

## Research Article

# Look Who's Watching: An Audience Reception of ABS-CBN's 'The Legal Wife'

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## Abstract

Television (TV) soap operas play an important role in the lives of Filipinos since certain TV images represent and or affect reality. The creative storylines, casting, and production in TV programs altogether appear to be narrating a person's story.

In recent years, the adultery genre has become a staple in Philippine soap operas. This popular TV genre has implicated women, particularly housewives, as it depicts family matters and relationships. One TV series that has become a hit among audiences is the "The Legal Wife."

This study explores the TV viewers' concept of marriage as portrayed in soap operas. Using the survey method, it examines the demographic profile of 1,000 TV viewers in Manila. It also analyzes how the abovenamed TV program has shaped the perception of married Filipinos toward marriage.

Results reveal that emotional attachment is high for viewers who never went to college. After watching many episodes, women imitate the behavior of the TV program's female protagonist. After watching many episodes, men usually remember the lines of the female character more than those of the male protagonist's.

**Keywords:** *soap opera, marriage, television, gender, viewership, emotional attachment, behavior*

## **Introduction**

### **A. Background of the Study**

Marriage is a commitment between two individuals who promise to care for each other despite their differences. For some, security, understanding, and affection characterize a good marital relationship. However, most people still tend to question what really comprise a successful marriage.

In recent years, several articles on the growing rate of annulment cases in the Philippines have been published in newspapers and online media. Calonzo and Cayabyab (2013), cited that, in the Philippines, marriage annulment and nullity cases have continuously risen for the past eight years. In 2012 alone, an average of 28 couples per day sought to have their marriages annulled or declared null and void. After a year, Sen. Loren Legarda cited a record at the Office of the Solicitor General, that showed an increase in the number of annulment cases from 9,133 cases in 2011 to 10,528 cases in 2012 (Ager, 2014).

There are several marriage concerns that contribute to marital problems. Medina (as cited in Gonzales, 2003) stressed infidelity as the most common issue among families in the Philippines. She also mentioned communication problems, financial stresses, and betrayals of trust as reasons for marriage break-up.

Several soap operas regarding marriage annulment in the Philippines have emerged, adding to the typical "rags-to-riches" storyline. In fact, various publications have cited the loyalty of Filipino viewers to soap operas. For Filipinos, soap operas offer a standard by which viewers can critically compare their own lives.

In 2014, ABS-CBN's "The Legal Wife" soap opera became the talk of the town after captivating more viewers than the rival network's TV programs. It also became the most watched weekday show on primetime during the same year. It ran from January 27 to June 13, 2014. Razon (2014) said "The Legal Wife,"

in its last five episodes earned the highest rating in the history of Philippine soap opera.

The story revolves around Adrian (Jericho Rosales) and Monica (Angel Locsin) who started their relationship as friends and eventually as husband and wife. Monica thought that she already had an ideal family with her husband, but Adrian later fell in love with Nicole (Maja Salvador). Monica later discovered Adrian's affair with Nicole, who happened to be Monica's best friend.

Since then (the discovery), Nicole made a lot of cunning ways to persuade Adrian to stay with her. It became complicated when Nicole told Monica that she was carrying Adrian's child. Toward the end of the series, Adrian tried to fix his broken family, but Monica rejected him. In the final episode, the two separated ways, but hinted at a reconciliation in the future.

The popularity gained by "The Legal Wife" stirred the interest of the researchers to examine this soap opera in relation with the viewers' perception. Coulter (2010) explained that TV images are not only interesting because they work as mirrors, representations, or counterparts of the "real" world, but also, because they affect reality.

While several researchers have explored audience reception on many subjects, there are limited studies about soap operas and viewership in the Philippines.

## **B. Research Problem**

Since watching TV is considered a hobby among Filipinos, the researchers studied "The Legal Wife" to determine how a TV program shaped the perception and behavior of 1,000 married Filipinos toward marriage. In line with this, they formulated the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of married Filipinos in Manila who have watched "The Legal Wife"?

2. What ideas have TV viewers obtained from this particular soap opera that feature adultery?

### **C. Objectives of the Study**

In line with the problems stated above, this study aims to:

1. Determine the demographic profile of married Filipinos in Manila who have watched "The Legal Wife" in terms of:
  - a. age,
  - b. sex,
  - c. highest educational attainment, and
  - d. monthly income.
2. Identify and analyze the ideas that viewers have taken from this particular soap opera featuring adultery.

### **D. Significance of the Study**

ABS-CBN's "The Legal Wife" is ranked first in 2014 in terms of primetime ratings, beating its rival, GMA 7's "Rhodora X" and later, "Ang Dalawang Mrs. Real." Before the airing of the pilot episode, ABS-CBN launched a teaser of the soap opera where Monica (Angel Locsin) slapped Nicole (Maja Salvador) in a confrontation scene. Dumauual (2014) said the trailer was well received and it even went viral on social media. Thus, this study is a significant endeavor in presenting the ideas of marriage in the Philippines in terms of the roles of the family members. This research also adds to the pool of limited literature on modern Philippine soap opera.

### **E. Scope and Limitation**

This research focuses on the viewers' reception of the content of the soap opera. It does not cover the determination of medium usage as well as the explanation and interpretation of the whole production of the television series.

## Review of Related Literature

### A. Soap Operas in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the most popular TV genre is the soap opera (Quirante and Sugbo, 2010). Often referred to as “teleserye,” the term has been derived from “tele” (television) and “serye” (series).

In 1998, the Kapisanan ng Brodcaster ng Pilipinas (KBP) said that almost 89% of Filipinos have TV sets at home, with roughly 57% of the Philippine household watching television programs from six to seven days a week. Most of the programs were aired by TV giants, such as the ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation, Radio Philippines Network (RPN), and GMA 7 Network.

According to the National Statistics Office (2001):

The popularity of television continued to rise in the 90s, as evidenced by the impressive 8.7 percentage point expansion in viewers (the highest among the eight mass media forms) – from 48.0 percent in 1989 to 56.7 percent in 1996. The increasing trend was reflected in both the urban (1.7 percentage points) and rural areas (5.8 percentage points).

Fong and Au (2009) said 60% of the TV programs are soap operas, 20% are news, and 10 percent are variety shows, including sports and basketball. With these, the authors said that the participants in the first Soap Opera Summit in the Philippines held in 2001, dubbed the Philippines as the “soap opera capital of the world.”

The history of soap operas in the Philippines started with “Gulong ng Palad” on radio in 1949. The drama was adapted into a TV program during the 1960s. The first soap opera on TV was the “*Hiwaga sa Bahay na Bato*” of ABS-CBN in 1963. Other soap operas such as “*Larangan ng Pag-ibig*” and “*Prinsipe Amante*,” emerged due to the success of the genre.

Before 1986, Coronel (1999) said that GMA 7 was the most popular network in the country. The network caught the interest of the viewers for its daring move to speak out during the Marcos dictatorship. It was not too long before Corazon Aquino took the helm in 1986, signaling

the comeback of the GMA 7's rival network, ABS-CBN. The latter then dethroned GMA 7 in popularity especially after some personnel were pirated by the growing empire.

Coronel (1999) said that, ABS-CBN dominated TV rating surveys when it reached as the peak of 65 percent, while GMA 7 only had one-third of the rival network's rating. She said GMA 7's daily soap opera, "Villa Quintana," which was aired from 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., caused trouble to ABS-CBN's ratings. The soap, derived from Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," was about a typical story of lovers from different social classes. Although the ratings of ABS-CBN were around 60 to 70% at that time, people changed channels since they were bored of the usual news lineup. There was even a time when "TV Patrol's" rating went down to 25%, while "Villa Quintana" was at 21 percent. At the same time, Mexican telenovela "Marimar" was aired on Channel 9 (Peralta, 1999) in the same year and crippled ABS-CBN's "TV Patrol." Coronel (1999) described "TV Patrol" as "a tabloid news show." Aired from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., the news program served as the "appetizer" before the primetime. It was in the 1990s when foreign soap operas, particularly Mexican "telenovelas," invaded Philippine television and made Latin American actors like Thalia, popular in the country. "Marimar," which shared the same timeslot with "Villa Quintana," shook the newscast off balance. Although the soap opera was about a usual love story between a rich man and a poor girl played by Thalia, it grabbed the attention of the public because the plot was fast-paced (Gabunada, 2012).

Fong and Au (2009), described "Marimar" as "engaging" because it used television to "satisfy the social and economic needs of the audience." A survey conducted by the Television Research Council People Meter in 1996, it indicated that those who watched "Marimar" in the Philippines were from the middle and lower social strata. "Marimar," who is a mestiza, hooked Filipinos, especially women who would like to have the "Marimar features" like sculpted nose, luscious lips, and brown eyes (Fong and Au, 2009). Azarcon-de la Cruz (1988), in her book "From Virgin to Vamp: Image of Women in Philippine Media," asserted that television programs, like telenovelas, are still about the looks of the women, the way they act, and their position next to men. Fong and Au (2009) said the poor and the oppressed, including victims of assault

and battery at the Women's Crises Center, could relate to "Marimar" (who was always being blamed for crimes she did not commit) since she fought back those who oppressed her even though she was a poor woman. They added that "Marimar" was close to the hearts of the Filipino audience, particularly to women, due to "cultural proximity factor" since the Philippines was colonized by Spain for more than 300 years.

In 1992, ABS-CBN managed to be at par with RPN 9 when it pitted "Mara Clara" against "Marimar." The story revolved around two girls who were switched at birth. Gabunada (2012), who was the former head of ABS-CBN's Research and Business Analysis Department, said they pitched in "Mara Clara" to attract housewives "who were not about to give up the television to anybody specially if they were watching their favorite shows." ABS-CBN lost its standing for some time, but not for long after it cut "TV Patrol" into 30 minutes and bought the other Thalia telenovelas like "Rosalinda." Fortunately, for ABS-CBN, the counter-attack worked. The network also produced primetime soap operas like "Mula sa Puso" and "Esperanza" to maintain its rank (Gabunada, 2012).

Fong and Au (2009) said the rationale behind the overkill of soap operas in the Philippines is that, they sell. Hence, they described television as "highly commercialized" in nature since networks create attention-grabbing television programs. The authors also said the screening of Mexican telenovelas boomed in the country since networks do not need to pay much but they earn a lot from these. Since then, several drama series have dominated the household viewing time and transformed into what we call today as "teleserye," "fantaserye," "action-serye," "dance-serye," "sineserye," and "Asianovela."

In 2008, ABS-CBN adapted the South Korean drama series "My Girl," which ran for 75 episodes. The soap opera was about a young female tour guide named Jasmine (Kim Chiu) who was asked by Julian (Gerald Anderson) to pretend as his cousin to grant his grandfather's dying wish to meet his long lost granddaughter named Hannah. Enriquez's (2011) analysis of ABS-CBN's soap opera "My Girl," revealed that the series failed to present societal issues such as oppression and class division due to its romantic storyline. Aired in 2010, the series showed

“a love that can cross boundaries and divisions,” a concept that one rarely finds in a world where classes are at constant hostility with each other (p.1).

In a study of Afable (2013) on the “Princess and I,” the author revealed that though there was an attempt to present the female characters in a post-feminist way, the producers of the soap were not able to sustain it. She cited that the “teleserye” still embodied traditional representations of women as the “weaker sex.” In the case of its female protagonist named Mikay, the producers of the show initially wanted to make her character a role model to female teenagers, but the respondents of the study still received her as indecisive and ignorant.

Commentaries of Villanueva (2013) and Argos (2007) reasoned that soap operas continue to attract Philippine viewers despite the clichés in their storylines because of their dramatic content. The latter mentions that:

Soap operas capitalize on the melodrama that Filipinos are known to live in and love. The fairy tale ending, the viscous plot, and the ‘love-to-hate’ villain are all elements that Filipinos look for in the preferred form of entertainment.

Having all of these elements intact, Argos (2007) said a soap opera is able to grab the attention of Filipinos to sympathize not only with the lead characters of the show, but also with its storyline. Linao’s (2013) online news article for the Gulf Times titled “Romantic TV Series Captures Filipino Hearts” stated that “[S]oap operas or telenovelas have become a big part of the Filipino culture as television evolves into one of the strongest forms of media in the Philippines.” However, a point of concern among these soap operas is that it was reported to enforce dominant ideologies and a notion of false reality among its viewers.

## B. Gender and Soap Opera

Most of the studies on soap operas have focused on the audience. Many of the researchers have associated these television programs with women since these usually tackle the lives of female characters. Men, meanwhile, have been linked with shows that feature strength and boldness.



Azalanshah's and Syed's (2011) study defined soap opera as a pervasive feature of everyday culture and a node for consumption of popular culture for women whose lives revolve around the private space of the household. This supports the description of Nochimson (1992) who connected soap opera with women and desire, specifically about passion for personal and domestic concerns.

Many scholars like Hobson (1982), Ang (1985), Buckingham (1987) and Geraghty (1991) also agreed with these characterizations, adding that soap opera is a long running, episodic television programs with fictional stories of romance, family, and relationships that cater to women.

In 1993, O'Connor and Boyle said, two of the most popular television genres such as soap opera and sports, have been very much associated with gender in terms of their audience. The authors regarded soap opera as "gynocentric" in nature because of its female viewers, while sports shows cater to males. They said that differences in gender between the genres had implications for the popular image of the two. The researchers also said, the soap opera has been regarded as inferior, a "mere fantasy and escapism" for women, while sports has been perceived as a "legitimate, even edifying experience for men."

In their study, O'Connor and Boyle (1993) found similarities in the two genres and even regarded sports shows as "male soap opera," since their way of viewing is related to domestic life and leisure, same with the housewives watching drama series.

Chandler (1994) studied episodes of British drama series such as "Coronation Street," "Rooms," "Emmerdale Farm," "General Hospital," "Crossroads," and "The Waltons" and found that soap operas take part of women's lives for the whole. With his findings, Chandler (1994) then separated the television programs and classified them for the interest of the viewers: masculine and feminine. Programs for men involve action and adventure, while programs for women include comedies and soap operas.

For Chandler (1994), masculine programs relate men to power, action, and technology. Feminine shows, on the other hand, include soap

opera because they depict family matters and relationships. Chandler (1994) also found that most soap opera viewers were “working class housewives” and they usually devote a lot of time to watch television alongside with their chores.

Feasey (2008), however, said soap operas also cater to males, but the storylines are focused on kidnappings, car chases, and violence. She said that in order to show male protagonists working through marital concerns, challenges to family loyalties and the pressures of male friendship, active and aggressive narratives may be used. Glendhill (as cited in Feasey, 2008) said masculine action tends to depict the “unexpressed and often unexpressible” male emotion that needs a melodramatic climax to break out. She also said that the most dramatic transformation in the soap opera is not the addition of the masculine storylines, but the challenges to males in viewing other men to express their emotions and feelings in the TV programs. Bowles (as cited in Azalanshah and Syed, 2011) also said the bulk of content that is portrayed in soap operas – family issues, neighborhood and romance – are societal issues that are appealing to women.

From 2000 to 2010, Genota (2012) said most soap operas showed gender inequality in Philippine society. Using textual analysis, she examined 17 soap operas of ABS-CBN with dramatic themes and looked at how working Filipinas undergo social construction in soap operas and how they were represented in terms of their professions and occupations. The researcher arrived at 18 professions, proving that there was bias since most of the characters were presented as housewives. Genota (2012) said this image has become a disadvantage for Filipina women in soap operas to pursue their desired professions and attain financial success, since they are bound to work for their families or stay inside their homes.

In the same manner, Dela Cruz (2012) discussed the alleged oppression of women as represented by three media – television shows, motion pictures, and songs – from 1960 to 1980 and used textual analysis to examine their “demeaning roles.”

With regard to the themes commonly presented in soap operas, a study conducted in Malaysia in 2011 mentioned that themes dealing

with family relationships and issues, and marital love are commonly presented in soaps. According to Azalanshah and Syed (2011):

Themes like family issues, parent-child relationships and marital love pervade non-Western soaps, whether they are from Asia or Latin America, with lesser emphases on individualism or sexual intrigue as in most Western soaps.

Arnett (2006) said themes such as marital love and relationship conflicts are common in soap operas. As such, conflict is part of marriage and family life. However, it may differ in terms of its sources and the nature and extent of expression.

### C. Memory, Sex and Violence on Television

The mass media are “very powerful spaces” for the preservation of memory and for memory-making and exchange (Blandford and McElroy, 2013). In fact, one of their components, the television, contains a rich site for history and memory. Television is undeniably one of the storytellers in a household. Most people watch television to be entertained based on their preferred genres such as sports, drama, comedy, horror, crime and suspense, or action.

Quirante and Sugbo (2010) said that prolonged exposure to a similar fare of programs on television fosters social learning, creating meanings, values, and beliefs in the minds of the audience. These, in turn, become part of a cognitive frame that they used in viewing and interpreting the world and physical reality.

In this study, “The Legal Wife” falls under the category of drama. Although it tackled marital conflicts, sexual desires were also presented in the TV series. In an episode aired on March 28, 2014, Adrian (Jericho Rosales) made love with Nicole (Maja Salvador) while on a trip, betraying his wife, Monica (Angel Locsin). While the episode depicted infidelity, the love scene trended worldwide on micro-blogging site Twitter after several viewers vented their exasperations. Reichert and Lambiase (2014) said many studies have suggested that the presence of arousing content in print, radio, and television compels attention. Lang et al. (2000) said, “arousing messages” of the television are remembered rather than “calm messages.” Lang et

al. (2000) said the presence of arousing content in media not only allocates to attention, but also to memory.

Memory, as defined by the Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing and Allied Health in 2003, is the "mental faculty that enables one to retain and recall previously experienced sensations, impressions, information, and ideas. The ability of the brain to retain and use knowledge gained from past experience is essential to the process of learning."

According to Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), human memory has three stages. These are sensory memory or the one that holds sensory, short-term memory (STM) or the one that holds perception for analysis, and long-term memory (LTM) or the permanent storage. The LTM is divided into two namely: the explicit or declarative memory and the implicit or non-declarative memory. Explicit memory refers to the conscious attempts to retrieve memories of past events while the implicit memory is the non-conscious effort to retrieve memories like reading a book that an individual has read before. In this study, the researchers will rely on the explicit memory of the respondents in discussing and answering the questions related to the television series, which depicted marital conflicts, sexual desires, and violence.

Bushman (1998) conducted three experiments where the participants were asked to watch violent and non-violent film clips. He concluded that violent films infuriated the viewers and changed their mood after viewing the film clip.

Bushman and Bonacci (2002) also conducted a study using the same methods, but this time, the researchers used television. They asked the participants to watch a violent, sexually explicit, or neutral TV program that contained nine advertisements. They found out that those who watched the advertisements during a neutral program proved better memory than those who saw the advertisements during a violent or sexually explicit program. They say:

Violence and sex impaired memory for males and females of all ages, regardless of whether they liked programs containing violence and sex. These results suggest that sponsoring violent and sexually explicit TV programs might not be a profitable venture for advertisers.

Meanwhile, when “The Legal Wife” series presented violence, particularly during its episode aired on May 20, 2014, it became the most unforgettable episode and was well-received by the audience (Choa, 2014). In that episode, Monica found out that Nicole and Adrian saw each other again after forgiving him for having an affair. An enraged Monica confronted Nicole, pulled her hair, and hit her several times. She only stopped after Nicole confessed that she is carrying Adrian’s child.

#### D. Synthesis and Critique of the Literature

The literature review was organized in a topical manner to stress the importance of history and memory. In this corpus, it is evident that studies and resources linking Filipinos with soap operas are limited.

Almost 70 percent of the authors in this review said soap operas reassure and validate the problems people are facing in real life. Most of the authors also cited soap opera as a medium for conveying the images of women and their jobs since the 1970s. The authors also put emphasis on the content, citing that soap opera is for a particular group of women who belong to the working class.

Moreover, 90 percent of the researchers in this review, including Dyer et al. (1977), have associated soap operas with women and regarded the genre as a kind of “social drama,” which is commercial in nature. It is also implied that the devotion of women to this genre has not changed until today, especially in the Philippine household.

Aside from the division of programs for men and women, the authors also said that soap operas tell us how women relate to men. With regard to family and work, almost all scholars pointed out that women in soap operas face many challenges. They are always oppressed by their partners and other people around them. However, in the end, women always emerge as victors.

## Framework of the Study

### A. Social Learning Theory

In this theory, Bandura (1997) explains that people learn through

observation, modeling, and imitation. He explains that human behavior has a reciprocal interaction with the cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences. As cited by Liebert and Sprafkin (1988), this theory proves that an audience can acquire the attitudes, emotional responses, and new styles of conduct of the characters through film and television programs.

Bandura (1986) also states that people learn from unforeseen observations. He also said that a person could learn new manners without practicing it and without any direct support because the action is dormant. He also stressed the significance of observational learning, citing that it gives new responses from other's behavior. Most of the behaviors that people show are learned through role models. According to Bandura (1971), these models and their influences are prominent and powerful, especially if the person is someone the viewer idolizes.

Bandura's theory suggests that there are reciprocal interactions between the person, the model, and the environment. He said that a "modeled behavior" is created when the viewers see what the characters are doing in television programs while the learning environment is the situation happening in a certain program. He also says that the television has a strong impact because its viewers are likely to imitate the action they have witnessed.

#### B. Cultivation Theory

This theory explains how television affects its audience based on the frequency of exposure regardless of its contents. Nevertheless, the contents that are shown in the television are mostly gathered from primary sources and transmitted to the audience. It only denotes that television rearranges the landscape of data gathering wherein experiences and information are previously obtained from a primary source, or others may experience them first-hand.

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1986) posit that, from infancy, television cultivates the very predispositions and preferences one acquires from other primary sources. Thus, there is more focus on the frequency or the exposure to a certain television show rather than the

messages. The theory covers the effects of television to its audience members and their susceptibility of being influenced after being exposed to a television program for a long period. The said influence to the viewers is attributed to the total impact of the show. The change in their behavior is not specific, patterned, and recurring.

In a nutshell, this theory implies that heavy exposure to television affects the perception of the audience, and eventually, their behavior. These changes mirror the images and messages that are featured on television.

In this study, the Social Learning Theory explains how the characters in the “The Legal Wife” portray their roles as models in the eyes of the viewers through television. These portrayals become unforeseen observation from the audience’s viewpoint, which may shape one’s attitude and eventually becomes a part of his or her behavior.

This is depicted in the model below.

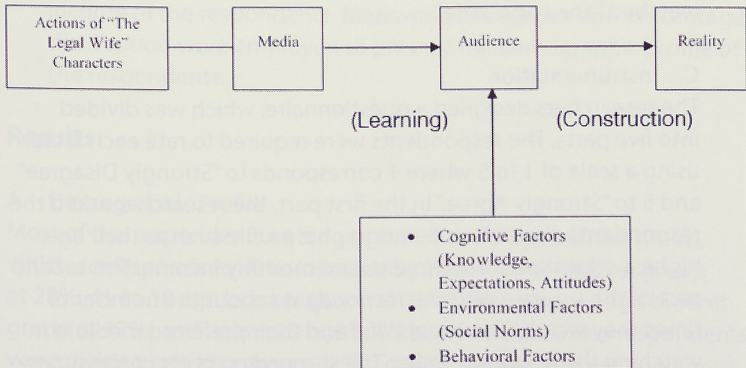


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The models or actors in this sense may be considered powerful since they are popular and prominent in the society. The Cultivation Theory details how an individual, who is an avid fan of “The Legal Wife” series, will change his or her perception after being exposed to the program for a long period.

## **Research Methods**

### **A. Research Design**

This research, which is descriptive in nature, obtained information from the explicit memory of the respondents through a two-page structured survey. The number of respondents was equally divided into 500 male and 500 female respondents. The researchers used survey to determine the thoughts and views of the respondents about marriage in connection with the television series.

### **B. Sampling and Study Site**

The researchers used purposive sampling to find out whether there are differences in the perception of male and female respondents toward marriage. This kind of non-probability sampling allowed the researchers to select people based on a particular purpose. Aside from the willingness to participate in the discussion, the researchers asked only married people who have watched "The Legal Wife."

### **C. Instrumentation**

The researchers designed a questionnaire, which was divided into five parts. The respondents were required to rate each factor using a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 corresponds to "Strongly Disagree" and 5 to "Strongly Agree." In the first part, the researcher asked the respondents about their demographic profile such as their age, highest educational attainment, and monthly income. The second part of the survey asked the respondents about the number of times they watch "The Legal Wife" and their preferred medium in watching the television series. The succeeding parts of the survey included the viewer involvement scale and learning scale on the ideas of the respondents on marriage. Each component has five questions. The questionnaire has 27 queries, which can be answered for about 10 minutes.

### **D. Data Gathering Procedure**

Each of the five researchers was assigned to ask 200 respondents from Manila to answer the survey. Before giving the questionnaire,



the researchers asked a screening question to the respondents—if they have watched “The Legal Wife” and if they are married. The respondents were given a letter of informed consent, which states that their participation in the survey was voluntary and that their answers would be treated with confidentiality. Those who agreed to participate were then asked to answer the two-page structured survey. The researchers checked each questionnaire to ensure that the respondents answered all the questions. After collecting the data, the researchers encoded the responses.

#### E. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers employed descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic profile of the respondents. The survey results were interpreted to get an inclusive finding. Data were presented in tables to show the distribution of the answers. Standard deviation was used to measure how the data was clustered about the mean. This was applied to present the age, sex, and the average monthly family income of the respondents. Meanwhile, frequency and percentage distribution were employed to present the demographic profile of the respondents.

## Results

#### A. Demographic Profile

Most of the respondents belong to the 21 to 30 age bracket group, which corresponds to 43%; followed by 31 to 40 age bracket group at 28%, 41 to 50 age bracket group at 12%, 51 and above age bracket group at 12%, and below 20 age bracket group at 5%. The respondents were divided into two groups – 500 males and 500 females – to determine the viewing habits and perception of the audience toward marriage.

**Table 1. Summary of Demographic Data**

Profile	Group	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	
Age	Below 20	51	5	
	21 to 30	429	43	
	31 to 40	282	28	
	41 to 50	116	12	
	51 and Above	122	12	
Sex	Male	500	500	
	Female	500	500	
Educational Attainment	Elementary	57	6	
	High school	442	44	
	Vocational	15	1	
	College	410	41	
	Post-graduate	76	8	
Monthly Income	10,000 and Below	76	8	
	11,000 to 20,000	586	59	
	21,000 to 30,000	223	22	
	31,000 to 40,000	41	4	
	41,000 to 50,000	32	6	
	51,000 and Above	42	4	

Most of the respondents in this study were high school graduates (44%), followed by college graduates (41%), post-graduates (8%), elementary graduates (6%), and vocational (1%). Majority of the respondents (59%) earn a monthly salary of P11,000 to P20,000, followed by those earning P21,000 to P30,000, P10,000 and below, P41,000 to P50,000, and P31,000 to P40,000.

**B. Viewership**

In terms of gender and viewership, majority of the male and female respondents watch the soap opera more than four times a week.

**Table 2. Gender and Viewership**

Male			Female			Total
Once a Week	16	3%	Once a Week	14	3%	30
Twice a Week	6	1%	Twice a Week	28	6%	34
Thrice a Week	127	26%	Thrice a Week	22	4%	149
Four Times a Week	86	17%	Four Times a Week	110	22%	196
More Than 4x a Week	265	53%	More Than 4x a Week	326	65%	591

### C. Medium

According to the respondents and as shown on Table 3, television is the dominant medium used in watching the soap opera, followed by mobile phones and personal computer. Gender-wise, majority of the female respondents (84%) viewed the soap opera using television. The same is true in the case of the male respondents with 79%. While women tend to watch the series on television, men used their personal computers and mobile phones in viewing the show.

**Table 3. Gender and Medium**

Male			Female			Total
Television	392	79%	Television	423	84%	815
Personal Computer	12	2%	Personal Computer	28	6%	40
Mobile phone	96	19%	Mobile phone	49	10%	145

### D. Viewer Involvement Scale

Majority of male respondents or 70% answered "neutral" when it comes to expressing their participation to the series; but for women, 86% answered "strongly agree" when it comes to "Talking back to television when I watch 'The Legal Wife.'" For women, around 75% said they try to put themselves into the situation of the lead character.

Meanwhile, majority of the male respondents or 82% answered "neutral" when asked about putting their selves in the situation of the lead character. Both male and female respondents agreed that they memorized some lines of the protagonist that caught their attention such as, "Akin lang ang asawa ko!" and "Ako pa rin ang legal wife!"

In the same manner, 78 percent of female respondents said they talk about the soap opera with other people and post related things on social media. Male respondents are not keen to using social networking sites as avenue for expressing their thoughts.

#### E. Ideas on Marriage

Majority of the male (65%) and female (82%) respondents strongly agreed that monogamy, respect, understanding, and forgiveness are the key to a good marital relationship. In addition, the respondents also agreed that love is the foundation of marriage, and not financial stability. Most of the male (80%) and female (89%) respondents agreed to leave their partner if they discover his or her involvement in illicit affairs. Male respondents (56%) agreed not to tolerate physical violence, whereas female respondents (64%) strongly agreed about the issue. However, both genders, agreed to forgive their partner in case of marital conflicts.

#### F. Learning Scale

Majority of male (73%) and female respondents (81%) answered "strongly agree" when asked if "The Legal Wife" gave them a real picture of how it is to be married. Meanwhile, while male respondents agreed (54%) that the series helped them learn how to act in different situations in marriage, the females answered "neutral" (52%). Both sexes were also neutral when asked if they think that the conflicts shown in the series could also happen to them in real life. In addition to that, male (32%) and female (43%) respondents answered "agree" on the series being able to help them learn more about marriage. They also agreed that the series has helped them learn from the mistakes committed by the characters in "The Legal Wife".

#### G. Gender Roles

Male respondents (74%) disagreed that cheating should be considered normal, while majority of the female respondents (84%) answered "strongly disagree". Both respondents also said they agree that the series served as an eye opener for them to change their ways and to avoid marital conflicts. When it comes to man's dominance at home, both genders answered "neutral". However, the respondents have opposing judgments with regard to sharing of household chores—

males (54%) agreed while females (43%) disagreed that wife should be solely responsible in doing the household tasks. Male respondents (52%) answered "neutral", whereas female respondents (67%) agreed that the wife should not work if the husband is financially stable.

## Conclusions

Results showed that respondents who did not attain college and higher degrees of education were more attached to the show. They also belong to the minimum wage group. The viewers' adoption and acceptance of the characters of the TV series only showed that the concept of Social Learning Theory is valid in this case.

Data revealed that most women-respondents have somehow adopted the behavior of the lead character after watching many episodes as they memorized some lines in the soap opera. Bandura (1971) said the protagonists usually influence the actions of the viewers especially if the actor is famous. While most of the male respondents in the study answered "neutral" when it comes to showing their emotions while watching the series, most of them said they sympathize with the female protagonist. Male and female viewers remembered more lines delivered by the female lead than the male lead. The audience also said they learned more about marital relationship from the perspective of the female protagonist and not from the male protagonist who cheated on his wife but later changed his life to be with his family.

In this study, the respondents said "The Legal Wife" provided the lens of what marriage is and how couples should act when there is a marital conflict. The respondents also said the series also gave them a clear picture of a complex marital relationship. Thus, this research affirms Bandura's theory that the audience acquires the attitude of the characters portrayed through television programs, particularly, the female protagonist. At the same time, Gerbner's theory supports the study, as it resonates with the findings that, viewers who have watched the series daily changed their attitude toward their partners to prevent marital conflicts. The series serves as a "wake-up call" for those who find themselves in a similar situation with the characters in the series.

## **Recommendations**

Future studies can look into the involvement of female viewers in other television shows like basketball and other sports to see if women have evolved to like shows that are mostly attributed to men. Researchers can also attempt to have the subjects undergo a test should they want to find out if there is a significant effect on them if they watch the soap opera compared to watching sports. This, however, would take a lot of time and effort.

In an experiment, the researchers can expose the subjects to an intervention or treatment where the respondents would be asked to watch clips of the show or if they have a time and the resources, watch the whole show. However, they should also consider the time and capacity of the subjects in handling the thought they have absorbed. Their availability, since most have work, should also be taken into account. Before the exposure of the subjects to the show (intervention or treatment), the researchers can ask the subjects to answer a simple survey in connection with what they remember prior to the treatment. The treatment will act as a refresher for the subjects for them to remember some parts of the television series. To further support their study, they might opt to use agenda-setting and framing as their theories since they have selected the shows for the viewers.

Researchers might also consider studying specific topics such as the participation or mediation of the family members of the married couple in relation with the television series or marital conflicts alone like illicit affairs.

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## Appendix 1. Survey instrument

### UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS GRADUATE SCHOOL

Dear Sir or Madam,

Greetings in the name of St. Thomas Aquinas! You are invited to participate in our research titled **“Look Who’s Watching: An Audience Reception of ABS-CBN’s ‘The Legal Wife’”**. The answers in this survey will be used to determine the demographic profile of married Filipinos who have watched the soap opera and to identify the ideas viewers take from a soap opera that features adultery. Your participation in this study is voluntary and there are no correct or wrong answers in this two-page survey. Rest assured that your personal information will be confidential and names will not be divulged. In this research, you may refuse or withdraw anytime. The researcher may also ask you to stop from answering the questionnaire if he or she thinks that you are experiencing difficulties in completing the forms. Thank you very much.

Respectfully yours,

John Evan Orias

Jezeel Lopez

Rachelle Pascual

Janice Roman

Regina Mariano

**I. RESPONDENT’S PROFILE (INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and check the corresponding boxes for your answers.)**

Age	Sex	Highest Educational Attainment	Monthly Income
<input type="checkbox"/> Below 20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 30 <input type="checkbox"/> 31 to 40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41 to 50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51 and Above	<input type="checkbox"/> Male  <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary <input type="checkbox"/> High school <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational <input type="checkbox"/> College <input type="checkbox"/> Post-graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 and Below <input type="checkbox"/> 11,000 to 20,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 21,000 to 30,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 31,000 to 40,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 41,000 to 50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> 51,000 and Above

**II. VIEWERSHIP (INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and check the corresponding boxes for your answers.)**

How often do you watch “The Legal Wife”?
<input type="checkbox"/> Once a Week <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a Week <input type="checkbox"/> Thrice a Week <input type="checkbox"/> Four Times a Week <input type="checkbox"/> More Than 4x a Week

**III. MEDIUM USED FOR WATCHING THE SOAP OPERA (INSTRUCTION: Please read carefully and check the corresponding boxes for your answers.)**

Where do you prefer to watch “The Legal Wife”? (You may choose more than one answer)
<input type="checkbox"/> Television <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop computer <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile phone <input type="checkbox"/> Tablet

**IV. VIEWER INVOLVEMENT SCALE**  
**(INSTRUCTION:** Please encircle the number *that best corresponds to your answer.*)

**LEGEND:** 5- Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neutral, 2-Disagree, and 1-Strongly Disagree

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I talk back to the television when I watch "The Legal Wife."	5	4	3	2	1
2. I imagine myself being in the situation of the lead character when I watch the soap opera.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I try to memorize lines in the series, which caught my attention.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I talk about "The Legal Wife" in my conversations with other people.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I post sentiments on social media after watching an episode of the soap opera.	5	4	3	2	1

What are the memorable lines that you remember?

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**V. IDEAS ON MARRIAGE**  
**(INSTRUCTION:** Please encircle the number *that best corresponds to your answer.*)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Marriage in the Philippines must be monogamous.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Love, and not financial stability, is the foundation marriage.	5	4	3	2	1
3. The existence of illicit affairs may result in separation of the couple.	5	4	3	2	1
4. Physical abuse should not be tolerated.	5	4	3	2	1
5. Forgiveness is the key to start a new beginning from past mistakes.	5	4	3	2	1

**VI. LEARNING SCALE (INSTRUCTION:** Please encircle the number *that best corresponds to your answer.*)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. "The Legal Wife" gives a real picture of marriage.	5	4	3	2	1
2. After watching "The Legal Wife," I have learned how to act in different situations involving marital relationship.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I think that the marital conflicts shown in the series can also happen to me.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I learned more about marriage after watching "The Legal Wife."	5	4	3	2	1
5. "The Legal Wife" helped me learn from mistakes committed by the characters in the series.	5	4	3	2	1

**VII. GENDER ROLES (INSTRUCTION:** Please encircle the number *that best corresponds to your answer.*)

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Cheating should be regarded as normal.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Every man's wish should be realized at home.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Domestic work should be shared equally between spouses.	5	4	3	2	1
4. A woman should not work if her husband has a well-paying job.	5	4	3	2	1
5. The soap opera served as an eye opener to avoid marital conflicts.	5	4	3	2	1

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**