to the mass media” (Gunter, 2000, p. 42).

The method, focus group discussion, is often used to supplement other research methods. In media studies it involves discussion of particular text by the participants. When first used in the US to determine the effect of radio programs, it was found that the result of audience ratings corresponds to the word expressions of focus group participants. Recent applications indicate the method can stand

alone to provide sufficient data about media text and audience reactions (Strelitz, 2005; Gunter, 2000).

The method is used in this study with a primary objective to support the qualitative content analysis data of letters. It was employed particularly, to find answers for the motivating factors for letter writing or broadly to get to the reasons behind audiences' reactions to the contents of the radio serial.

b) Sampling, Recruitment and the Setting

The recruitment and sampling of participants for this research was made from the pre-organized listening groups set by the Population Media Centre Ethiopia (PMC) in Addis Ababa. The groups were not active by the time this data was collected. However, their former activities were important to get access to groups and members. There were five listening groups in Addis Ababa alone. Among them two groups were contacted for the purpose of this study.

Participants were purposely selected from both the listening groups set for monitoring the serial by the Monitoring and Evaluation Department of PMC and from the public. The criterion was their regular listening. This purposeful selection is made both to find regular listeners and to balance their views as Schwandt (1997) advises to use purposeful sampling (as quoted in Lindlof and Tylor, 2002). Those from the public were gathered by the technique known as snowball sampling to find regular audiences. Individuals from the first listeners groups guided the researcher to find other listeners they know who were regular listeners to the drama. Using the snowball technique, those other participants were gathered for the rest of the group discussions.

The demographic distribution of participants in the first two groups is three males and three females, six members in each group. They all know each other as they work together in their clubs and during the monitoring times. The other two groups consist of relative 'strangers'. Hence, they were grouped according to their sex to encourage them speak relatively freely in front of others.

One of the procedures the researcher has to decide in the application of focus group is also the setting of the discussion. There seems no standard setting for conducting focus group since it differs with the objective of each research project. However, Gunter (2000) argues that in any case it “should be as informal as possible” (p.44). It is also advisable to “balance the needs of the researcher as well as the participants” (Strelitz 2005, p. 124) in organizing the setting. However, in this study, priority is given to the participants’ comfort to get the most out of them. The discussion was made in their usual meeting place (club offices) and on their ‘free’ time (Saturday afternoon).

One essential point to mention here is the choice of the research area. Though the radio serial is also listened in the regions of the country, the researcher chose Addis Ababa listeners for their easy accessibility in the short time available. The sampling of the groups is also purposeful, as said above, to find groups (listeners) that can provide sufficient data with few groups as much as possible.

c) The role of the moderator, discussion guide and recording the data

Flick (2002: 16) suggests that the role of the moderator should only be to support the dynamics and the functioning of the groups and the discussion to a large extent. This is to limit the role of the moderator, and to limit their interference and directing of the discussion.

Having this in mind, the researcher (also the moderator) of this study limited his role in the discussions only to the "support" of the discussion by only introducing the subject of the discussion, providing "fair" chances to all participants and asking questions when necessary to let the discussion continue. Refreshment was provided before the participants began the discussion to make them feel free in the situation and friendly to the moderator.

The discussion guide provided the subject of the discussion and questions related to the discussion points. All focus groups were provided with the same discussion guide and in a similar sequence. However, the questions asked at the middle of discussions vary according to the situations in each group.

The discussion was recorded in a mini cassette recorder, which was placed at the centre of the participants table. To let the participants forget the presence of the recorder, it was on for some minutes before the real discussion began. Unless and otherwise the moderator thought that a speaker's words are important at that point, there was not interruption to change the tapes (cassettes).

d) Profile of the Participants

The following table summarizes the profile to the focus group participants.

Group	Age group	Sex	Source	No. Participants
1	18-24	M	Club members	3
	17-21	F	Club members	3
2	19-25	M	Club members	3
	16-23	F	Club members	3

3	16-22	F	From the public	5
4	18-22	M	From the public	6
Total				23

Table 1: Demographic profile of focus group discussion participants

Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology used in the research process. It gave a description of qualitative research as a method used to gather and analyze data. Distinct methods used in the study were discussed in some detail. While the qualitative content analysis is used to study the content of the audience letters to analyze audience reactions to the serial, a focus group discussion with listeners provided the other data, particularly which is related to the motivating factors or reasons behind the reactions. A detailed account of the techniques used for both methods to collect data is also what constituted this chapter. In the following chapter I will present the data, analyze and discuss it.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

In order to succeed as an entertainment-education strategy for social change, the characters, their relationships, and their story must seem plausible to the audience, resembling problems and events that happen in their own lives.

(Laurence Kincaid, 2002)

4.1. Introduction

As described in Chapter One, the main objective of this research is to identify audience reactions, their motivating factors and analyze it with program goals to explore the extent to which the drama is part of the audiences' lives. Evidences are collected from a qualitative content analysis or text analysis of letters and from a focus group discussion with listeners. This chapter presents the collected data first through a detailed description of the data and then analyzing it in a way that produces meaning to understand the relationship between the radio serial and its audiences.

4.2. Audience Feedbacks as Data Source

Data from the letters of the *Menta Menged* audiences has been collected, categorized and analyzed to understand the kind of reactions audience members have, the motivating factors for their reactions and the relationship that exists between these reactions and the program goals. A systematic general survey of the letters (as detailed in chapter three of this study) and a textual analysis (qualitative analysis of the contents) has been made to answer the

research questions of the study (the list of questions are in chapter one of this study). Narrations from the focus groups are also used to strengthen what is in the letters.

4.2.1. Four Categories of Reactions (What they Write?)

From the general review/survey of the letters of the Ethiopian, *Menta Menged* radio serial drama, four categories of reactions or responses were explored. These include commentaries, appreciations, associations, and reflections. These categories also have different sub groups of interest for writers based primarily on their relationship with the drama. The data shows that while some view the drama as an outsider, as an audience out there, others associate it with their lives, making it part of their life experiences. Each category is discussed in the following units.

a) Commentaries

Comments to the producers of the *Menta Menged* radio serial drama are one of the contents of letters. Writers comment on the drama as a whole and on the characters' behaviors and actions. They have cited the strengths and weakness of the drama, remarked on the plausibility of the story and the personality of characters' actions. Some critically evaluated the drama and found it effective in some way but unsuccessful in others. For instance, a young student Teshome (all names here are pseudonyms), observed the drama as effective in teaching the consequences of migration but found it failed to clearly educate about HIV/AIDS:

....The drama has successfully showed us the consequences of illegal migration with the lives of Kokebe and Mebrehatu. It is a current issue as many young girls are trafficked to Arab countries unaware of the deadly situations for migrant workers there through illegal agencies.... But I do have also another comment that the drama has failed to clearly inform about HIV/AIDS. I need you to put due emphasis on this for the future... (Teshome, 28/08/06).

Teshome is critical of the contents of the drama as he identified issues which are successfully addressed over those not 'clearly' presented. He also commented on the necessity and urgency of issues identifying most important issues over others. As it can be seen from the letter, it was written while the drama was running and hence, the writer wants the drama to focus on HIV/AIDS.

Another listener from Addis Ababa views the drama critically because it is a new kind of drama in Ethiopia for educating the youth by showing the daily lives and problems of the youth. What makes the drama different for this listener is the length, as it was on air for more than two years.

However, at the focus group discussions, participants repeatedly raised the repetitions of educational issues as a weakness for the drama. They mentioned it for slowing down the storyline.

...having all those strengths, I was repeatedly offended when issues were repeated again and again. The same issues were raised here and there and that irritates me. I think that often did slow down the drama and sometimes I began doing something else till it changes... for others it might be good repeating but for me I don't like that.... (Tsfaye, 19 KGD participant).

Repetition is one of the techniques of serial dramas like *Menta Menged* to clarify controversial issues and to raise alternative views. But care

should be taken not to be easily recognized by listeners as that may bore them.

Another comment by participants as a weakness of the drama is on the storyline. One participant pointed out that the storyline (the way the conflict develops) less motivates him to listen seriously. He said the drama “follows more or less the same storyline with *Yeken Kignit* [a former EE serial drama produced by the same PMC] in which there are too good and too bad characters fighting and the conflict revolves around them” (Samuel, 20). This was actually shared by most participants in one of the focus groups. The strengths and weakness of a drama is also dependant on the plausibility of characters.

In the case of *Menta Menged* serial drama, characters are commented on mainly based on their actions and behaviors. These comments work for both kinds of characters: good model characters and bad model characters. Abinet, the protagonist, and who is there to represent positive role models is often criticized for being angelic while he is appreciated for being far sighted, hardworking, exhibiting love of family and positive altitude to wards human beings, the desire for learning and other likable human qualities.

Bad model characters, which often antagonize good models, are also criticized for appearing inhuman in all walks of life and devilish always but still they are allowed to live in a normal world or lead a normal life. They are also criticized for being unacceptably strong and exaggeratedly drawn as always shrewd, selfish, and arrogant.

... Menta Menged is about a lot of things. It touches many problems of the youth. I love the issues it raises. But I do have doubts about its effectiveness. I heard many of my friends saying that it is full of exaggerations. Though it creates a lot of conflict especially between Abinet and Leul, I don't think we can find similar people around us.

Abinet has an exaggerated patience. He didn't take any action against Leul. He is not a saint. I think that damages the credibility of the drama.... (Shimels, a teacher, from Desie, 17/10/06)

Listeners from the focus groups also raised the issue of the realisticness or plausibility of some characters but they were sharply divided on tolerating them. While some reject these characters as too fictitious, others accept them on the ground that their exaggerated quality was one of the reasons that made them like the drama. Mekdes, 17, is an 11th grade student. She was in grades 9 and 10 while the drama was running. She said that it is their uniqueness (due to some degree of exaggeration) that attracted her to the drama. And Mahlet is her favorite character:

Mahlet [an innocent student character] is so unique for me. She trusts what her friends say. She speaks things straight. She knows little about people around her. I, myself was like her. I never thought the possibility of rape in Addis. With what ground can you expect that in a middle of a city...on a day time...? She was like that. She trusted the words of Leul. I think I will do the same. I don't know about date-rape before that. But all your classmates are not the same... I was thinking about how I first began listening to the drama, it was when Leul was telling her a lot of ...things about him. I first understand him that he was a very good person uh... But still I appreciate [also] the patience of Abinet whatever it is. I was also blind to all teachers....it is the drama that educated me everything... (Mekdes, 17, FGD participant).

For Mekdes, the drama is an extension of her school life. She repeatedly said that she is now different after listening to the drama. What has happened to the characters in the drama has taught her something that she didn't expect. Other participants said that they felt sometimes odd when a character showed an exaggerated behavior like Leul's hate for humanity and Abinet's patience for all that Luel did to him.

One of the contents of the commentary letters is also about the drama's finishing. Some letter writers ask about the unknown end of some characters when the drama finally ended broadcast after running for more than two years. Characters such as Challachew, Seife, Tsedey and Victoria were not known when the program finally ends:

...I have listened to the drama from its beginning to the end. It has caused a lot of positive things in my life. Especially Abinet has taught me to be patient and hardworking. But I am not that happy about the finishing. We were expecting to know what happened to the children of Chalachew and the end of Victoria after she steals her father's money. We need also to hear the marriage of Abinet and Mahlet. What about Nuredin and Nuria? I think the ending is too early. It would be more entertaining and educating if these characters ending was known. (Selam, 28/07/07)

In general, comments of listeners indicate a critical evaluation of the message, the characters and the serial drama as a whole.

b) Appreciations

Menta Menged radio serial listeners also write their appreciation of the drama. These praises, however, are varied in nature. These include comments about the drama in general, the producers and sponsors, characters, artists (drama writers, actors and actresses), and about the issues raised in the drama. What was most loved by many listeners is the drama's entertaining and educating nature.

A sophomore student from Awasa University said that he tunes in to *Menta Menged* both to be entertained and to get something "good". He praised the producers and writers for keeping both sides balanced.

This is just to thank you. I really enjoy the drama because it entertains as well as educates people. I always tune to the drama even if I do have exams. It gives me a lot of important things. I thank you again for all what you did. I hope you will keep us entertained in the future.... (Daniel, 14/06/06).

The focus group participants from Addis Ababa also stated that they think that the producers have tried to maintain balance. One participant said “when you find a section of the drama is too serious the next for sure becomes entertaining. That made me to love it” (Gashaw, 21).

Listeners of *Menta Menged* also write letters primarily to appreciate characters on the bases of specific behaviors and actions. It is the positive role model characters such as Abinet, Mahlet and Teacher Fami that are most appreciated for their strong foundation and doing only what is socially good etc. A teacher in a rural school in Amhara wished that he had had Abinet in his class. And he also admired one of Abinet’s teachers who helped and encouraged Abinet to be a successful student.

....It is clear that Abinet is not only a good student but also is a model for others. What I like most is his limitless interest to learning and his discipline in a class and out. I don’t know what I would say, if he were in my class.But still he is a model and I hope many students will follow him. I know his teacher, Fami, has done a lot for Abinet.For me teacher Fami is also a model for other teachers... (Taddese, 12/03/2007)

Artists (actors and actress) too are admired by listeners for making the drama more like real and for their imitation/ acting as if they are in a real life situation and not in a studio acting a written script. Artists of the leading characters are given the most tribute as they are

the most frequently appearing figures. Listeners who wrote letters directly to these artists (though still they use the PMC's postal code) requested addresses and photos and autographs.

... it was Mahlet's melodious voice that attracted me for the drama at first. But then I can't come back. It is a very good drama for the youth. I think all parents also have to listen to it. I appreciate all characters and artists who played them. Solomon [an actor who played the role of Abinet] is no more Solomon. I think he perfectly looks like Abinet. Please pass my appreciation for him and other artists... (Yohannes, 19/12/06).

The following letter is written to the Actress Meseret Mebrate who played the role of Mahlet in the serial

...I don't have a word how I love you. I know it is because you love the job. I have also got a chance to watch some of your dramas on TV. You are so perfect. ...I live in a small town. I don't have the opportunity to train and practice to be an actress here. Even in my school people don't appreciate what I am doing. I think it is because they are not aware about the importance of theatre and film. If I get any chance I will show you how I can change my self. So please give me your address, postal or telephone and I will tell you a lot about me. People have told me that it would not be that much difficult in Addis... (Tsigie, 27/6/07).

Among the various issues of the drama such as reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, migration, traditional practices, job and education, listeners less appreciate the inclusion of such serious issues like HIV/AIDS and drugs. They prefer the inclusion of issues that affect their daily lives such as family and peer relationships and migration.

c) Associations

Audience letters indicate that listeners associate the drama in two ways to their lives through the characters. The first way is when they found that a character(s) has a similar behavior to them. This kind of association is known as character identification. It is one way in which audience members can change their attitude and behavior:

A 23 year old listener from Addis Ababa writes about what the main character Abinet likes and dislikes in the drama and said that all of these characteristics similarly work for him too. This similarity has made him not only follow the drama attentively, but also to act based on the life principles of the character though he also said that he lacks patience like the character and hence wishes to have that.

... I know I have to be patient. And I have to be strong always. I work hard but things go often times wrong. I have been fighting with my mom for losing a lot of money after I lost a bid for a Car Washer. I know one day I will be successful. But I pray to get your patience on everything... (Shawel, 10/01/07)

The other way that listeners associate with the drama is when they found something that happened to a character had happened to them as well. This makes them feel that the character is someone similar to them and therefore, what happens to the character may also happen to them in the future. A listener, Kidist, from Eastern Ethiopia wrote, in connection to this, “....I can’t see any bright future.... a mighty of suffering is showering on Degie [a character who was raped and become positive]. She has a good friend that will encourage her. Who else is for me?May God saves us from these Devils.....”

Association is mainly made on similarity of character(s) behaviors. The socio-economic status of the characters is also what leads listeners to associate their lives with the lives of characters in the serial drama. They also sympathize with what happened to the characters:

... your drama is everywhere is my life. It has changed me in many ways. I can't forget the tears of Kokebe and Degie. How can I live a day without remembering the poor Mahlet? ... (Martha, 4/11/06).

d) Reflections

One level at which audience interaction with a media program reflected is through audience involvement. It is the degree to which audience members engage in reflection upon, and parasocial interaction with, certain media programs, thus resulting in overt behavior change (Sood 2002; p.156). Sood further defines reflection as the degree to which audience members consider a media message and integrate to their own lives (p.157).

Some *Menta Menged* listeners have written letters that show the drama has a connection to their life. The connection is expressed through the reflection of the media message and their life experience. That is to say that audience members consider some of the drama messages as similar to theirs /and/or people close to them, or that reflect their lives.

A listener in Addis Ababa wrote his story after he found part of the *Menga Menged* story to be similar to his. This story is about Ethiopian

illegal migrants in neighboring countries who went there for visas to move to the USA, Canada or Europe. The story in the drama is about two young lovers who decided to migrate to Europe through Kenya, but unfortunately they were caught by Kenyan police and imprisoned for months. With no legal procedure for their rights, they became subject to police intimidation. Finally the girl helped the boy to be released and go back home by fulfilling police officers' needs but she committed suicide. When he came to Ethiopia, police imprisoned him for months till the truth about the girl emerged.

In a real setting, a similar story had happened years ago to two Ethiopian lovers who went to Sudan to travel into Italy through Libya. The storyteller writes "I let her to steal money from her parents and we left for Sudan.... But things were not as we expected. I was caught by Sudan Police and imprisoned for about a year. I heard that my girl has become prostitute in Khartoum" (Matheos, 09/04/07). Then their original plan failed. Finally when released, the boy came back home while the girl remained a prostitute. Similar to the story in the drama, the young man was sent to prison for four months after the girl's parents accused him of taking their daughter without their knowledge (See Appendix C for the full story).

The writer of this story states at the beginning of his letter that he feels that the drama is a combination of other real stories rather than a fictional drama. He feels that in addition to him, there are people with stories around him.

Similarly, focus group discussion participants reported that they have lots of similar stories as those found in the drama, and that they experienced these issues either personally or from others close to them in real life:

I can tell you a number of stories. For instance, I know a family who has similar characteristics with Ato Shiferaw's [Leul's father]. They provide everything for their son. But he left school because he has everything for why should he learns. He then left his home. I think no one knows where he is now. (Mahteme, 20, FGD participant)

This is my classmate's story. She told me that her parents often quarrel. ...She sometimes sleeps in class. I think the main reason is that her father is drunk. Then she left home and school. Some people say she has gone to the Middle East in search of a better life. But there is also a gossip that says she has become prostitute... (Makeda FGD participant).

4.2.2. Reasons behind Letter Writing (Why they write?)

There are explicit and implicit reasons or motivating factors for letter writers for writing the letters. As it is discussed in chapter three of this study, letters to *Menta Menged* radio serial drama fall into two categories: those letters written with invitations by the producers for competitions and those which are written with the audiences' own reasons. Because the invitation for competitions has prizes, it works here only as one explicit reason for writing letters. That is to say that the initiative is not of the writers rather the producers. Hence, the emphasis in this section is on those letters that were written with the listeners' own initiatives.

The data reveals that listeners wrote letters to *Menta Menged* radio serial drama for various reasons. It is true that all listeners do not write letters since letter writing is a personal, voluntary activity.

However, those who write also have different motives and objectives to achieve.

The analysis of the *Menta Menged* letters also demonstrates that a number of factors are involved in writing letters to the drama. Though some state that the drama has really affected them positively, the main reason for writing their letters may not be solely the drama. This is actually with the exception of those who write to compete for winning the awards. The explicit and implicit reasons are each discussed separately.

a) Explicit Reasons

Explicit reasons were given in the letters which openly stated why they write those letters. These are external factors other than the drama itself. The two common reasons are to get personal recognition through airing their names (or they simply wished hearing their names aired) and to create contacts with artists and producers. Many listeners write comments and/or praises and request their names to be aired. While they request openly that they need their comments to be aired in the program, their commentary is slightly more than three lines of appreciation. Their objective however seems that they wanted to be recognized as listeners and participants. A 21 year old student from Addis Ababa, for instance, said that he is writing to check if his name could be aired. He also noted at the end of his letter that if they do not air it, that would be the end of his participation and even in listening the drama.

... I am a regular listener to your program Menta Menged. It is a very good drama. It entertains a lot of people. I appreciate that you are doing good. Please air this message. This is my first time to send you a letter. I want you to air my comments so that I can send

you other letters next. I hope you will do it. This is my first and if you don't it will be my last. Please ... (Samuel, 5/10/05)

Hussein from Combolcha in North Eastern Ethiopia also said that this is his third letter:

.... I live in a small village (town). I am a regular listener. But I want to be your participant. I have sent you three letters before but I didn't get any answer yet and this is my forth letter. Please don't throw it to a basket. ... Your program is good. It educated me to be patient. The conflict in the drama attracts me more. Though your program is twice a week, it is short. I suggest you to elongate it a bit. Since, I am your first participant please answer me soon...I have also two friends who are your participants and I need you to appreciate them.... (No date on the letter but received on 14 Nov. 2006).

Hussein's objective of writing is explicitly expressed. He needs to be recognized as participant. The comment he gave is that it has educated him to be patient and he loves the conflict in the drama. His actual desire is, however, to be a part of the participating community i.e. people who compete and win awards during competitions.

On the other hand, some listeners have written their life stories emphasizing the problems that they are facing socially, economically and culturally or their interests and future plans. It seems that because the sponsors are aid organizations such as UNICEF, these writers request all kinds of help from these organizations and PMC. With a similar objective are those who wrote in request of contact address, photos and autographs of artists.

b) Implicit Reasons

When we look at implicit reasons, different social, economic and cultural forces are behind the audiences' minds that push them to voice to the drama or at least to express themselves to the drama producers in addition to the drama itself. Lulit, 21, from Addis Ababa writes:

... I listen to Menta Menged. My parents have died years ago. I was with my aunt for about three years before she forced me to leave her house and shelter in a church. ...I was working half- day and attending my education on the other half. Now it is difficult to go on like that and I am thinking to shift my education to the evening so that I can work the whole day to support myself. But I do not know if that is a right decision. What would Abinet do if he were in my place? ... (Lulit, 13/09/06)

Though Lulit writes about her life situation, it is understandable that she connects her life with the drama. She is comparing her decisions to that of the character Abinet. In one way this might be taken as a deep involvement of the listener in the drama and she is looking at herself as a reflection of the drama. However, on the other hand, it seems she is writing to find advice from the producers and/or from the character.

In some letters the researcher has observed that the situation described is solely about the drama, the characters and how that influenced or just has a connection to their lives. In these cases priority is given to the drama and the relationship the situation has with the drama. It seems that in such cases, it is the drama which primarily has driven the emotion of letter writers to hold a pencil and paper. However, this situation is highly dependent on the power of the

drama to evoke emotions in the minds of listeners, other things being equal.

To understand the hidden agenda of writers, hence, has been very difficult as human behavior is complex and dynamic. The researcher in this case is highly dependent on the contexts of letters and statements given at the focus group discussion. Though only a few participants said that they had been participating, either in letter writing or filing the weekly opinion and evaluations forms of the PMC Monitoring Department, some said that there were situations that initiated them to write reactions. Makda, 19, is one of the listener group members who often participated in filling the monitoring forms of the PMC. She remembers the kind of situations that usually develops after they listened to the drama among family members and other people:

We often argue on characters and issues after the drama is broadcast. It is common also to hear people arguing like we do. I remember once in a coffee ceremony where a couple of people were gathered. The drama ended and a hot discussion began after one of our neighbors who is a teacher complained about the situation in schools where some students force teachers to pass them to the next grades. The issue was raised due to the drama. There were people who talked about the irresponsibility of teachers while others defended. I was initiated to write about that to PMC [the drama producer]... but for a reason I don't remember now I forgot it.... But I usually sent my views while filling the monitoring form... (Makeda, FGD participant).

Though such kinds of situations, where a discussion follows the end of the drama, were also reported by the majority of the participants in the focus group discussions, they did not want or were not initiated to

share that with the producers of the drama. And all episodes may not invoke both discussions and interest in writing letters as well.

4.3. Discussion of the Findings

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, this second part of the chapter is devoted for discussion of the findings. The discussion is arranged according to the data presentation. To support the discussion, apart from the actual data, reference is made to the literature to include other similar findings and theoretical frameworks.

4.3.1. *Menta Menged Audience Reactions*

The first section of this chapter illustrates the kinds of reactions *Menta Menged* audiences have towards the radio serial drama. The analysis of the listeners' letters shows that audiences have four categories of reactions to the drama. While some write letters to address their comments on the drama or characters, others write to show appreciation for the drama and/or characters. Others write to state their connection and reflection to the drama. This connection and reflection is expressed in many ways. Some writers found stories in the drama, which are similar to their life. Others found similar characters to themselves. Characters play a role in attracting and holding audiences' attentions.

Esta de Fossard, in her script writer's manual in titled *How to Write a Radio Serial Drama for Social Development* (1996), advised writers what qualities characters should have. Based on her advice,

characters in an EE radio serial drama should be realistic and believable, appropriate to the message, appropriate to the audience, varied in personality, limited in number and adults rather than children (p. 64). When characters look believable audiences feel that the drama is something about real people. This leads to a level to model characters. Though *Menta Menged* listeners have mixed perceptions and reactions to the characters' personalities, those listeners who identified (a) character(s) as having similar or likable behaviors have taken them as models.

Besides, this similarity is observed in both positive role model characters that have socially acceptable behaviors and in negative role model characters whose behaviors are socially unacceptable. Those who reported similarity to bad model characters also reported that they have changed their personality to positive model behaviors after comparing and evaluating the benefits and the punishments of the good and the bad behaviors, respectively.

Although the researcher did not find this in the letters, however, in one of the focus group discussions participants were divided on the negative model character, Leul. One of the participants strongly argued that Leul is a victim of his own parents and hence he is not responsible for his socially undesirable behaviors and actions. Her argument of liking him was also critical, in that she defended him being in his social position. In EE this kind of character identification occurs and is called as the "Archie Bunker effect" which is an unintended effect on audiences when they identify with a negative model (Sood and Rogers, 2000; Singhal and Rogers, 2001).

These associations and reflections indicate that the drama or the message has got a place in these audiences' minds. Especially those who have reported that the drama has some kind of association to

their life are likely to be influenced by the drama's message. EE studies that attempted to answer the 'how' of EE effects suggest that audience involvement in one or other ways such as parasocial interaction with a media character, identification with a character, or emotional involvement with the drama leads to a behavior change on audience members (E.g. Sood and Rogers 2000; Sood 2002; Papa, et al., 2000; Kincaid, 2002 as reviewed in chapter two).

This finding is, however, from the self-reports found in the letters. These reports can be subject for different interpretation. Most of the reports that indicate a behavior change from bad to good are from the response letters. These letters are written with the invitation of the serial drama producers for competition. Hence, writers may intend to write what the drama producers may want to hear so as to win the competition rather than writing the truth. The researcher believes, at least, there might be exaggerations by these audiences.

What I understand from the focus group discussion, however, is that listeners are aware of many of the educational issues raised in the drama. Though it is difficult to know the levels of their behavior change, it is probably possible to conclude that from this high knowledge level of issues, a change in attitude and behavior might occur. Similar to this assertion is that many of the participants in the focus group discussions reported that because they have learnt it, they would not do what other negative models/ characters were doing.

4.3.2. Motivating Factors in Letter Writing to Menta Mened

Motivating factors are the main reasons that caused different interpretations in the analysis of audience reactions. The existence of

external factors or stimuli other than the radio serial drama story and the characters, suggest that responses or feedbacks of audience should be carefully analyzed and interpreted.

The data reveals that audiences write for various reasons, which has no direct relationship to the impact of the drama. Some write because they want their names broadcast, though there is not policy or prior experience of broadcasting names and comments when general comments are made about the program. It is only when a listener wins competition(s) that his/her name is aired and that is at a specific time (only three times during the whole two year program) after competition questions are asked and listeners are invited to participate.

In the literature, (as reviewed in chapter two of this study), it was found out that various motivating factors are involved in the writing of letters in particular and participation in general. Law and Singhal (1999), for instance, found out various reasons for writing letters, in their study of audience letters to an EE radio drama in India. Their findings show some listeners write because they are registered listeners even if they need not. Some simply wish to hear their names broadcast, although there is no guarantee of this from the radio station. Certain people are also interested in gaining access to the radio actors and producers. But many write to celebrate and identify with a favorite radio program or with certain actors. While the last reason suggests the influence of the radio drama, the other factors show the role of external motivating factors.

Menta Menged listeners have also exhibited similar motives in writing letters. That they wish to hear their names on the radio is one of the many external reasons for writing letters.

This might be from the influence of other media programs that often have regular or irregular programs of broadcast for audience feedback. During my general survey, I have seen that some listeners have written ‘*Yibekal*’ the name of another popular AIDS radio program by misunderstanding the difference between the serial drama, *Menta Menged*, and the radio program while they are talking about the serial. This radio program has time for audience feedbacks and it has also a program where both the youth and adults exchange address for pen pals and even for love and marriage (including HIV +ve people) relationships. Hence, it is the researcher’s belief that this program and/or other similar programs and trends might have influenced them.

Murphy (2005), cautions evaluators to be aware and control other media program impacts during evaluations of E-E projects: “I caution those undertaking evaluation of E-E projects to control for the effect of exposure to modern media in general as separate from the effect of specific program, for example, a soap opera” (p. 486). Murphy hence further advises a revisiting of data by independent researchers after an evaluation is conducted. As discussed in chapter two (section 2.2.2 EE evaluation and audiences) evaluations may show completely different results due to the presence and absence of other media and/or programs.

The data also shows that listeners write letters with the objective of creating relationships with program producers such as narrators (epilogue-givers) and artists such as script writers, actors and actresses. The stated objectives indicate that some wrote letters because the artists are celebrities and they (letter writers) found this to be fun, while others indicate that they have future plans to be artists and hence, they need advice. Still others wrote letters that

state their miserable situations of life and hence, they seem to want help from the drama producer(s) (PMC Ethiopia) and program sponsors such as UNICEF.

A comparison of commentary and response letters show that response letters are more direct in reporting knowledge gains, attitude changes and behavior changes. Commentary letters, however, showed limited behavior changes but possible high intentions for positive actions. They are more open to knowledge gain and attitude changes.

4.3.3. Audience Reactions and *Menta Menged* Drama Goals

The PMC Ethiopia's, *Menta Menged* radio serial drama has the objective of addressing the problems of young people in Ethiopia. It aims particularly to enable the youth to take actions to solve problems such as HIV/AIDS, unemployment, migration and other social issues. The drama targets the youth and the adults at a reproductive age. The drama intends to empower the youth to solve their problems collectively and individually. As discussed in chapter two of this study, the drama aspires to enable them "acquire knowledge, values, skills and experiences through dialogue and capacity building..." (PMC, 2006)

"Most campaigns measure success by compliance with goals." (Dervin and Frenette, 2001; p. 71). Though this is not an evaluative research project which checks whether the program is effective or not, audience reactions help analyze the extent to which the program has influenced its listeners. Because audience members are expected to react to the messages of the drama in any way (according to the response model as assumed in chapter one), their reaction provides

insights to the level of the drama's influence. Cho and Salmon (2007; p. 296) takes this argument further to explore the possibility of unintended effects that may occur in health communications. They wrote:

Specifically, individuals may carry the intended meanings to unintended levels and contexts through subsequent communicative actions, and the social environments surrounding them may direct the process and outcomes of a campaign to unintended contexts and levels. Consequently, campaigns intending changes in individuals may unintentionally modify the systems, values, and cultures of the society and its diverse subsectors.

Moreover, audience reactions may also suggest a different approach and/or guide to a new way of tackling the social problems raised. In other words, the findings of audience reactions could be incorporated in future campaigns.

In relation to this, the reaction of *Menta Menged* audiences shows a mixed result. While some find it as a tool to change themselves and their societies (as intended by the producer), some are at the midway point for the expected outcomes. Listeners' letters suggest that the serial drama was popular enough to cause them to become involved in the storyline and identify with characters, particularly those who played prominent roles in the story. These audiences also reported that they share many positive values with characters and were motivated to act accordingly to solve similar problems in their real life situations.

Though the drama has raised several issues of the youth, both in rural and urban, letters show selection of program issues as important and most prominent. Migration for both sexes and rape for

girls both at school and home were prioritized as their most prominent problem, which they were not aware about enough but learnt it from the drama. The issues such as HIV/AIDS seem less important or at least it was not suggested as a main issue and those who cited it said that the drama has not effectively addressed the solution to problems associated with it. This might be due to the negative (unintended) effect of mass media that results from an over (increasing) exposure to an issue. Cho and Salmon (2007) noted that “Increasing exposure may decrease perceived personal risk and social importance concerning a health issue in members of the public” (p. 295).

From the focus group discussion, I understand that listeners prefer to see their economic problems solved before social problems. Their reason is that it is the economic problems that are driving the social and health problems rather than vice versa. This might be the main case for letter writers as well that pushed them to focus on migration and unemployment or the issue of respecting work as a main issue they learnt most from the drama.

During the focus group, participants raised and most agreed on the weakness of the serial in showing solutions to many of the problems. However, there were also some arguments where participants said that the drama itself is a positive strategy since it encourages listeners to think about the problems and leaves them to find solutions for themselves based on the specific situations to each individual listener.

In general, the data shows a selection of priority issues as problems and solutions. The drama, however, raised most of these issues, though there are still differences on applications on the ground.

4.3.4. Audience Reaction and its Implications to EE Practices

Entertainment education is a relatively new strategy with its deliberate application for social change. It is still at a level of strategy, which uses theoretical frameworks from other social sciences. However, as reviewed in chapter two of this research, the literature shows that it is fast growing and is effective in many countries. It also addresses many issues of society from single problem to complex problems of society.

Nevertheless, as Singhal and Rogers (2002) pointed out, more work is needed to show theoretically and practically how and why EE affects and influences people to change their attitudes and behavior. In addition, research methodologies need to be varied to address different issues around human behavior. Similarly, data sources should be varied in nature.

Menta Menged drama audience reactions show that the current practice of EE in Ethiopia (radio serial drama) is attracting larger audiences and signals a positive trend. Though relatively new compared to other African countries, Ethiopia's experience of implementing the strategy is resulting in similar findings with other countries such as India. The letters and the focus group discussions specifically show that the drama is a new kind of media intervention and it is popular enough among the target audience as well as the general public in stimulating discussions on social and health issues.

Hence, the future of radio drama in particular and entertainment education media interventions in general in Ethiopia is promising as long as they are implemented based on extensive formative research and designed based on theoretical frameworks.

4.4. Summary

This chapter presents the data collected from a qualitative content analysis (text analysis) and a focus group discussion with listeners. Audience letters show that four categories of reactions namely: commentaries, appreciations, associations and reflections. The data also includes the various reasons (motivating factors) behind letter writing and participation to *Menta Menged* radio serial drama. This finding is also supported with data from the focus group discussions.

The chapter also discusses the data in relation to theories and practices reviewed in chapter two of the study. Hence, audience reactions are analyzed with respect to the research questions of the study. The kind of reactions, motivating factors, their relationship with program or drama goals and their implication is also dealt with. The next chapter, chapter five, summarizes and concludes the whole study.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Audience response or reaction is a key component in the study of EE impacts or effects on audience behavior. In a radio serial drama it can suggest the impact of the radio drama on audience members. In developing countries, audiences respond to a radio serial drama often in writing letters which is the main form of audience participation in EE media programs such as serial radio and television dramas. Letters written by these audience members who listened to the drama indicate how the drama influenced its listeners to move in socially desirable directions.

Entertainment-education mass media programs can attract huge audiences. While the entertaining function helps to hold the audience's attention, the educational messages attempt to influence the audience member's knowledge, attitude and overt behavior. Audiences who listen to the programs, for instance radio dramas, are then expected to react or respond to the producers in different ways.

Radio serial dramas intend to influence target audiences towards socially desirable behaviors using model characters and familiar settings. The models show good and bad behaviors, which are rewarded or punished. Drama involves conflicts to hold audience emotions and presents model characters that have similar social problems as the target audiences. Producers expect audience

members to react or respond to the drama, characters and their lived experiences. Often audiences write letters to producers stating what they like and dislike, to say what they have learned and what they think is good and bad etc.

When it is done with the initiatives of the audience members, letters represent the writers' knowledge level and attitude toward an issue. Moreover, it also gives insights on the intentions of behavior change to a socially desirable direction. This assumption leads practitioners to take mass audience responses such as in letter writing as an indication for effectiveness or program impact.

However, audience behavior is complex and hence mass response may not be representative for intended media impact, but is rather limited to suggestive functions. Target audiences are not the same though they may have similar problems and needs. These problems may be social or economic or both. However, their knowledge level and attitude varies depending on the personalities of audience members and their attitudes towards these problems and needs.

This research, however, has shown that mass audience responses, particularly in letter writing, needs careful analysis and examination to claim whether the program has actually influenced, as intended, the audiences' knowledge, attitude and perhaps initiated change of their overt undesirable behaviors. Since there are stages of behavior and social change, audience feedback may not show the same level of reading of the serial drama's messages. This may caution program implementing agencies and individuals as well as independent program evaluators that audience feedback is crude data that needs analysis and interpretation before using it.

Moreover, incentives for letter writing which are accompanied by award winning competitions may have unintended consequences. Audience members may write in their letters what they think the producer wants to hear so as to win the competition rather than writing the truth in their minds. These kinds of letters give less genuine data for the influence of the serial drama. Hence, producers need to take care while encouraging their audiences to participate in either writing letters or other ways. Audience letters can only be regarded as 'pure' and unsolicited when the audience members are left free to choose their subject and language for their letters.

Entertainment-education mass media programs which aim at influencing audience members prosocially such as radio serial dramas often work in a media environment where other (mass) media reach the audience members. Evaluations of these programs hence need to control the effect or exposure of these other media (programs). Audience members may not be able to identify from which program they acquire the intended behavior. Hence, it would be difficult to claim audience responses of change in their knowledge, attitude or behavior is as the results of a single media or media program.

5.2. POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is limited to the analysis of the reactions of audiences from the letters and from the focus group discussions. But it is valuable for future research. Other research needs to show the relationship between audience reactions and their actual knowledge, attitude and behaviors. This may help measure the extent of the impact of a program. Increasingly, research also shows that it is not the mass media program that influences individuals, but rather their

interpersonal communication which emerges as a result of having consumed the media product. In other words, the fact that audiences listen to a radio program may be less important than the fact that they later discuss the issues raised in the serial. It may be at this level of interpersonal communication that audiences are stimulated to change attitudes or undesirable behaviors, as they are influenced by opinion leaders in their communities.

Moreover, audience letters represent only the views of those who can write. Hence case studies such as extended observations may provide insights into how audience members react while they are listening and immediately after the end of the drama. As agenda setting theory proposes, audience members may engage in further discussions on the issues broadcast in the drama.

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Appendices

Appendix I
(Sample Supporting Letters)

Date-----
No-----

Population Media Centre- Ethiopia
Addis Ababa

Faculty of Journalism and Communications
Addis Ababa University

Subject: Request for Cooperation

Aderaw Genetu is an MA student in our Faculty. He is currently working on his thesis on Entertainment Education and Audiences in Ethiopia. He requests your kind cooperation in letting him access audience letters and related documents in your Centre. We highly appreciate for all of your helps.

With Regards,

Asst. Dean

Appendix II

(Discussion Guide)

A Discussion Guide for the Focus Group Discussions (a guide for the moderator)

- Issues to be covered
 - The likes and dislikes about the drama/characters
 - The strength and weakness of the drama
 - The role of audiences in the drama
 - The issues of the drama you remember most
 - The characters you remember most
- Questions
 - How was the drama?
 - What is its implication to you/your life? Education? Family? Etc
 - Was it looking like true?
 - Which character(s) you think go (es) with you?
 - Have you ever participated in the drama such as in letter writing?
Why?
 - What issues do you remember most?
 - Was it successful? Why?

Appendix III

(Letter competition questionnaire)

1.1. First round competition questions

1. Which actor/actress did you like best in the serial drama? Why?
2. Which actor/actress did you like least in the serial drama? Why?
3. What message did you get from the serial drama?

1.2. Second round competition questions

1. What message did you get from the serial drama?
2. What message did you get from the serial drama regarding HIV/AIDS?
3. What do you think you learn from the serial drama?

1.3. Third round competition questions

1. Did you get anything new from the serial drama? What is it?
2. What behavioral change did you bring as a result of listening to the serial drama?
3. What is the most interesting part of the serial drama in your opinion?

Appendix IV

(Samples/cases of letters)

9/4/2007

First of all, I salute you all. I attend PMC programs. A PMC effort to resolve social problems is wonderful. Before now I attended Yeken Kignit (Looking over One's Daily Life) drama. But I found my self inside Menta Menged (Crossroads) which is currently on air. The character who resembles me is Mebrehatu. Believing that there would never come success in Ethiopia, I let my girl friend steal money from her parents. We dreamt and stood to leave the country and go to Italy through Sudan and then Libya. Nevertheless, I was caught and imprisoned in Sudan. My girl friend, too, became prostitute in Khartoum, principally because she was raped by soldiers. After two months in prison, I was released. Looking for my girl friend, I was informed that she was a prominent prostitute who made sex with higher officials in the country. People also told me that she became rich enough with that same "job". Thinking of my loneliness and poorness, I stepped at a crossroad as to where I could go. I thought to continue my original plan to go to Libya. But I was informed that the soldiers at the boarder couldn't let me enter into. Moreover, people threatened me that the soldiers would cut me off in to Pieces. Ultimately, I decided and went back to home. Earlier, I had told my friend working in Sudan to tell my girl friend that I had been back. But she remained there. Her parents challenged me about where their daughter was. I was imprisoned for about four months. After released from prison, I began working in a small business. Some old friends appreciated me while others laughed at me. Currently, I am attending my school. I work at day time and attend school at evening. I, as a model, give lessons to many youth. Menta Menged is a copy of my life.

*Alemu Mulugeta
Addis Ababa*

Dear Producers of Menta Menged,

I am writing now just to keep my promise of writing or being your permanent participant after I won the Second Round Completion. And hence, I don't have that much comment on the drama. But let me say a few lines about what I feel.

The conflict between Leul and Abinet and the suffering condition of Kokebe is a bit disgusting. Besides, Tsigie was very reluctant to take one more step to take actions against Leul. She may have a reason for her decision. But if she were able to report to the police, her fear of attack from Leul would be minimized. The release of Leul from prison is also another disgusting part of the drama. I wish to see Abinet freed and back to his beloved friends.

Yours, Kalewongel, Nazareth

Declaration

This thesis is my original work. It has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Aderaw Genetu Tassew

20 June, 2008