

The role of television in creating political awareness among the youth

Abstract:

This study examines the role that television debate shows have in creating political awareness among the youth. The focus of this study is on the youth, who live in Nairobi. Nairobi was chosen for this study because, it is the capital city of Kenya and therefore, very cosmopolitan, with high television viewing rates among the youth aged between 18- 24 years and this youth may have, at one time or other watched the new flurry of television debate programs being aired on all the major television stations. The same youth in this age bracket form 75% of the total population and they are indeed the leaders of tomorrow. Youth involvement in politics has become a bigger issue today, and more youth and politicians are waking up, to the crucial realisation that it is time to steer more youth into leadership. The general idea behind this study was to establish the extent to which the television debate programs have influenced the youth's knowledge and perceptions of politics and politicians, and whether the discussions, on these television debate programs are relevant to issues relating to the youth. The study utilized Purposive and Snowballing techniques in the data collection. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), to process the various frequencies and distribution tables. Television debate programs have had a tremendous effect on the youth. Several of the effects emerged from this study~ These include gaining knowledge on politics and politicians, gaining a better understanding on various governance issues, and that through these programs the youth have somewhat, changed their perceptions about politics and politicians. The youth also felt that, most of the shows may be good avenues to mentor the youth into leadership and politics, however at the moment the current style and format of the shows is still very much centred on the old generation politicians and the youth's agenda is still not being heard. The choice of content for discussion on these debate shows is largely dependant on the politics of the day and often this translates into politics of the old generation. This study ends by presenting a summary of the findings, which were used as a basis for the conclusions and recommendations