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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION

Reception Analysis of Print Serial Messages
A Case Of: *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama
Addis Ababa University

By: Tirsit Yetbarek

June, 2010

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

RECEPTION ANALYSIS OF PRINT SERIAL MESSAGES

A CASE OF: *THE JOURNEY LIFE 101*

PRINT SERIAL DRAMA

Of

Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS
project of Addis Ababa University (MARCH AAU).

A

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A Case Of: *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial
Drama Addis Ababa University**

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Table of content

Acknowledgements	I
Abstract	II
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	8
1.1. Background of The Study	8
1.2. Statement of the problem.....	9
1.3. Objective of the study.....	10
1.3.1. General objective.....	10
1.3.2 Specific objective	10
1.4. Research questions.....	11
1.5. Significance of the study	11
1.6. Scope of the Study.....	11
1.7. Limitations of the study.....	12
1.8. Organization of the study.....	12
CHAPTER TWO.....	13
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
2.1. History of Entertainment -Education.....	13
2.2. Definitions of entertainment education.....	14
2.3. Using E-E for health messages	16
2.4. Advantages of E-E serial drams.....	17
2.4.1. The nine Ps of entertainment-education are:	18
2.5. Potential resistances to E-E	18
2.5.1. On the message production side.....	18
2.5.2. Message reception resistance	19
2.6. Theories of Entertainment –Education	20
2.6.1. Social learning theory	21
2.6.2. Persuasion theory.....	22
2.6.3. Reception theory	23
2.7. History and development of Comic books.	25
2.7.1. Characteristics of comics.....	29
2.8. What is MARCH?.....	29
2.8.1. MARCH AAU and <i>The Journey Life 101</i> Print Serial Drama.	31

CHAPTER THREE	36
METHODOLOGY	
3.1. Qualitative research.....	
3.2. Case study research.....	38
3.3. Data collection techniques.....	38
3.3.1. Focus group discussion.....	39
3.3.2. In-depth individual interview.....	41
3.4. Sampling technique.....	42
3.5. Data Collection Procedure and analysis.....	43
CHAPTER FOUR.....	45
Findings and Data Analysis	45
4.1. Message reception.....	46
4.1.1. Getting connected with the medium.....	46
4.1.2 Holding discussions.....	47
4.1.3. The way of presentation.....	49
4.1.4 Balanced Entertainment and Education.....	53
4.1.4. Persuasive or poor quality entertainment.....	55
4.1.5 Reality of the story and characters' interaction.....	58
4.2 Message interpretation.....	60
4.2.1. Objective of the Print serial.....	60
4.2.2 Misinterpretation and negotiation of meaning.....	63
4.2.3. Passing the wrong message.....	65
4.2.4. Mis-representation regarding gender.....	68
4.3. Image of the university students out of the community.....	69
4.4. What is missing?	71
CHAPTER FIVE	72
CONCLUSION.....	72
REFERENCE.....	75
Appendix:.....	80
Guide for the Focus Group Discussion.	
Guide for in-depth individual interview.	

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Abstract

*This study tries to investigate the message reception of **The Journey Life 101** Print Serial Drama of the Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS project of Addis Ababa University (MARCH AAU). In order to get a deep understanding of the issue in focus, a qualitative research design is employed. To generate appropriate data for the study, an equal number of male and female, totaling, forty, research participants from all faculties of the university were selected purposively based on the criterion of being a regular follower of the medium under study. The data was collected primarily through six Focus Group Discussions which had categories based on seniority and place of residence before joining the campus. In-depth individual interviews with twelve active Focus Group Discussion participants were used to triangulate the data. In-depth interview with program producers and document analysis were also included to enrich the data. The study revealed that the medium has popularity in the community as well as out of the community. This is attributed to the print nature of the medium and also the well thought out design of presentation. The use of concise expressions blended with images contributed to the reception of the message. In addition, its comic book format has played a significant role in catching the attention of the audience. However, the interpretation of the message is found to have been negotiated and even at times opposed by the majority of participants. The first reason given is that the magazine focuses only on the assumed “Arada” or ‘Modern’ group of the community by ignoring the other significant groups. The Second reason is that the story does not have positive role models that could manifest strong self-efficacy. The third reason given is that some of the transitional characters use “perfect English” beyond the reach of the readers. The colloquial nature of the Amharic language used is also found to be a factor that limits the message reception. Besides, the fact that none of the characters are getting immediate punishment for their negative behavior is found to be sending the wrong message to the target audience. The length of publication and irregular distribution time, which affected the serial nature of the medium, has also affected the message interpretation. Negative portrayal of both sexes and distorting the university’s and the students’ image are considered to be potential limitations for the message interpretation.*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of The Study

The fight against HIV/AIDS is a social, economical and political problem of a nation, especially those of developing one due to its strong relation to literacy and poverty. These days, the situation is better than the previous; in aspects such as number of infected people, death rate related to the disease and the awareness about it (UNAIDS, 2008). However, the high prevalence still occurs in the age group 15-49, majority at urban areas in Ethiopia (MOH, 2009). In order to tackle down the transmission of the disease and to protect the high-risk group of the population, media plays a significant role. Radio takes the high level in reaching audiences along with TV and print media, which have lower number of audiences compared to radio (Negussie, 2008). The increasingly growing communication channels provides the alternative to use a specific and well suited medium to reach a particular group in order to create awareness, reduce misconceptions and associated vulnerability of high-risk (Singhal & Rogers, 2003). That is why conducting anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns with maximum efficiency requires a clear understanding of the problem, challenges and obstacles for effective HIV prevention education by using effective program design and application of media (Mckee et al., 2004).

Addis Ababa University as an important institute in the country's development holds a community endowed with the power to secure the bright future of the country. However, the age range for the majority of the community lies in the

highly-risk population for HIV/AIDS prevalence. This makes the community a spot for major prevention site. Due to this, educating the community in a way that makes sense in its environment has a tremendous advantage to realize the development goals of the country by securing the productivity of the community. Based on this assumption, Addis Ababa University signed a cooperative agreement with US-CDC-Ethiopia in 2004 to work on a project called Modeling and reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS (MARCH) Addis Ababa University. Its aim is to strength HIV/AIDS, STI and TB prevention, control and treatment efforts at the university to encourage desirable behavioral change in the community. Among the mediums the project use to obtain the objective is the Print Serial Drama (PSD): *The Journey Life 101* which is used as a reference point to address HIV/AIDS messages. The print medium uses the psychosocial theory and Entertainment-Education(E-E) communication strategy, which is assumed to be helpful in increasing audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitude, shift in social norms and change in overt behavior (Singhal & Rogers , 2002).

1.2. Statement of the problem

As has been tried to show in the background, the fight against HIV/AIDS is showing a decrease in prevalence in the country. Nevertheless, there are still high- risk populations that are in the 15-49 age groups. Considering the responsibility this group shoulders in the country's future, it needs to double the effort to educate them through effective media by evaluating the existing mass mediated messages reception and improve them for better effect in attaining the desired out come. Developing and implementing culturally relevant and appropriate high quality, entertaining and educational message is, therefore,

believed to be very important in addressing problems in a country. Experience in a number of developing countries such as Mexico, Brazil, India, Kenya and Tanzania show that mass media has been effective and efficient in changing audience attitudes and behavior. In this regard, *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama (PSD) of MARCH AAU project appears to be popular in getting the attention of the university community. There are also reinforcement activities based on the stories in the PSD. These will play significant role in changing the behavioral status of students to the desirable behaviors to prevent HIV/AIDS prevalence. However, these assumptions need deep investigation both to anticipate its effectiveness and to increase its contribution to positive behavioral change as Valente (2001) claimed that communication intervention's true effect is not measured by the degree audience like them but rather in the program's influence on the community it is created to influence.

1.3. Objective of the study

This study does have the following general and specific objectives:

1.3.1. General objective

The general objective of this study is to analyze the reception of the HIV/AIDS messages of *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama by Addis Ababa University students.

1.3.2. Specific objective

The specific objective of the study is

- To explore the students response to the HIV/AIDS messages of *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama.

1.4. Research questions

In order to obtain the objectives set, the researcher probes the following questions.

1. How is the message of The Journey Life 101 Print Serial Drama interpreted by Addis Ababa University students?
2. What are the factors that foster or limit the reception of the message?

1.5. Significance of the study

This study tries to find out how student make meaning out of the medium and what factors hinders their interpretation to go along with the objective of the program producers. Therefore, this study could be useful for the specific medium in focus to make adjustments based on the findings of the study for better effectiveness. It can be helpful for other universities which plan to have similar medium in reaching their community. In addition, this study might be useful to media institutions and others who work on HIV/AIDS education and communication to design messages by reducing factors, which are hindrances for effective communication and transmission of education regarding the problem. This study might also serve as a source for those who intend to carry out further study in this area.

1.6. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is specific to investigation of Addis Ababa university students' messages reception of the Print Serial Drama produced by the MARCH project of Addis Ababa University. It is confined in providing explanations regarding how the students receive the messages and what factors foster or limit

their interpretation of messages and understanding of objectives the project tries to provide.

1.7. Limitations of the study.

The universe of the study is all students of Addis Ababa University with the assumption that this print is distributed considering one edition for two students. However, constraints of time and budget forced the researcher to focus on a very small number of students though the study design provides the power to get the most out of the participants. Therefore, this study is not concerned with generalizing the results but to give the deep insights of the purposely drew participants.

1.8. Organization of the study.

This research paper consists of five chapters. Chapter one provides a background to the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, scope, limitation and organization of the study. The second chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study by dealing with E-E strategy, theories of the strategy, the nature of comic books and application of E-E for health education. This chapter also provides a concise introduction of MARCH AAU Project and the Print Serial Drama *The Journey Life 101* of the project. The third chapter is dedicated to the methodology of the study which presents the rationale behind selecting qualitative study and methods of data collection. The next chapter, chapter four, concentrates on presentation and analysis of findings. The last chapter presents conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. History of Entertainment -Education.

Entertainment-Education(E-E) can be considered as the result of an ongoing development which started from the theory of mass communication message reception as a magic bullet, where the assumption was that every message was received as it is; followed by the minimal effect theory when it was realized that people are active and selective in receiving media messages. Consequently, the media has minimum effect since the audience chooses what to view or listen to.

Providing message by linking entertainment and education is not a phenomenon of this century; rather it goes as far back as human history of storytelling (Singhal & Rogers, 2001). Most cultures all over the world have folk media, music, drama and proverbs for entertainment and to transmit educative pro- social values (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). However, E-E as a process of purposely designed and implemented media message both to entertain and educate is considerably a recent phenomenon (Singhal et al., 2004).

E-E is not a theory; it is rather a communication strategy to bring about behavioral and social change, which is supported by several communication theories as a base for structuring messages. The area of focus being different, E-E is used all over the world to transmit developmental messages. There are two versions regarding how E-E came out as a development communication strategy.

The first version is an accidental discovery in 1970 by Miguel Sabido, who studied the strong effect of television drama on *Simplement Maria* drama of Peru. He studied the effect on the audience and developed a methodology for creating similar programs which he applied to Mexican audiences (Singhal & Rogers, 2001: 2002). This development is believed to be unique and provided a clear difference between the new genre (E-E) and the old conventional soap operas which were melodramatic, highly exaggerated and in many ways considered as “unreal” (Fossard, 2005). The second version claims that E-E is the result of the development of entertainment media industry and technology which resulted in changing the previous presupposition of strong media effect like the magic bullet theory to the use and gratification theory which gives the choice to the viewers based on the audiences’ shift from educational channels to entertainment media (Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

The wide exposure to entertainment media content and the heavy consumption of them by the population of the world is one of the premises given by Waisbord (2000) for the development of the strategy. The other premise he set is that educational message does not necessarily need to be dull but can have entertainment formats to achieve socially desirable change.

The overall idea tells that entertainment and education are not exclusive of each other (Melkote & Steeves,2001).

2.2. Definitions of entertainment education.

The words entertainment and education are both rooted in Latin languages which mean “to hold or command attention” and “to lead forward” respectively (Webster English dictionary). Combined together, they signify a meaning of

commanding attention to lead forward which also holds the frequently mentioned objective of entertainment education, that is, change for better social behavior.

Many scholars gave different names for E-E such as Infotainment, Edutainment, and enter-educate (Fossard, 1996). Currently the name Entertainment- Education has got the dominance. As well as having various names, there are various definitions for E-E. *“Putting educational content into entertainment media messages”* is a definition given by Singhal & Rogers (1990). *“A strategic communication process initiated by a partner interested in educating by capitalizing on the popularity of entertainment”* is another describing definition (Bouman, 1999; Piotrow, Meyer & Zulu, 1992).

“A performance which captures the interest or attention of an individual, giving them pleasure, amusement or gratification while simultaneously helping the individual to develop a skill to achieve a particular end by boosting his or her mental, moral or physical powers” (Nariman,1993: 154) are among the numerous definitions.

Despite the different names given to the strategy, there is a communality in that what all convey through their definition is the intended combination of educational message with an entertainment format (Papal et al., 2002).

The following definition given by Singhal & Rogers (2004) regarding what E-E is and its objective contains what all the scholars tried to express through their definitions.

Entertainment-Education (E-E) 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 attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behavior which can occur at individual, community or societal level.(p.5)

Regarding the contribution level of E-E intervention Singhal & Rogers (2004) puts two levels .The first is that it can influence members' awareness, attitudes and behavior towards a socially desirable end, where the anticipated effects are located in the individual audience member. The second is that it can influence the audience's environment to help create the necessary conditions for social change at the system level. This idea is further elaborated by Wailack (1990) who wrote that E-E media can serve as a social mobilizer, an advocate or an agenda setter, influencing public and policy initiatives in a socially desirable direction.

2.3. Using E-E for health messages

Starting in the mid 1980s, E-E interventions have been used for health related educational issues, mostly in form of radio and television soap operas especially in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. (Singhal & Rogers, 2003). At the beginning, Population Communication International (PCI), a nongovernmental organization headquartered in New York, and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP) were the sites for dissemination of E-E projects. These days organizations like The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDP) in Atlanta utilizes E-E soap operas in its MARCH (Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV) in four African countries: Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana and Zimbabwe. In addition the Population Media Center an NGO headquartered in Burlington, Vermont has E-E initiatives underway in Ethiopia, Philippines, Sudan and Swaziland (Greenberg et al., 1996)

Though it started as a radio and television soap operas in developing countries, these days there are multiple formats of E-E strategy and it is applied very widely (Singhal & Rogers, 2004). Just like the format, the intervention level is also various. Some interventions are national campaigns while others are designed for specific local audiences. Yet other interventions go beyond the national scope like that of the south Asian cartoon *Meena* which, include a much broader geographical and cultural space (Ibid).

2.4. Advantages of E-E serial dramas

Serial dramas continuing for several months or years are considered advantageous for behavioral change programs for the following reasons:

- ❖ They capture the attention and the emotions of the audience.
- ❖ They provide repetition and continuity, allowing audience to identify more and more closely over time with the characters, their problems and their social environment.
- ❖ They allow time for characters to develop a change in behavior slowly with hesitation and setbacks as it occur in real life.
- ❖ Serial dramas have various subplots that can introduce different issues in a logical and credible way through different characteristic of conventional soap operas.
- ❖ They can build a realistic social context that will mirror society and create multiple opportunities to present social issues in various forms.
- ❖ They probably provide the best opportunity to realize fully the nine Ps of E-E (Kincaid, 2002:142).

2.4.1. The nine Ps of entertainment-education are:

- ✓ **Pervasive:** - it is found everywhere from street corners to community radio level.
- ✓ **Popular:** - people like entertainment, seek it out and enjoy it.
- ✓ **Passionate:** - entertainment stimulates the emotions, so people remember, talk to others, and are more inclined to take actions.
- ✓ **Personal:** - people identify with dramatic characters as if they were personal friends.
- ✓ **Participatory:** - people participate by singing, dancing and talking about characters and stories.
- ✓ **Persuasive:** - people can be persuaded to identify with role models and then see the consequences of sensible or foolish behavior and imitate what works.
- ✓ **Practical:** - entertainment infrastructures and performers are already in place and always look for good dramatic themes.
- ✓ **Profitable:** - Good E-E helps pay its own way and generates sponsorship, collateral promotions and sometimes profit.
- ✓ **Proven effective:** - Messages from entertainment can change the way people think, feel, and behave, as research has shown (Singhal et al., 2004:51-52).

2.5. Potential resistances to E-E

E-E scholars and practitioners are now more mindful about the potential resistances to Entertainment- Education by the message producers, in the message environment, and in message reception by audiences.

2.5.1. On the message production side

- Strong resistance to initiating E-E interventions.

- Broadcasters fear charting what they perceive as to be unknown territories.
- Commercial broadcasters fear that advertisers and audiences will be turned off if a program is perceived as playing an educational role.
- They increasingly pay attention how E-E projects are formulated, funded, researched, produced, distributed and broadcasted (Bouman, 2002).

2.5.2. Message reception resistance

Audience members selectively expose themselves to E-E messages, selectively perceive them selectively recall them and selectively use them.

When presenting health messages, especially when these messages are specific or technical, the following are considered as potential obstacles, according to Johns Hopkins University's Centers for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP, 1991a).

- Too much education and not enough entertainment.
- Too much entertainment and not enough education.
- Poor quality entertainment e.g. Characters, plots, dialogue, which are not credible.
- No credible urgency.
- Routine recommendations.
- No immediate personal relevance.
- Controversies based on culture and tradition. In health culture sensitivities loom large first in depicting problems such as Hiv/aids unwanted pregnancy, abortion, and paradoxically, even more in proposing solutions such as condom use.

2.6. Theories of Entertainment –Education

The dominant theoretical basis for most E-E research in the past was Albert Bandura's social learning theory. After the broadcasting of *Simplimente Maria* in Mexico in 1970, Miguel Sabido a writer, producer, and director at *Televisa*, the private Mexican television network carefully deconstructed this Peruvian drama in order to understand its theoretical basis. In designing his E-E methodology, Sabido drew especially on Albert Bandura's (1977, 1997) social learning theory. This theoretical approach has since tended to dominate most theoretical writing and research about Entertainment-Education and Sabido Methodology for designing of E-E programs (Singhal et al., 2004).

It is believed that a natural fit exists between Bandura's theory and E-E interventions which often seek to influence audience behavior change by providing positive and negative role models to the audience.

The past investigation of E-E largely provided cognitive and rational explanations of effects, utilizing the hierarchy of effects, stages of change and other models. E-E investigations of today are focusing more on the rhetorical play and affective aspects of E-E which emphasize the entertainment rather than the education aspect (Singhal & Rogers, 2002). Currently theoretical investigations of E-E are taking the role of emotions more seriously. Emotions are an important form of human experience which can trigger for instance changes in preventive health behaviors. This potential is often underestimated, understated and overlooked according to Zillman & Vorderer (2002).

Theories behind E-E represent diverse disciplinary fields, ranging from logical positivistic perspectives to critical theory and humanistic perspectives. Sabido's formula for generating successful E-E programs (his work was especially on soap operas) included elements from five perspectives; a Circular Model of

Communication (Singhal & Rogers, 1999), Social Learning theory (Bandura, 1977), Dramatic theory (Bentley, 1967), Jung's theory of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1970) and the concept of triune brain (Noriman, 1993; Singhal, Rogers, & Brown, 1993). Many of these theories were used by subsequent E-E researchers, although social learning theory is predominantly used and still applied in most of E-E interventions of current soap operas.

2.6.1. Social learning theory

Social learning theory which was later named Social cognitive theory, is a conceptual framework that analyzes the determinants and psychosocial mechanisms through which symbolic communication promotes personal and social changes (Bandura, 1977). Albert Bandura's social learning theory is one of the earliest theories and the one predominantly used in E-E programming and research (Singhal et al., 2004). The theory assumes that social modeling is an important concept in learning and adapting new behavior (Bandura, 2004). Even though the name seems to emphasize the social aspect, the concentration of communication is rather on how individual people make sense out of the social environment and decide what to do (Fossard, 1996). Bandura also sets two basic modes of learning which are (a), through direct experience of rewarding and punishing effects of action; and (b), through the power of social modeling. He asserts that trial and error learning is not only tedious but hazardous when errors produce costly or injurious consequences. Therefore instead of direct experience, learning from the successes and mistakes of others is a short cut (Bandura, 2002). According to the theory self-efficacy, which is defined as one's beliefs in his or her ability to carry out a certain action, is the driving force for

human behavioral change (Bandura, 1977). He further explains that “efficacy expectations are a major determinant of people’s choice of activities, how much effort they will expend and how long they will sustain effort in dealing with stressful situations”. In addition the outcome expectation, called the response efficacy, is an individual’s belief that a certain behavior will lead to a certain outcome. In an E-E program, soap opera characters “teach” audience members via modeling that they are able to make recommended response thereby enhancing self efficacy perception and that they are able to make a recommended response to enhance outcome expectancies. In order to attain this in E-E soap operas, role model characters are necessary in a serial drama as they demonstrate desirable and undesirable behaviors through positive and negative models that change over time to adopt acceptable behavioral practices (Singhal & Rogers, 2001). One critical point in modeling is the impact negative characters impose on behavioral change. They refers to it as the unintended effects dilemma, due to the fact that trying to exclude negatively behaving characters from the story will detract from the reality of the dramatic confrontational nature between the positive and negative will be lost. However the fact that this negative role model character can be attractive and may encourage negative behavior among the audience.

2.6.2. Persuasion theory

The focus of this theory is the psychological characteristic that a person’s perception of and response to a message is based on factors like knowledge and skill, attitudes towards behavioral and social issues, predisposition or preference, beliefs and concerns about the behavior and its consequence and attitude towards the source of the message(Fossard,1996).

The theory reveals two factors influencing the audience which could rise from the message and the source. Firstly message factors are the way the message is provided which makes it appropriate and effective for a particular audience, i.e. how long and complex should it be, what language or vocabulary is best, in what order should the messages should be presented, shall both sides of the story be presented, how much repetition is needed in order to get the message across and whether the messages use fear, humor, or logic to make its point (Ibid).

Secondly the source factor which has the potential to make the messages interesting, relevant and persuasive for audience. In dramas the characters are the message delivering tools; therefore the characters need to hold the following in order to effectively achieve the objective set through them.

- **Credibility:** - is the character believable as the bearer of the message?
- **Attractiveness:** - is the character appealing or attractive?
- **Similarity:** - does the character have anything in common with the audience?
- **Authority and expertise:** - does the character have the authority or experience to be a spokesperson for the prompted behavior?

Unless an E-E serial drama combines both effective message design and presentation, the attainment of its objective is in question.

2.6.3. Reception theory

Also known as reception analysis, **audience reception** theory is a humanistic approach of audience study which has come to be widely used as a way of characterizing the wave of audience research, which occurred within communication and cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s. Audience reception theory can be traced back to work done by Stuart Hall and his

communication model called "Encoding/Decoding." Hall's theory moved away from the view that the media had the power to directly cause a certain behavior in an individual, while at the same time holding onto the role of media as an agenda-setting function (cited in Singhal et al., 2004)

Davis and Baran also share Hall's idea and define the theory as "*Audience centered theory that focuses on how various types of audience make sense of specific forms of content.*" (2006:199). The theory focuses on the ability of audience to make meanings out of popular media or cultural texts and how they hold the power to interpret and use it according to their preference (use and gratification theory) This differs from the earlier assumption that media messages had one specific way of interpretation as the magic bullet theory (Williams, 2003). However, William still forwards the point that the concern of reception theory is not limited to answering what people are doing with the media. Rather it also includes how audiences actively engage in the process of generating meaning and the factors out of the media that shape the sense they make out of the media message.

Reception analysis scholars believe that media texts are open to different interpretations depending on the audience's background and knowledge. The scholars hold an assumption that few messages are self explanatory and transparent enough to be interpreted in an identical manner. They always have a gap which we need to fill with our knowledge or private or public experience (Pitout, 2001).

2.6.3.1. The encoding/ decoding model

The encoding /decoding model is concerned with how media texts construct meaning and how people make sense of what they see, hear and read (Williams,

2003). This model focuses on how different social contexts and backgrounds influence individual meaning making (Ibid). However, Hall argues that certain groups may have the power to impose their value and that the media could take the central role in this process, which in turn may result in encoding of several messages in one dominant meaning enforced by the dominant group in the society. Based on social factors, especially class, Hall's model distinguishes three decoding options. These are dominant, negotiated and oppositional.

Dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading: the reader fully shares the text's code and accepts and reproduces the preferred reading (a reading which may not have been the result of any conscious intention on the part of the author(s)) - in such a stance the code seems 'natural' and 'transparent'.

Negotiated reading: the reader partly shares the text's code and broadly accepts the preferred reading, but sometimes resists and modifies it in a way which reflects their position, experiences and interests (local and personal conditions may be seen as exceptions to the general rule).

Oppositional ('counter-hegemonic') reading: the reader, whose social situation places them in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant code, understands the preferred reading but does not share the text's code and rejects this reading, bringing to bear an alternative frame of reference

2.7. History and development of Comic books.

One might think of comics as very modern texts, but it is possible to see connections between them and the communication systems of early civilizations. For example, the Egyptians used combinations of images and hieroglyphics,

while narratives composed of sequences of pictures were common in other ancient cultures (Scott, 1993). The word 'comics' can be misleading about the nature of many of the publications that carry this label. It is certainly difficult to imagine any meaningful connection between the themes they cover like the book Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which deals with the horrors of the Holocaust, or Joe Sacco's *Palestine*, which is about the problems of the Palestinian people which are hardly comical. Even in the superhero comics, probably the most common type, there is little trace of comical elements. The reason is the fact that the early strips, both in England and in America, were of a humorous nature (in America they were also called 'the funnies') and so the attribute 'comic' remained attached to this art form even when various new genres were developed later on (Ibid).

In an attempt to create a term which would better describe the art form of comics, towards the end of the 1970s a new expression, 'graphic novel', was coined, to replace 'comic book'. However, the replacement never really occurred, while the term 'graphic novel' has been adopted mainly for commercial reasons. In fact, the distinction between 'comic books' and 'graphic novels' is nothing more than a matter of labels, and has barely anything to do with content or with any other feature.

American comic historians generally cite *The Yellow Kid* as the first comic character, which first appeared in 1896 in the Sunday edition of *The New York World* immediately succeeded by comic strips which soon became a regular feature of daily newspapers. Some of the characters created during this early period have remained famous to this day.

Encouraged by their increasing popularity, in the early 1930s some publishers began to collect newspaper comic strips into books, hence the term 'comic books'

started to be applied to it.. Such collections soon gained considerable success, while newspaper comic strips continued to be produced and other famous characters created, like *Tarzan*, *Mickey Mouse* and *Dick Tracy*.

The first comic book that had new material rather than reprints of newspaper strips was *New Fun Comics*, published in 1935. After this, many other publications followed, including the *Mickey Mouse Magazine* and *King Comics*, which contained famous characters like Popeye, Flash Gordon and Mandrake the Magician.

In the meantime, in Europe children's magazines began to host comics as well. The popularity of comics rose steadily and many characters were created, the most famous of whom was Hergé's Tintin.

The first costumed hero was *The Phantom*, which appeared in *Ace Comics* in 1938. In June of the same year, *Superman*, the most famous superhero, made his debut in the first issue of *Action Comics*. Another famous superhero, *Batman*, first appeared the following year in *Detective Comics*. After the success of these three costumed heroes, many more were created in the same period, all with similar characteristics.

Will Eisner's *The Spirit*, created in 1940, was somewhat different, because of his sense of humor, for the fact that he did not wear the customary tights and, perhaps more importantly, because his stories were oriented to a more mature audience.

Towards the end of the 1940s the popularity of the superhero genre began to fade, while 'crime' and 'horror' comics gained more favor with comics readers. As crime and violence were increasingly featured in comics, many people began

to worry about the effect that such publications might have on young readers. The concerns over the presumed harmful influence of comics on children gave rise to campaigns against comics both in America and in Britain, which led to censure in the mid-1950s. However, what was slowly happening was that comics were becoming more intellectual.

In the early 1960s there was a revival of the superhero genre, with the most popular new characters being *Spider Man* and *The Fantastic Four*. In the same period, even more important was the birth of underground comics, generally referred to as 'comix'. In these publications both content and form were more experimental and, above all, they were intended for adult readers. This trend grew towards the end of the 1960s and continued throughout the 1970s.

Comics became more intellectual especially in Europe, where they began to attract serious scholarly attention. The number of adult-oriented publications grew and some of them were accredited with high artistic value, like Hugo Pratt's *Corto Maltese*.

In America, in the meantime, *A Contract with God*, written and drawn by Will Eisner at the end of the 1970s, was the first 'graphic novel' to be published. Although the term was later used mainly for commercial purposes, it reinforced the idea that comics were no longer only for children.

The single title that definitely established comics as a proper adult art form was *Maus* (published between 1985 and 1992) by Art Spiegelman. This book, in which the author narrates his father's experience in the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz, gained international recognition and attracted the attention of a great number of critics, scholars and readers alike.

In the 1990s many 'adult comics' were published, where serious themes were often accompanied by experimentation in the form. This trend continues today, with new authors exploring new possibilities provided by digital graphics and the Internet (*The Columbia Encyclopedia, 2004*).

2.7.1. Characteristics of comics.

The most important characteristics of comics are: employment of both words and picture and the organization of text in sequential units graphically separated from each other.

Although the use of both words and pictures together, as such, is not a unique characteristic of comics, the way in which linguistic and pictorial elements interact with each other certainly makes the difference. The arrangement into sequences of panels is the other fundamental characteristic of comics. This is what makes comics different from cartoons, which are composed of one panel only. The language of comics has many similarities with the language we use every day (Scott, 1993).

2.8. What is MARCH?

MARCH is an acronym for "Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV". It is a strategy with two interlinked but distinct activities: Modeling and Reinforcement. Research has shown that successful and innovative behavior change interventions tend to be personalized and emotionally compelling, make extensive use of role models, work within social and cultural norms and expectations, and recognize the unique impediments and facilitating factors in

the environment (resource manual for MARCH coordinators, CDC). The modeling and reinforcement parts complement one another to give a solid base for behavior change. The "Modeling" aspect, based on established theory, makes use of a radio or printed serial drama (PSD) that educates listeners by capturing their attention and showing how people change their behavior. The reinforcement activities will follow the practicum of the students trained to become Reinforcement Agents. The subjects will devote their time in organizing campus events in an innovative manner. This will be taken as a requirement to the successful completion of the Certificate Curriculum. The students will draw action plans for specific events they choose in groups including, art exhibitions, lectures, debates, plays, sport competitions, concerts, poetry recitals, etc., These are expected to serve as MARCH behavior change strategy. The reinforcement activities take the printed serial drama as a reference point. During the interaction of the Reinforcement Agents and the larger university community discussions will be initiated and encouraged as a form of reinforcement component which are expected to correct mis-perceptions, emphasize importance of HIV prevention, describes strategies people use to reduce risk of exposure and solicit recommendations for change. The project use Albert Bandura's Social learning theory which revolves around behavioral change communication based on others experience which the MARCH strategy is build up on by providing model characters which the audience shares ideology. (<file:///C:/Users/user/Desktop/jonhofkins%20march.htm>).

2.8.1. MARCH AAU and *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama.

2.8.1.1. MARCH AAU.

MARCH AAU is a health intervention program among the three MARCH projects in the country. The other two are National Defense Force of Ethiopia MARCH (NDFE-MARCH) and Federal Police MARCH (FP-MARCH). MARCH AAU is organized in collaboration between Addis Ababa University and Center for Communication Development (CDC) signed in 2004 to strengthen HIV/AIDS, STI and TB prevention, control, and treatment efforts at the university. This program is funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through CDC-Ethiopia. Technical assistance is provided by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP), National AIDS Resource Center (NARC) and CDC.

The AAU's Modeling and Reinforcement to Combat HIV/AIDS (MARCH) is designed to empower students with the knowledge and skills needed to make safe, healthy, responsible, and respectful decisions about sex and relationships, to live productive and healthy lives (for those living with HIV) and to reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV. The project uses the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) MARCH behavioral change model to encourage positive behavior by modeling behavior change over time in an entertaining serial drama. Positive behaviors are then reinforced through reflection, discussion, and other community-level activities. MARCH model is used to encourage desirable behavioral change among university community since the project focuses on providing culturally appropriate messages, psycho-social factors impacting risk, linkage to available services, and

broader social normative changes necessary to sustain behavior change (Galavotti et al., 2001). It is for these reasons that this approach is used as a behavior change communication strategy with the student population at AAU.

As mentioned above there are three MARCH projects in the country and all of them having a Print Serial Drama. These are '*Tikuakure Nebroch*' (The Black Tigers) which is produced for members of the National Defense Force; '*Tewerwari kewakebet*' (Shooting stars) which is reference point of the Federal Police MARCH project; and *The Journey Life 101* is the PSD of MARCH AAU.

2.8.1.2. The Journey Life 101 Print Serial Drama.

The Print Serial Drama *The Journey Life 101* is the reference point of MARCH AAU for the reinforcement activity expected from the reinforcement agents. The photo comic book, "*The Journey Life 101*" uses drama, humor, and heartbreak to explore the challenges facing Addis Ababa university students, such as HIV/AIDS. It follows the story of three single students and one couple at AAU as they traverse daily university and city life, and deal with issues such as transactional sex, condom use, relationships, testing for HIV, and gender equity. Initially the serial was considered to be a two year serial with a monthly publication. However, it is only on its 10th edition from the 56 episodes it is going to have, with an interval of three months to get published. Even though the common way of presenting comics is by using cartoons, *The Journey Life 101* uses photos rather than cartoon characters which the producers believed would be sound based on the maturation level of the audience in focus. The serial has

got the attention of students and liked very much. It is not only the community; students take it with them when they go back to their home and it has got the chance to attract more audiences than was intended for.

2.8.1.2.1. Characters of *The Journey Life 101*.

Mare Zenebe, 20 years old is a freshman female student who comes from a small town called Kombolch, in the Amhara region and is assigned to the Institute of Languages Studies Faculty. Her parents are presented as a housewife and as a man who works in a government office. For her, being exposed to city life is a new world and comes with many pressures from different sides due to the fact that she is new to such a life style. The peer pressure from her dorm mates is presented as high influence which led her to start to act as a modern girl who is getting the exposure to night clubs and applying cosmetics. She was given a character of good student at the beginning and now she is going in the wrong direction by giving more attention to having fun and thinking of ways to look good in order to attract the attention of male students. The behavioral objective intended to transmit through her is to make healthy responsible decisions about sex and relationships based on her self-worth.

Sammy Girma is another freshman student who is assumed to represent students from Addis Ababa who came from very strict family where there is no discussion about risks and maturation related issues family. He is a science faculty student at Arat Killo campus whose behavioral change is presented as a result of being new to changes happening to him in relation with his being virgin and his desire to get a girlfriend. He is from a well- to -do with a strong moral value family background though his family is presented as strict in allowing him to get money other than for educational materials . Currently he has got out of

track by giving more attention to how to make love by practicing it with commercial sex workers. The behavioral objective he is expected to teach at the end is to explore his sexuality in a safe, healthy, responsible and respectful way.

Henok Abinet is 20 years old a 2nd year Theater student who comes from Awassa from a middle-class family. Both parents are educated and high school teachers. His family gives him high respect more than any of their children. He is also considered a hero of the community since he has joined university as a result some community members support him with money. However, he is not practicing healthy actions in the university. His life principle is that life should be a carefree journey. He is presented as a student who has multiple sexual partners, smokes cigarette and chews chat always. He also drinks alcoholic drinks which leads him to practice unsafe sex with his multiple partners. He recently has got damped by his girlfriend by saying he has no vision. This and his dorm mate's decision to have an HIV test have created mental questions for him. Just like the other characters, the producers have made him a negatively behaving character. It is expected that he will demonstrate the self-efficacy to live a productive and healthy life while dealing with the challenges of living with HIV.

Bilen is a 21 years old 3rd year Law faculty honor student. She is from Addis Ababa with an upper-middle class, educated and modern family background. She is presented as a female student who is worried about her love relationship with the other major character, Yonathan, who is also a third year Political Science student. She does not express herself very well in order to make a decision about their relationship; rather she is going in the wrong direction to show her love by thinking to make him jealous. Her boyfriend also loves her but

the miscommunication between them is created due to not being able to expressing themselves. This is the base for problems that rise between them.

Yonathan is a very handsome male student. He has a night time job as a drummer in a night club and also has several tours out of Addis Ababa which creates problems for the relationship he has with Bilen(his girlfriend) and also with his teachers since he misses classes due to his job. He is from a well to do family which provides him as much money as he wants. The behavioral objective intended to transmit through this couples is a long term relationship (www.aau.edu.et/march).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

As stated in the objective, this study is to analyze the message reception of *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama by Addis Ababa University students, with a specific endeavor to explain how they interpret the message and what factors foster or limit their reception of the message intended to be transmitted by the message producers.

The objective of this chapter is to discuss the methodology employed to collect and analyze the data in order to come up with a well-researched explanation for the research questions. The research design used is a qualitative research design with a case study. Focus group discussion is used as a major technique of data collection, supported by in-depth individual interviews. The rationale behind selecting this methodology is discussed as follows.

3.1. Qualitative research

Qualitative research design is concerned with developing explanations for social phenomena that take place around human beings by trying to answer questions of why?, how?, and in what way? (Maykut & Morehouse, 2004). According to Pope & Mays, the goal of qualitative research is the development of concepts

which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the meanings, experiences, and views of all the participants (1995). Initially this method was presented as an alternative to the weakness of quantitative analysis which is numerical based. Later on its uniqueness in seeking explanations to preserve and analyze situated form, content, and experience of social interaction rather than trying to present it mathematically, made it more suited for social science research (Lindlof & Tylor, 2002). Hancock (2002) supports this idea and explains the method as research about opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals, which produces subjective data. Many scholars claim that there is a growing interest to use qualitative study regarding audience and media relations. Among these Gunter (2000:54) said:

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.

Lindlof & Tylor (1995) agree with Gunter's idea and added that inquiries based on contingencies of meaning can produce insights about the human condition and qualitative methods are more suitable to address these issues.

Unlike quantitative research which has pre-determined variables, qualitative research is inductive and open-ended both in procedure and results presentation. In addition the involvement and decisiveness of the researcher in qualitative research is very significant and strong enough to produce difference in outcome due to its subjective nature (Ibid). It is with this acceptance that the researcher chose to use qualitative research design since what this study tries to investigate is the perception of the students that can be expressed in their own understanding.

3.2. Case study research.

A case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system. Creswell (2007:37) defines it as:

a methodology or type of design in qualitative research in which investigator explores a bounded system or multiple systems over time through detailed, in-depth data collection by involving multiple sources of information.

There are three types of case study, based on the intent of the case analysis. The first is Single instrumental case study which is an investigation that focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue. The second is the collective or multiple case study that focuses on an issue by analyzing multiple cases. This approach uses the logic of replication in which the researcher replicates the procedures for each case. The last one is the intrinsic case study that focuses on the case itself because it presents an unusual or unique situation (Robert, 2003). Among these three, this study employs single instrumental case study because the big picture under investigation is print message reception and factors that foster or limit the process. In order to do so the case of Addis Ababa University MARCH project's Print Serial Drama, *The Journey Life 101* is taken as a bounded single case.

3.3. Data collection techniques.

Much message reception research uses two alternative data collection techniques: focus group discussion and in-depth individual interview (Schroder et al., cited

in Tebebe, 2006). Therefore, as reception research this study used focused group discussion as a primary tool for data collection and in-depth individual interview as supporting tool to enrich the data.

3.3.1. Focus group discussion.

Focus Group Discussion is qualitative data collection method in which participants meet as a group to discuss a given research topic. It is basically group interview, although not in a sense of an alternation between a researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of the moderator (Morgan, 1997). The hallmark of focus group discussion is their explicit use of group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group (Ibid). Strelitz (2005) also agrees with the above idea and states that focus groups offer opportunity in obtaining responses to how people think and feel about the issue in focus, since it encourages group interaction – participants can influence and be influenced by other participants.

Focus group discussion is also characterized by homogeneity in terms of variables that might have impact on open discussion among participants. The idea of maintaining the homogeneity has been core point for credibility of research, especially in relation with gender and sensitive issues. In addition variables such as age, educational status, family background or use of a particular medium are among the factors which need consideration (Du Plooy, 2001).

The other curtail point in relation with focus group is group size. It basically depends on the level of participants' involvement with the issue for discussion.

If the participants have low level of involvement with the topic, it may be difficult to maintain an active discussion in a smaller group. In addition small group can affect the amount of detail the researcher need due to the fact that participants might be sensitive to the dynamics in the group. On the other side small size is appropriate when participants are both interested in the topic and respectful of each other. Furthermore it is useful when the researcher desires a clear sense of each participant's reaction to a topic.

Large groups also have their own setbacks particularly it will be difficult to manage the discussion especially when the participants are highly related with the topic. In addition participants may break in sub groups and start their talk at the same time which implies lose of data for the researcher. Therefore it is important to bear in mind these problems and organize the group. The common rule of thumb is to use 6-10 participants in one group.

How many groups for a research is also another point scholars tried to reflect on and came up with the idea of three to five per project. Nevertheless, they also said that it is pre determined by the saturation level, which in other words is to mean when the moderator starts to accurately anticipate what will be said next in a group (Calder, 1977).

Holding the advantages; to give opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in short time, to provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants' opinions and experience, and handing the participants the power to lead the direction of idea transfer, the method is not complete by itself just like any of the other methods. In order to fill the gap other methods such as participant observation and in-depth individual interviews are used in combination with it (Creswell, 2009; Morgan, 1996; Gomm, 2008).

According to Morgan (1996) there are three basic uses for focus groups in current social science research. First, they are used as a self-contained method in which

they serve as the principal source of data. Second, they are used as a supplementary source of data in studies that use other methods as a primary source of data such as a survey. Third, they are used in multimethod studies that combine two or more means of data gathering data in which no one primary method determines the use of the others.

As stated at the beginning, this study used focus group discussion as a self-contained method by giving consideration to the value of group interaction among the students will enable the researcher to find out different aspects of the medium in focus where the participant influence and influenced back during their focus group discussion. However, the researcher agrees with the scholars' idea that it is not complete by itself and used in-depth individual interview as to make the research complete.

3.3.2. In-depth individual interview

This is a one-to-one dialogue between a researcher and a single participant in order to get the detailed response of the participant (Henn et al., 2006). It shares a lot with focus group but here the researcher is the one who controls the direction of discussion unlike in the focus group, where the participants hold more power, though the moderator tries to guide the circumstance. The central point to in-depth individual interview is that it provides qualitative depth data by allowing interviewee to talk about the subject in terms of their own frames of reference. This enables the interviewer to maximize his or her understanding the respondent's point of view in relation with the issue in focus (Ibid).

In-depth individual interview are classified in three.

The first is Structured (standardized interview), which is often used in quantitative research. It is characterized by having the same set of questions in

the same order for all participants of the interview. It is believed to be convenient to compare participants' responses.

The second is semi-structured interview (guided interview), characterized by having guiding sets of questions prepared to initiate discussion which will enable the researcher to ask more probing questions based on the interviewee's response to the guiding questions. This instrument is often used in qualitative research.

The last one is unstructured interview, which is an interview without predetermined set of questions where the researcher and the interviewee talk freely. It is often used in combination with observation. This interview is believed to be very flexible which demands high experience on the side of the researcher to handle the situation to make sure it is going in line with the purpose of the interview (Yemane, 2007). Even though it is the researcher's belief that the issue under discussion is not sensitive, giving more time and opportunity for participants whose ideas are believed to be particularly relevant makes using this tool necessary and a means for triangulation. For this reason a semi-structured in-depth interview was held with 12 participants who were also participants in the focus group discussion. In the same way, in-depth interview with the program producers was held in order to include their response regarding the issues the researcher tries to investigate.

3.4. Sampling technique.

Ideally all students of Addis Ababa University are audience of the medium in focus. As a result any randomly selected student could be a sample, if it was concerned with getting data that could be generalized for all. However, as a qualitative study, this research is not concerned with generalizing of data; rather

it is to deeply understand the phenomenon experienced by the students through purposive selection of participants (Morehouse et al., 1994). Therefore, from the total population, 20 female and 20 male participants totalling 40 sample students were purposely selected based on the criteria of being a regular follower of the medium. This was able through snowball purposive sampling technique with the help of information officers who are responsible for the distribution of the PSD in every faculty. After that, the focus groups were organized based on two categories. The first category was based on level of academic year (seniority), since adapting to the environment plays a significant role in understanding the message presented by using it as a reference point. The second one is based on the students' home town being Addis Ababa or out of the city which also plays a significant role in understanding and taking the medium as reflection of their own life. Consequently, from the six groups, two were held with freshman students while the other four were held with senior students since senior students category hold those who are second year and above which take large portion of the community. Regarding the group composition, as the rule of thumb suggested it to be between 6-10, each group had 8 participants with equal number of male and female students. The participants of the in-depth individual interview were later selected based on their active participation in the focus group discussion. Two participants, one male and one female, were taken from each group in order to get detailed data on the points discussed as a method of triangulation.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure and analysis.

As mentioned in the previous parts, focus group discussion is the primary tool for data collection. Therefore, after organizing the participants into groups, the

time and place for conducting the discussions were set by giving the choice to participants in order to make them feel free and get the most out of them. Accordingly, the discussions were held out of school time around the campus, which the participants found to be convenient for them.

Even though the participants were aware of the reason they were organized in the group, since it was explained to them during the purposive sampling stage, before starting the discussions the purpose of the study was explained to each group. In addition their willingness for participation was also confirmed, based on the agreement to keep their personality confidential. Recording of the discussions was also done based on their permission.

Both the focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews were conducted in Amharic language in order to create smooth flow of idea among the participants and to allow interviewees articulate their idea freely without language constraints. All discussions and in-depth individual interviews were recorded. Notes were also taken during both data collections in order to capture nonverbal and significant observations. Later on, all the data was transcribed in note form at least, and translated in to English which is the language of this study. In order to analyze the data obtained in a way that furnishes answers to the objective of the study and research questions, the transcribed data were brought together based on the similarities of ideas and categorized under the themes of the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Data Analysis

This chapter deals with presentation and analysis of the data obtained from the focus group discussion and in-depth individual interviews. The data obtained through both techniques is analyzed simultaneously since the tools are used to find more on the same idea.

As presented in the objective of the study and research questions part, the main objective of this study is to explore the students' response to the messages of *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Drama of MARCH AAU and how they interpret it along with what factors foster or limit their receptions of the message. Therefore, the guides for the focus group discussions, as well as the in-depth individual interviews were organized based on two major themes in harmony with the objective of the study. The first theme is focused on how the students receive the message. The second theme is concerned with the way the students digest and interpret the message provided through the medium.

4.1. Message reception

4.1.1. Getting connected with the medium.

The focus group discussions and the in-depth individual interviews conducted showed that the students came across the medium in several ways. Most of the senior students participating in the study admitted that they found out about the PSD after they joined the campus, while the fresh students who were Addis residents said that they had had the exposure to the medium before they joined the campus. Those fresh students who came from out of Addis Ababa also indicated that students from their area brought the PSDs when they came for break, which created the chance for them to read it before they join AAU.

It was in 2000 E.C, when I joined this campus that I found about this medium. It was around the New Class Room (NCR) building that a man who carried a lot of the books came and started to distribute to students .At first, I thought it was for sale but when I found that it is for free I also took as much as I could and started to follow the story (female senior student from Addis).

I am a reinforcement agent in MARCH project and we were told that there will be a print serial about the campus and even had discussion

about the characters before it was published. As we were expected to organize events to get the certificate, we also organized an open discussion with other students. That is how I came to know about it, and then when it got published I started to follow the story (Male senior student out of Addis).

The above expressions indicate the accessibility of the medium from the time of joining the campus for students who are third year and above, since it is now three years since the print started publication.

The other participants, especially freshman students, indicated that the fact of its being print made it easy to be accessible at different places, unlike radio and TV programs which require frequency and extra equipment, giving them the chance to get it before coming to the campus.

It was when I was high school student that I found it in one of the internet cafes in Nazaret, They give it to you until you get spot to sit to get the service (senior male student who came out of Addis).

I first come to know about it when I was a preparatory student. It was in a beauty salon in Addis Ababa. It gave me the idea about the life in the university (Female freshman student from Addis).

4.1.2 Holding discussions.

The purpose of the magazine is to be read and discussed: at the end of each episode there are 5-10 discussion questions which invite the reader to continue thinking and anticipate what will happen next: What would you do if you were in place of this character? Who do you think represent you in the story? Do you think this character is doing wrong thing? These are some of the kinds of question given for discussion. In the first two editions the discussion questions were given in English. However, the program manager said that the reinforcement activities indicated that this language usage has created potential problem for open idea exchange, which forced them to change it to Amharic.

Concerning holding a discussion or participating in activities undertaken by the reinforcement agents, most of the participants admitted that they have never had a discussion guided by the questions provided at the end of each episode. In addition the participants stated that they have not that much experience in the reinforcement activities. The following quotes illustrate the participants' direct expression regarding this.

I didn't know it has questions till now and we don't hold as such a formal discussion but we usually talk about who looks good among the characters. We girls talk about the guys and the guys talk about who is more attractive among the female characters (female freshman student from Addis).

When a new edition is released, after reading it we pick out the funny words used in the story, specially that of Henok's expression about different things and we talk about it and laugh out with it. That is what we usually do regarding discussion (female senior student out of Addis).

I like the story very much and that is all I need so I have never seen any question I read the story and go to my study that is what I usually do. I sometimes talk with my dorm mates and close friends about the characters' decisions but as I said I don't know what kind of questions are given (male senior student from Addis).

However, a considerable number of the participants in the study reported that they have seen the questions but never had a formal discussion based on them. Rather they mentioned several informal idea exchanges depending on issues they found to be surprising or interesting.

I have seen them and I usually read them. There are some questions that don't demand you to share with others, rather you make a monologue with yourself like the peer pressure the characters are having and you try to see yourself in their position (female senior student from Addis).

After reading each episode, I read the questions given at the back and also share idea with my friends who are reading or have read it. We are not only restricted to the question given, we also discuss about anything that

catches our attention like the way Henok speaks, Mare's dressing style and so many other related things(male senior student out of Addis).

One of the participants, who was also a reinforcement agent, stated during in-depth individual interview that reinforcement agents are expected to take part in the reinforcement activities and organize events in order to motivate students to share ideas by participating in the different activities intended to be covered by taking the PSD as a reference point.

We do hold a discussion in relation with the questions and I take part in the reinforcement activities which usually take place at the cultural institute where we discuss about the characters, the problems they face and also on things we consider are not really true or might have been exaggerated (Male senior student who came out of Addis).

As it can be noted from the above quotes, there is exchange of ideas or at least a monologue with in the self, even though most of the discussions going on are not in line with that of the objectives the producers set through the guiding questions given at the back. However the medium has served as an agenda setter by providing the audience with points to think and talk about the issues raised in the story. This is one of the uses of E-E based media, according to Wailack (1990). The reinforcement activities also have a contribution though it is usually attended by reinforcement agents and some interested students. These activities are performed in all the different campuses with different format of presentation such as discussion, beauty contest, dramas and music shows which use the print as a reference point.

4.1.3. The way of presentation.

Regarding its way of presentation, most of the discussion participants appreciated the use of images and concise words which makes it easy for readers

to follow the story easily. For most of the participants the words used are well suited, they find the expressions concise and it is accompanied by photos which enable them to see the emotional and nonverbal aspect of the story.

It is a well thought over publication: the graphics, photos and also the very funny and precise words are what make it unique and attractive. It really is a well designed work (male senior student out of Addis).

It is a very relevant book and its way of presentation is amazing because if you want to teach a rapper while dressed up like a priest, it won't work, You have to look like him to get his attention, so this print is also the same. It is like a work of a good psychologist - it approaches by looking like the audience (male senior out of Addis).

Its being about a youngster and using language full of fun – this makes it very near to us. Young peoples' lives are not as such serious and that is what you see in the print. I think this is what attracts all of us (female freshman student from Addis)

Nevertheless, this point opened another heated discussion among the focus group participants about whether the language used in the story is really the way they interact with each other or if it is just a way some part of the community use it. In this regard, most of the participants confirmed that they have heard of such expressions among the assumed modern or 'Arada' students. According to the participants' definition, Arada or modern students are those groups of the community which have a western dressing style with a language dominated by code switching between English and Amharic, the latter being of a colloquial form, which has evolved among the "Arada" peer group. This group of the community is also associated with having fun by chewing chat, smoking cigarettes, going out for parties at night to relax and drinking alcoholic. It is with these characteristics that the participants claimed that the language usage in the print is associated. The participants in addition stressed that for someone who

has heard or used the expressions used by the specific group; it produces fun which however they asserted is not usually the case through out the community.

I don't know about the talk in the male dorms but in girls' dorm this is not the way we talk. Most of us in the dorm are from the state and we don't use English language as such and we don't have such modernity. All their (characters) actions reflect Addis girls. It doesn't mean you don't see and hear such things but everything is over-exaggerated and group specific (senior female student out of Addis).

You will find funny words which you have never heard of before which particularly are used among the so called 'Arada's' who chew chat and do different drugs. Even I sometimes feel like the print is just adding a vocabulary for them (female freshman student from Addis).

It is not only in its being funny or colloquial that some participants found it to be group specific. They also pointed out that the level of English language used also reflects a private school background. A senior student from Addis Ababa expressed the participants' claim through his experience during in-depth individual interview as follows:

Once I gave this print to a preparatory student and he was impressed with the English language they use. It is well spoken but this is not the reality for most of the students. For example we are English major students but most of us don't have a good command of the language. So I think it is just focused on the students who came from a good family background and private school (Male senior student from Addis).

There is a common assumption that the students from well-to-do family background will join the private school which advocates and gives more emphasis to practicing English in the school compound and outside. This advocacy is also part of government-owned and public schools but the family background, in providing opportunities such as access to the satellite TV which helps to practice and develop English language in their daily conversations, is

more for those of students from well-to-do family background and private school system. The current observation in the University community also shows that most of the Addis based students are from private schools such as Saint Mary, Cathedral, Saint Joseph and some similar like this. It doesn't mean that students from government-owned schools don't gain admission to the university but compared to those who were at private school, they are less in number.

However, a minority of participants did assert that the language used is definitely what is real in the community.

The language is appropriate and reflection of the reality in the community. When I just joined here, I thought as if there is no Amharic since everyone uses the English language (Female freshman student from Addis).

We use Amharic and English in combination, it is usual to see students speaking them mixed up just like what we are doing now (though the discussion was held in Amharic some of the participant were putting in English words). So for me the language is what I really do and see students do too. (Male senior student from Addis).

From the expressions it can be understood that the language used seems to create a division among the community and revolves around some specific group which the participants claimed to be all about Addis Ababa-based students and the assumed Modern or "Arada" students of the community. Addis Ababa University community consists of students from Addis Ababa and those who come from the rest of the country. Nevertheless almost all students who get dormitory service and have a longer stay in the campus and have campus social life other than the learning and teaching situation are those who come out of the city since the Addis based students are supposed to go home at the night time. However, in second year and above, Addis based students may develop friendship with the students who have dorm and may stay the night in the dorm. It is from this community that the participants claimed that the print is more of

the life style and language usage among the Addis based students and the assumed 'Arada' students which could also include students who came out of Addis but manifests behavioral and action similarity with "modernity".

Having a personal attachment with the story by identifying with the dramatic characters as if they were personal friends is one of the nine Ps of E-E. Language used by the characters is key to making such attachment. However according to the above observations, most of the participants couldn't relate to the language used in the magazine. In addition one of the resistances for message reception of E-E medium is not having a credible dialogue among characters in a serial drama which is still presented through the language used by the characters in the story.

4.1.4 Balanced Entertainment and Education.

The other thing the participants and the in-depth individual interview participants dwelled on regarding the way of presentation was the balance between entertaining and educating. In this regard also most of the participants of both the focus group discussion and the in-depth individual interview clearly notified that they found it to be more entertaining than educating. They mentioned that the language being full of fun and colloquial is what dominates the presentation. As a result they consider it to be a fun book.

It is more of entertainment, I never thought of education out of it because for me it is not strong enough. You don't find your story being told so it is not as such serious. I even give it to others to read and get fun out of it (Female senior student out of Addis).

For me the high percent is for funI will just search out for the funny parts- those are the focus of my interest. (male Freshman student out of Addis).

It is just for entertainment, especially what they say in the dorm and everything Henok says. It makes me curious and I would give 80% for entertainment (Male senior from Addis).

It is more of entertaining....I read it just because I like the wording and the fun. It is without question that it is so entertaining. Maybe for someone who does the discussion and participates in the reinforcement activities it may have a lesson but for me it is not as such strong for that (Male senior student from Addis).

Meanwhile some of the participants have a different perspective about it. For them it is both in combination and definitely is capable of teaching them. The following are among the expressions they used to show that.

It is funny and easy to understand - this helps me to see their mistakes and take a good care to not do the same mistake, so I would say it is educative for me since I learned a lot out of it (Female senior student from Addis).

It is both entertaining and educational. You don't have to be in relationship to understand the problems and this print shows you the problems in relationship. Through this you will get the lesson of what you have to do if you were in the characters' place .I have learned this and other things.(Male senior student from Addis).

Here two theoretical points are in conflict: one is that the E-E medium is supposed to be popular in order to create a feeling of fun which audiences seek out. With this regard The Journey Life 101 is successful. Let alone the community, it has obtained the power to get the attention of outsiders which the participants attributed to its being full of fun. Reading one of the episodes can make one understand how much funny it is since most of the words used are not formal words which all speakers of the language use everyday. This language use somehow describes the character of the audience since such communities are expected to have their own sub-cultural language which signifies their life style. However, in order to say it is funny, the audience has to know the meaning of the new term which can foster laughter or makes one to pause and think about it.

For example “Geja” is a term used to mean some one is uncivilized and “chiqua” refers to “the girl” in the community among the so-called “Arada” which some participants claimed were new to them. These and most of the words used create fun in the story. Nevertheless it is stated by E-E strategy scholars that too much fun can have a great impact on the message reception. Therefore, the idea presented by the participants is that it is too much fun and it is not strong enough to educate them, even though still some claimed that its being funny is what makes it to be interactive for them and enables them to get the lesson out of it.

4.1.4. Persuasive or poor quality entertainment

The participants were also given a point of discussion in order to see if the medium is representative or not. On this issue all participants agreed that it is all about modernity and the representation is also along with this consideration. They also indicated that all the habits and even the major characters are not representative of majority of the community which the study participants still referred back to the definition they gave to modernity and being ‘Arada’. This idea has shown the different acceptance the print is given by students from Addis Ababa and for those who came out of Addis Ababa. A majority of the students from Addis claimed the life is representative of the things they do and see every day. However, even within these focus group participants, there was a gap in taking it as their story.

I think most of us are like this. Before I came to the campus I was told it will be very hard but after I joined it was not like that - we have a lot of time to have fun and what the print did is just it exposed the reality about us (Female senior student from Addis).

However, a male participant in the Addis based FGD participants opposed the idea in the followed by another participant in support of the print’s failure regarding representativeness.

It is not real! Maybe if we say it is after four o'clock at "beg tera" (a nickname given to the place where students in the campus, who are in relation or who plan to have one meet and flirt with each other) I will agree but during the day it is not what I see. It is not the way we spend the day (male senior student from Addis).

We discuss about it being representative or not and me and my friends have the same idea that we don't see ourselves as such in the story. We are not represented but what we see in our environment is represented (male freshman student from Addis).

You won't find yourself but you may find someone who shows the character you have, so for me there is no prominent character but I see myself in their ideas and actions (Female senior from Addis).

The focus group participants of students who came from out of Addis Ababa, on the contrary, said that it is not about them and the way they live.

It is all about Addis Ababa based students. The way the characters talk, their dressing style and even the things they do is all what students from this city do. It is all about being modern. Mare was the one who came from the countryside but she already has started to speak and act like them. (Male senior students out of Addis).

My brother expects me to send him every time it gets published but I myself have lost interest in it now because it doesn't represent me. It doesn't have the things I like and get involved in. Man is selfish by himself and wants to find something like him so we search for a thing that stands for us among all the things and I couldn't find that in this print any more (Male senior student out of Addis).

At first it was intentional that I followed the story but now it has become something that I can predict what is going to be next, so I read it just to have fun out of it - this is because the characters have changed a lot which at the same time left my life out of the story (Female senior student out of Addis)

All the study participants made one point clear: that there are groups which are not included in the story though they hold significant share in the community.

I don't know why but students with good manner, strong personality and good academic performance are not included (Female Fresh man Student out of Addis).

If you are a student who comes from the countryside you will find it hard to find yourself in the story. You want to be there as a member of the community but it was only Mare and she has changed. But there are strong students who works hard to change themselves like the guys who work at the public phone in the campus and many others- it doesn't include them(Female senior student from Addis).

It is not only well-behaving students who are not given representation according to some of the participants. They also said that economically lower students also are not given a part in the story.

All the characters are presented representing the middle-class students but there are many who are living in poverty, who don't dress as the students presented in the story (Male senior student from Addis).

What can be inferred from the participants' ideas and also the researchers' observation of the print as well as the community in focus is that the characters are presented as more fun and relation focused. In addition, most of them are presented as being provided transport service by their family or close relative which creates a mental image of being from wealthy family background. The fact that the characters are involved in getting out at night to have parties in bars and night clubs along with the chat chewing habit of the male characters is what dominates the actions of the characters.

When presented with the above observations, the program manager responded regarding the focus on these characters that were perceived as behaving negatively by the participants, he said that they focused on these students based

on the theory they use which is the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura. The theory claims the use of modeling as a means to get a lesson in life. However the theory recommends using both positively and negatively behaving characters in order to show the impact of reward and punishment, which in turn would teach the audience to make informed and reasonable decision. Along with the modeling line, characters in serial drama are classified into three. These are: positive characters, which are supposed to be a positive influence on the transitional character; negative characters who manifest a negative influence on the transitional character; and transitional characters, that is, those who are the major characters of the story and who are expected to struggle with the two influencing forces. The transitional characters are the role models for behavioral change on the audience by falling and rising. *The Journey Life 101* also includes these characters but the role models are those who are negatively behaving in a way that the reader has to take a lesson not to go in the life line the characters are going.

4.1.5 Reality of the story and characters' interaction.

Participants indicated that the PSD is somehow out of line by being exaggerated. They consider it being fun and relationships based, which they said is not the case in the campus and their daily life. They were critical that the characters have undergone unrealistic behavior and character changes, by making a reference to Mare.

The change Mare shows is so unrealistic. If some one skips reading one episode he /she will lose truck of Mare. She has completely changed into a modern girl. For me this is too much. It's simply unrealistic (Male freshman student out of Addis).

I don't think someone who scores the point to get to university gets changed so easily. We have a mission when we get here and that seems to be totally forgotten in case of Mare (Female senior student from Addis).

The idea of senior students being very much interested in making freshman students their friend was another implausible pattern for a considerable number of the focus group participants.

Seniors don't spend this much time to get friendship with fresh students, be it the Addis or rural girls and you would see freshman student going with freshman student and the same with seniors but in this story the modern seniors are presented trying hard to make the freshman student their friend. This is not the reality and also no one will change this fast (Fresh female student out of Addis).

The students also expressed their doubt regarding Henok's actions. They found the fact that he gets whatever he wants unbelievable: he has never been rejected or failed to solve a problem or difficulty.

I feel the characters are real except Henok. He is a bit out of the reality. There is nothing that tells you how he survives. You don't see him studying and his grades- it creates a question in your mind - how could a student with this all negative habits survive first semester? It is somehow difficult for me to see that (Male senior from Addis).

Henok is just a character for me. He doesn't represent any one. As far as I know all girls are not going to listen to your deception. Many girls and guys are not like him. Sometimes when you read the story there is a realistic touch which makes it beautiful but sometimes it is too fantastic like that of Henok's success in getting girls and his power to persuade them (Male senior student from Addis).

In conclusion, the study participants considered the print serial to be interesting in way of presentation, especially its being photo based with attractive, colorful well-thought out design and good print quality. Being print medium also made

it accessible and easy to consume and share. However the majority also criticized it as the story of specific group, which is signified with the words used and the life style portrayed. According to the dominant theories in E-E, the way of presentation and audience participation are significant points in their reception of the message. The Social Learning theory, the Persuasion theory and Reception theory, which are the theoretical frameworks of this study, have stated the importance of a plausible, persuasive and inclusive story line and characters interaction both in language and action needs to be similar to the audiences' daily experience. The idea of Laurence Kincaid (2002:145) summarizes the ideas emphasized in the theories and puts it in the following way:

“In order to succeed as an Entertainment -Education strategy for social change, the characters, their relationship, and their story must seem plausible to the audience, resembling problems and events that happen in their own lives”.

4.2 Message interpretation

4.2.1. Objective of the Print serial

Strengthening HIV/AIDS, STI and TB prevention, control and treatment efforts at the university by encouraging desirable behavioral change in the community is the objective of the Print Serial Drama by presenting the messages in entertainment- educational strategy. The Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura is the theoretical framework used for the print. Since it is only in its tenth edition, it is early to estimate its impact on behavioral change of students. However, based on each episode, the producers have transmitted specific objectives like peer pressure, reasoned action and problem of open communication among couples. In order to understand the participants' awareness about the objective, they were asked if they knew what the objectives

of the print were, and responded with several assumptions, which were somehow in line with the project objectives. For most of them it is a preparation for freshman students about the life in the campus and to educate about HIV and related problems.

I think it is to teach about HIV, drugs and relationships all together by using characters within the campus environment (Female senior out of Addis Ababa).

It is to familiarize us freshman students about the campus, what things we will face when we get here, not to get cheated by seniors (female freshman student from Addis).

However still most of the participants claimed it is not going to attain the objectives due to the misinterpretation regarding the messages. They mentioned exaggeration of characters change, focusing on specific groups by ignoring other community members and the delay of punishment for wrong actions as the major reasons of misinterpretation.

4.2.1.1 Exaggeration or not credible urgency

Most of the participants stated clearly that the timescale for change in character or behavior is not believable. While acknowledging the strength of peer pressure in changing students' behavior, they found it was given too high a place in the print serial, and did not agree that it would be so strong as to make one forget the mission they had when they came here to the campus. The following are the expressions they used to show that they do not believe it is easy to change.

Being new for everything when your life changes is obvious but it will also be something difficult to change what you have just within a few days or even month. But what you see on the character Mare is unbelievable. The reason for her change is not sufficient enough by showing unrealistic adaptation (Female senior student out of Addis).

I don't think Mare has taken time to think about what she came for and to stand for it. She is totally out of truck after only one episode. I don't know why the writer just messes up her like that (Male senior student from Addis).

It seems as if no-one stands for a strong visionPeer pressure is not like this; we are big enough to decide for ourselves but in the story no one is strong enough. Sami is influenced by his friends. Especially the influence and the impact on Mare is very exaggerated - it is so unbelievable (Freshman female student from Addis).

A few students did consider the influence of peer pressure to be convincing and real unlike the above students. They appreciated the writers' openness to expose the fact in the campus.

Majority of the female students are like Mare. Especially those who come from the countryside don't want to be labeled as uncivilized or 'fara' so they will be influenced to change quickly (female senior student from Addis).

I don't think Mare's change is dramatic. I have seen such girls in the campus so for me it is not exaggeration. I would even say she have tried to resist but when you are new for something you want to try it - that is a behavior of any student (Male senior student from Addis).

Not having credible urgency in character's change is presented as one of the causes for resistance to message reception and interpretation by audience according to Johns Hopkins University's Centers for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP). Persuasion theory also has asserted that the credibility of characters actions and changes influence the message reception, meaning that if the audience does not find it persuasive enough they will negotiate or even oppose the preferred meaning which the message sender intended to transmit. The other basic point here is the theory of self-efficacy, defined as one's beliefs in his or her ability to carry out a certain action, which Bandura explained as a major

determinant of people's choice of activities. For example, how much effort they will expend and how long they will sustain effort in dealing with stressful situations is a driving force for human behavioral change. In this regard the study participants have criticized the print for portraying them as not having strong self- efficacy by saying that the characters presented don't have sense of struggle with challenging situations by getting influenced and change their character for obstacles. Such a belief about the characters and collectively about the print opens the door for opposition of the message.

4.2.2 Misinterpretation and negotiation of meaning

The focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews indicated that there is uncertainty in objective attainment and also confirmed that there is misinterpretation of the intended messages of the PSD. The participants claimed that it gives the impression that campus life is more about relationships and having time for entertainment, which they stressed is not at all.

I don't see the characters getting worried about education. Maybe it is because the print is about life but education is our priority - it should have been given at least half of the part. If someone out of the community sees it he will assume all what we do is worry about love (male senior out of Addis).

It is all about relationships. There needs to be a person who gives priority to education; this is not given a representation while it is the important part of the life we are here for (female senior from Addis).

It focuses on going out for parties, trying to get attention from opposite sex , chewing chat and some similar ideas like this, it gives you the impression that the life in the campus is more of social life than a place for education as what it was supposed to be (Female freshman student out of Addis).

The focus being on issues of relationships and having fun is also understood by the program producers as they tried to advertise the idea on the print itself. In the first edition at the end of the discussion questions it clearly says that “there is more to university than lectures, assignments and exams.”

However a few of the participants did point out that they understood why the producers gave such a focus to risky behaviors rather than educational issues.

They specified their reasons as follows;

I think we have to understand the objective of the print; I believe it is to teach about HIV, drug and relationship so it needs to focus on the issue in order to address the problems coming along with it (female senior out of Addis).

All the risky behaviors that expose us to HIV and related illnesses are practiced after having relationship, party and chewing chat, so it need to show this in the print in order to teach the consequence (Male freshman student out of Addis).

In the in-depth interview, a senior female student from Addis expressed her agreement on the focus being on such issues of risky behavior and students engaged in these actions for two reasons. She specified them:

For one it is from these wrongly behaving students that you can learn - if it was story about “good” students, it wouldn’t have got this much attention, let alone from the chat chewers I wouldn’t be interested. The other thing is that it is because these students are exceptional that the story is possible to make. Who would learn from your “good” story?

A male freshman student also appreciated the story being told the other way round than the expected one because he said people are negatively tuned. He explained it as follows:

If you say Haile G/selasse won it doesn’t make a great story but if you say Haile lost everyone will pay attention to it; I think this print is doing the same. A student joined university and scored four So what? That is what he was supposed to do but if you say students are chasing one another,

smoking and the like they would say" what?" and they will give a time to it.

4.2.3. Passing the wrong message.

In addition to the focus on issues of fun and relationships, the participants argued about the impact it has on students, since none of the characters seem to be having a problem due to their wrong behavior. So far in the story these characters are just performing the risky behavioral actions such as going out for party at night, experiencing sex to avoid a tag of being called virgin by friends, practising sex with multiple partners and holding back from open communication between the couples. The story is now, at the 9th and 10th part, it has started to give some indications of the impact of having multiple partners and practicing unsafe sex, which has become a concern for the transitional character Henok. But the participants feel the punishment is delayed and this delay in punishment for wrong behavior is pointed out to be as passing the wrong message.

There are a lot of students who got dismissed out of the campus but they just saw only the characters succeed in getting girls, going to the party and have fun by smoking and chewing chat. They didn't see the impact on the characters so they don't get the lesson; rather they see the pleasure of having fun (male senior out of Addis).

At the beginning I think it was assumed to teach but in my view we are not getting education, rather we are learning how to express our feeling in a wrong way since it tells you that getting out to party and having sex is not a problem as long as you score B+ (Yonathan, one of the transitional characters, who misses class scored B+) . It is surprising because we study 24 hours and we don't even get B (male senior student from Addis).

Some of the other participants also criticized the print for having negatively behaving characters, especially Henok, who is accustomed in having multiple partners and characterized as a person skilled with sexual seduction. This makes

him a talked about character and creates a feeling that he represents the peak of modernity. In this respect, he is an inspirational character for male students, which was considered as a barrier for behavioral change of students according to the “formative assessment” measuring barriers and facilitators done by MARCH AAU as a base to come up with the summary grid and synopsis that guides the story.

I like Henok; I think all guys want to be like him, they don't want to be seen as uncivilized. They want to be a player like him and they can get a good lesson how to be that out of his actions (male fresh student out of Addis).

I have learned how to get a girl by taking Henok's experience - he gives you the words and the things you have to do to be successful in getting girls and persuade them easily which will be rewarding in your group to be considered as modest - but it was not what I expected to be I was expecting a message how to get out of trouble and how to complete my stay in success(male senior from Addis).

Singhal & Rogers (2001) referred to such an effect as unintended effects dilemma in which negatively behaving characters will have an impact on the behavioral change of audience because they like them. The writers also clearly stated that it is not possible to take out such characters since they are the core players in any story. However the theory has a balancing mechanism by including positively behaving characters that will be taken as role models by the audience. Unfortunately, the positive influence character part seems to be nonexistent or such characters are not given a lot of space in the story, which resulted in opposition of meaning by the audience as the study participants stated. In addition not getting immediate personal relevance by observing the characters being punished or rewarded has affected the audiences' interpretation. This factor is considered as one of the message reception resistances by reception scholars.

In explaining the reason why they have such impression, the participants attributed it to the prolonged punishment the characters are going to face.

I am sure this print has a lesson to teach at the end but until it reaches there it will teach a lot of wrong behaviors and I know it has 56 editions and I don't think anyone will get the lesson. I will graduate this year but I didn't see any one get punished (Female senior from Addis).

It might be at the 29th that we get the lesson but we will be out of here before that day comes. It is also the same for new comers so I don't know who will get the lesson (male senior out of Addis).

The participants suggested making it a weekly if possible or at least a monthly publication in order to maintain its serial nature and also in order to make students get the intended lesson. However the program manager said that ideally it was assumed to be a monthly publication and it would be over within at least three years but he explained that

The story production by itself takes 21 days and the rest the publication and distribution also takes some weeks. As it is also known since it is prepared for regular students it will not be published during the summer time this also adds to the length of the time.

The researcher asked if the management has done a formative assessment which would have solved such problems and the project officer stated that they have carried out a “formative research” with a few focus group participants in order to identify the factors that are challenges for behavioral change and to come up with ideal characters. However factors such as time, language and positive role models were not considered to be problems. The researcher believes that most of the ideas the participants mentioned as weaknesses could have been solved if the formative assessment was given serious thought and was well researched as most successful E-E projects in different countries are the result of well researched and considered research.

4.2.4. Mis-representation regarding gender.

The other point that creates opposition to the message is the perception that all characters are seen to be portrayed negatively, with female characters being portrayed particularly negatively. One of the freshman female participants from Addis expressed her disappointment on the characterization of the girls as easy-going.

The writers have characterized the females as all concerned about getting men's attention and easy to take them to bed - especially I feel the story is about Addis's girls and it tells as if we have no hard time to get involved in sexual relationship.

Another female participant who came out of Addis expressed the wrong portrayal of the female characters that came from the countryside by referring to Mare:

The only female representative in the story that we can relate to was Mare but she is presented as weak and not able to resist challenges, and this gives the wrong idea that we rural girls are not strong enough to attain our goal.

The male participants also noted this point by including the idea that it also presents male characters as all addicted to drugs and spending their time chasing girls.

I took the print home and except my parents the rest of my family read it and do you know what my older brother said, "which one are you?" And all of them started to see the male students being like Henok and the female in place of the girls who interacts with him (male senior from Addis).

The way the writers presented the girls as weak and the story puts them like you can find them easily if you ask them but this is not the girls I know because they have their own dignity and self-respect (male senior student from Addis).

The character all participants agreed to be presented as strong and visionary among the transitional characters is Blen. They accepted her actions and decisions to be plausible and realistic though they still consider her to be weak in some aspects like open communication with her boyfriend which is acceptable in E-E strategy also since audience will get a lesson of challenges and impacts of wrong decision.

Belen could be considered as a role model but she is kind of weak as she can't freely express her feeling and that seem to be affecting her education (female freshman participant out of Addis).

4.3. Image of the university students out of the community.

The study participants are concerned about what kind of image the print creates about them among the society out of the community. Most of the study participants accused the print in creating a negative image about the university and them.

One male participant of the Addis-based senior students raised the idea of taking it home and to share it with parents in order to make parents understand how the way of rearing a child affects the way the child behaves later on:

You know what I think, it will be very helpful if it is given to our parents because I think it is the background we have that matters in our interpretation and understanding of the message. I was raised in a free family and when I came here there was nothing new to me.

However almost all of the participants in his group and also participants of the other groups, since I took his idea and tried to see the reaction of participants in the other groups participants by considering its relevance in trying to triangulate the representative ness of the medium, strongly opposed the idea of taking it home .

Some of the participants who opposed the idea are those who have taken it home and saw their family's reaction like that of the senior male participant from Addis who said that they started to have second thoughts about him.

Another participant who came from out of Addis shared his experience about his family's reaction and he expressed it as follows:

My family have read it and they asked me if there is chat for sell in the dorm because it is all about getting chat and said: you guys spend these all time playing so when do you study? (male senior student out of Addis)

I took it home and my parents said "I don't think you stay in the library as you say!" When they knew it is from the university they expected a lot but this print is about few students which is spoiling our image (male senior student from Addis).

Those who haven't taken it also refused the idea of taking it home due to the fear of the challenge and negative thought about them their parents will have.

You want them to kill me? They will not totally trust me afterward, believe me. If I tell them I have never chewed chat, never smoked cigarettes and have had no sexual relation they won't believe me. It is not undermining our parents but this it for us not for them (Male freshman student from Addis).

Our image is not this it is all about the story of negatively behaving student and this is not our real image. The society already has negative thoughts about the university students of these days and giving this print is like adding a fuel in a burning fire (Female senior student From Addis).

Nevertheless a few students said that they had taken it, that their parents had accepted it as a publication to teach students how to abstain from such activities in the story and said that it opened a discussion about life in the university.

My family and my villagers have read it. They just don't put me in place of the characters they rather advise me to get a lesson out of it and it made us to talk about it several times.(male senior student from Addis)

A female senior participant from Addis during individual interview strongly insisted that it is not a distorted image by asserting it has reality of the practice in the campus.

Before we joined here we were told that it will be a hard work in the campus but when we came here it wasn't like that - we will be given assignments and we do that then we will have plenty of time to do this things so what the print did is it exposed the reality; we can't say it is a bad impression - it is the reality.

Whether they have taken it home or not, it was agreed among the participants that this decision presented a challenge. This shows the interpretation the participants have about the medium which in turn gives the negotiated or oppositional reading and interpretation they have about the message transmitted through it. The nature of the medium being easily movable from one place to the other, highlights the necessity to give high consideration to it. The program producers have accepted the fact that it has reached an audience it was not intended to first; however data collected from a broader formative assessment would have had raised such issues and pointed to a solution.

4.4. What is missing?

The participants were asked what things they consider as a strong and what things they want the project to include in the print.

Almost all participants appreciated the way of presentation being photo based and attractive with the cover and inside design.

Holding all the things stated above they expressed their desire to see a strong and positive influencing character, as well as reconsidering publication and distribution time in order to make better than it is now.

The story needs a hero character who we can take as a role model. If the producers could do that I think the popularity will be more and it will have its objective achieved (Female freshman student from Addis).

We don't see the characters good side but we need to see a strong and visionary role model it need to include such characters it could be by including a new character or by magnifying characters like Mota, the character who came from state and is presented as education focused character a positive influence on Henok. (Male senior student out of Addis).

It shows the reality in the campus and its way of story telling is interesting but it doesn't have a role model character this part is missing in it I hope the producers consider this and include more groups (Female senior student from Addis).

Generally the findings of the research shows that in its reception part the participants have found it to be very inviting and well designed along with its being a print comic with images increased its accessibility. On the language used however, there is a difference in reception which most of the participants' clamed it to be too much fun that affects its consideration as a print with serious life matters. The representativeness of the print is also found to be group specific. The interpretation part is also subjected to difference in opinion among the participants. Most have mentioned that it is exaggerated, passes the wrong message to students and creates negative image about the university and students in the university.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The importance of a community based medium is beyond question. It is more influencing and appropriate in preserving pro-social values and fighting challenging negative social practices. This can be apparent when the message in the medium is inclusive of all participants of the community and entertains a story line which covers important aspects of the community. That is why the significance of *The Journey Life 101*, which is the Print Serial Drama of the MARCH project of Addis Ababa University, is obvious. The fact that it is the first to come up with such a story book for the university community contributes to the appreciation of the program designers and program producers.

The objective of this study, was intended to investigate the message reception of Addis Ababa University students of *The Journey Life 101* of MARCH AAU in order to find out what factors foster or limit the students' reception and interpretation of the messages. Though it is obvious that generalization cannot be drawn from this qualitative study, it significantly helps to understand the case under investigation more deeply than any other method could have done. The major frame of reference of the research and the findings are based on Laurence Kincaid's (2002: 145) presupposition that:

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

Accordingly, the study has found that the PSD has become popular, which is one of the prerequisites for message reception. The popularity of the print is not restricted to the community; rather it also has the attention of the external community which can be attributed to the print nature of the medium. In

addition, the designing and use of photo comics also enhanced the reception of the message.

Nevertheless, the investigation supports Valente's (2001:154) claim that:

"communication intervention's true effect is not measured by the degree audience like them but rather in the program's influence on the community it is created to influence,"

This assumption is found to be true since the study showed that the popularity did not go along with the message reception in a way it was intended to.

The message interpretation is more negotiated and at times even opposed by the target audience which is the result of incomplete understanding and misinterpretation of the message. The reasons given are:

- ❖ Exaggeration in character changes and actions which made the study participants find the story to be implausible.
- ❖ Ignorance of significant part of the community by covering only the daily interaction of one specific group which is claimed to be the "Arada" or 'Modern' group of the community showed that the story is not about events that happen in the majority of the audience's lives.
- ❖ Lack of positive role models and presenting the existing characters with low self-efficacy made the audience negotiate and even at times oppose the representativeness of the medium.
- ❖ The characters not being punished on time for their negative actions is found to be sending the wrong message especially for those students who leave the campus before completing the story. Additionally, the delayed punishment exposed the audience to 'unintended effects dilemma' which Singhal & Rogers, (2001) refer as the attraction the audience develops toward negative role models by observing the short term success the characters get before being punished for their negative actions.

- ❖ Use of “Perfect English” by transitional characters (mainly by Yonathan) which is beyond the reach of the majority of the readers and also the colloquial nature of the Amharic language used (specially by Henok) created a hindrance for the message reception since it demands that the audience know the signified word in order to make sense out of it.
- ❖ The length of publication and irregular distribution of the magazine has affected the serial nature of the story. The fact that the story has 56 episodes with a three-month-interval of publication makes it difficult to know who gets the lesson at the end of the story since most of the students who were regular followers of the story will have graduated by that time.

Thus, the medium ought to involve all significant groups of the community and also cover issues of educational matters through characters that have strong self-efficacy. Using more appropriate language within the reach of a majority of the target audience could also significantly help in the objective attainment process. The program producers also have to manage a way to show the impact of negative actions on time by giving consideration to the story length in order to make sure the students complete the story before leaving the campus.

Furthermore, since *the Journey Life 101* is university based and other universities are also doing the same, it would be significant to have a well researched formative assessment with all the detailed investigation of the community in aspects such as life style, language use, time matters, as well as the unintended audience that the nature of the medium could pull in.

Therefore, by improving the above mentioned limitations of the medium and continuing to prepare the magazine with the attractive and well thought out designed presentation appearance it has now, the project could manage to secure an achievement of desired out comes at the end of the day

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Appendix: Guide for the Focus Group Discussion.

The general objective of the study is to analyze the message reception of print serial messages with a case study of the Print Serial Drama of Addis Ababa University. The purpose of this instrument is to collect data for a master thesis in partial fulfillment of master's degree in Journalism and Communication. Thank you for your cooperation in advance!

1. Demographics

- Faculty
- Year of entry
- Permanent residence (residence before joining the compass).
- Gender

2. Reception and interpretation of the messages.

Message reception

- How often do you follow *The Journey Life 101* Print Serial Message?
- After reading each episode do you discuss the questions provided at the end of each episode? With whom do you hold the discussion?
- How do you evaluate its presentation (in terms of language use, setting of the story, and characters development)?

Message Interpretation.

- What do you think is the objective of the PSD? Do you think the medium will attain its objective at the end?
- Among the characters, who do you think represents you in the story?
- What type of message do you think the PSD emphasizes more(Discouraging, Encouraging, scary message,)
- How do you see the balance between entertaining and educating you?
- To whom do you think the PSD is well suited or intended (student from Addis Ababa, All students in the community).

- What strength and weaknesses do you observe in the PSD?
- What do you think the program producers should do to improve its message reception by students?

Guide for in-depth individual interview.

- ❖ When did you start following *The Journey Life 101* print serial drama?
- ❖ Do you read the story to get education about HIV/AIDS or you use it as an entertainment magazine only?
- ❖ Do you see yourself presented in the story? If yes, who do you think represent you among the characters? If no, who do you think the characters represent?
- ❖ How do you see the storyline, is it about the daily life of ordinary university students or do you think it is group and class specific?
- ❖ How do you see the dressing style, the language they use and their day to day interaction among them?
- ❖ Do you think the comic book is popular? If yes do you think it will continue being popular?

- ❖ Do you think the medium will attain its objective at the end?
Why?
- ❖ What do you consider strong and weak about the comic book?
- ❖ What do you think the project should do to improve the medium?

Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: TIRSIT YETBAREK

Signature:

Date of submission: