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## **Perception of Korean TV Drama Reality among Jordanian Youth**

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Based on questionnaire responses from a purposive sample of 400 Jordanian young viewers, this study attempts to examine reality perceptions of the events portrayals on Korean TV drama among them, and to explore how they relate to this drama such as realism perceptions, utility, and identity. The results revealed that viewers' gender has a significant impact on their intensity of Korean TV drama viewing, their perception of its reality and their attitudes towards it. Our findings also indicated that intensity of this drama viewing influences the attitudes towards it; however, there is no significant effect for this intensity on perceived reality rate of this drama.

Keywords: Korean TV drama, Jordanian youth, perceived reality, agic window, utility, identity

In the past decade, East Asia has witnessed growing influences of Korean media industry (Shim, 2006), and “the popularity of Korean television dramas, songs and movies has skyrocketed in countries of North and Southeast Asia....transcending geography, culture and nationhood” (Kim, Singhal, Hanaki, Dunn, Chitnis, & Han, 2009: 595), and they “have enjoyed immense popularity all over the world” (Correa, 2012:1). This phenomenon was described as Hanryu or Hallyu which means “Korean Wave” (Vu & Lee, 2013: 309), the most watched Korean drama waves for 2016 were: “Cheese in the Trap, Doctor Crush, Scarlet Heart: Ryeo Cinderella and Four Knights, Uncontrollably Fond, Descendants of the Sun, High End Crush, Jealousy Incarnate, The K2, Another Oh Hae Young” (Nancy, 2016). Such dramas led viewers to positively perceive South Korea (Anderson, Balica, Balmain, Iadevito, Kida, Mazaná, & Yoon, 2014), since, they have formed a good impression of South Korea, and have drove tourists from these countries to visit South Korea, as well as, some women from Southeast Asia countries have had plastic surgery to make their facial features resemble Korean actresses (Vu & Lee, 2013).

For Arab and Muslim countries including Jordan, the immense popularity of Korean drama is because it is “subtle repression of emotions and intense romantic passion without overt sexuality” (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011: 73, cited in Correa 2012:1).

### **Perceived Realism: Concept, Dimensions, and Measures**

Social realism was defined as “a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976:176), and as “the extent to which television content, whether real or fictional, is similar to life in the real world

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(Busselle & Greenberg, 2000: 257), therefore, the perceived social realism is the audience's judgment of the degree to which television drama is similar to life in the real world.

Perceived realism is a multidimensional concept (e.g., Busselle & Greenberg, 2000; Cho, Shen & Wilson, 2014; Hall 2003; Hawkins, 1977; Malliet, 2006; Potter, 1992; Ribbens & Malliet, 2010), since, Hawkins (1977) identified magic window reality, social expectations, specificity, and context as four important dimensions of perceived reality from drama among children. Potter (1992) suggested three dimensions of perceived reality from television drama among young children: magic window, utility and identity. Busselle and Greenberg (2000) identified six dimensions of perceived reality from among television viewers: magic window, social realism, plausibility, probability, identity, and utility. Likewise, Hall (2003) pointed to six factors as being the main dimensions of "evaluating the realism of media texts: plausibility, typicality, factuality, emotional involvement, narrative consistency, and perceptual persuasiveness" (624).

In his study about adolescents' perceptions of videogame realism, Malliet (2006) used "factuality, authenticity, character involvement, virtual experiences, and perceptual pervasiveness" (377) as dimensions of perceived realism among them. Seven dimensions of perceived game realism were also identified by Ribbens and Malliet (2010), these dimensions are: simulation, freedom of choice, character involvement, perceptual pervasiveness, authenticity regarding subject matters, authenticity regarding characters, and social realism (p. 585). Cho, Shen and Wilson (2014) indicated that there are five dimensions of perceived realism: Its dimensions included "plausibility, typicality, factuality, narrative consistency and perceptual quality" (851).

The current study adopted Potter (1992) classification of perceived realism dimensions because of its suitability to measure perceived realism of television drama. He suggested, as aforementioned, there are three dimensions of perceived reality from television drama: magic window, utility and identity:

*Magic Window:* Magic Window reality was defined as "the degree to which children believe they are viewing either ongoing life or drama" (Hawkins, 1977: 299), the degree to which viewers believe that "the images on television are the same as the images in real life" (Potter, 1992: 392) or "the extent to which television allows one to observe ongoing life in another place or inside the set itself" (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000:257), thus, magic window refers to the phenomenon in which viewers believe that individuals in the media actually exist and the events in the media actually took place (Hawkins, 1977).

*Utility:* Utility, or social expectations, was defined as "the degree to which they believe television characters and events do or do not match their expectations about the world (Social Expectations)" (299). Potter (1992) identified it as "the belief in the applicability of television-conveyed lessons to the viewers' own lives" (394), and it was also defined as "how much information or events observed on television are useful to the viewer in real life" (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000: 257). In their study about adolescents' use of sexually explicit Internet materials, Peter and Valkenburg (2010) identified utility as "the extent to which adolescents perceive these materials as a useful source of information about sex and as applicable to the real world" (377).

*Identity:* Potter (1992) defined identity, as third dimension of perceived reality, as "the degree to which the viewer develops a relationship with television characters. People who closely follow a character on television might find themselves thinking about, worrying about and talking about that character, much like a real person (393). It is also defined as "the extent to which viewers incorporate television content into their real lives or involve themselves with content elements" (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000: 257).

## Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions guided this study to explore the intensity of South Korean TV drama viewing among Jordanian youth, their attitudes towards this drama and their perceptions of its reality, and to examine relationships among these variables as well.

**RQ1:** How much time do they spend on watching Korean TV drama?

**RQ2:** To what extent do they perceive the Korean TV drama reality?

**RQ3:** What are respondents' attitudes towards this drama?

Beside these survey questions, the researchers proposed the following hypotheses:

A considerable amount of research has explored gender impact on TV dramas and programs viewing (e.g., Hasegawa, 2006; Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2004; Jiang & Leung 2012; Yang, 2012). Gender has a significant impact on police reality viewing (Holbert, Shah & Kwak, 2004), and on viewership duration of Korean television dramas in China (Yang, 2012). Jiang and Leung (2012) also found that women watched Korean dramas more frequently than men did. On the other hand, Hasegawa (2006) didn't find any significant difference between males and females for viewing duration of Korean drama. The researchers therefore offer the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Female viewers watch Korean TV drama more often than male ones.

Many studies have examined the gender impact on perceived realism (e.g. Elliott and Slater, 1980; Paek, Choi, & Hove, 2017; Punyanunt-Carter, 2008). Based on some previous research, gender influences on perceived program realism (Elliott & Slater, 1980), and perceived utility (Paek, Choi & Hove, 2017). On the other hand, Punyanunt-Carter (2008) found that there were no significant difference between males and females for viewers' perceptions of drama realism. Hence, we hypothesize that:

**H2a:** Female viewers perceive the Korean TV drama reality (Magic widow) more than males do.

**H2b:** Female viewers perceive utilities of Korean TV dramas in their real life more than males do.

**H2c:** Female viewers identify with Korean TV drama more than males do.

In their study on associations between television viewing and adolescents' sexual attitudes and behavior, Ward and Friedman (2006) found women were more likely to have positive attitudes towards TV sexually-explicit materials. As well as, Calzo and Ward (2009) found that women were more likely to have positive attitudes towards homosexuality. Therefore, we offer the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Gender has a significant effect on the attitudes towards Korean TV drama.

The relationship between intensity of TV drama viewing and perceived reality have been explored by many scholars (e.g., Elliott & Slater, 1980; Kang, Andersen, and Pfau, 1997; Paek, Choi & Hove, 2017; Peter & Valkenburg, 2010; Potter, 1992; Quick, Morgan, LaVoie, & Bosch 2014; Vu & Lee, 2013). On one hand, the time spent watching TV was positively related with audience perceptions of program reality (Elliott & Slater, 1980), perceived utility and identity (Potter, 1992), perceived TV reality (Kang, Andersen & Pfau, 1997). Exposure to sexually explicit internet materials is positively related with the perceived realism of such materials (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010). Vu and Lee (2013) also found that there was a positive relationship between time spent in watching Korean dramas and the perceived realism of South Korean life. Positive relationship between *Grey's Anatomy* viewing and perceived realism of this program

were also found (Quick, Morgan, LaVoie, & Bosch, 2014). On the other hand, Paek, Choi and Hove (2017) found that TV use for health information is not related to perceived utility from this use. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H4a:** Intensity of Korean TV drama viewing has a significant effect on perception of this drama reality.

**H4b:** Intensity of Korean TV drama viewing has a significant effect on perception of drama utilities in the real life.

**H4c:** Intensity of Korean TV drama viewing has a significant effect on viewers' identity with this drama.

A considerable amount of research also has examined the relationship between intensity of TV viewing and the attitudes towards TV materials (e.g., Calzo & Ward, 2009; Eyal & Kunkel, 2008; Gottfried, Vaala, Bleakley, Hennessy, & Jordan, 2013; Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2004; Peter & Valkenburg, 2010; Rivadeneyra & Ward, 2005; Vu & Lee 2013). TV news, police reality, and crime drama viewing were related to attitudes toward capital punishment (Holbert, Shah, & Kwak, 2004). Rivadeneyra and Ward (2005) found positive relationship between the times spent watching TV and the attitudes towards gender role. Exposure to shows that portray negative consequences of sex leads to more negative attitudes toward premarital intercourse (Eyal & Kunkel, 2008). More frequent exposure to sexually explicit Internet material will lead to more instrumental attitudes toward sex (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010). Gottfried et al. (2013) found that exposure to sexual content in comedies boosted teens' sex-related attitudes. Attitudinal favorability toward South Korea was positively related with viewing time of Korean drama (Vu & Lee, 2013). However, Calzo and Ward (2009) didn't find any significant relationship between TV homosexuality scenes viewing and attitudes toward homosexuality. Hence, we offer the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Intensity of Korean TV drama viewing has a significant effect on the attitudes towards this drama.

Dominick (1974) indicated that attitude toward police correlated with perceived reality of TV police with the reporting of witnessed crimes. Perceived empathic viewing of the Korean drama would have the effect of making viewers' attitudes more pro-Korean (Hasegawa, 2006). Bahk (2010) also found perceived realism regarding the movie and role affinity with native people portrayed in the movie were significant predictors for the attitudes toward forest preservation. A greater perceived realism of sexually explicit internet material leads to more instrumental attitudes toward sex (Peter & Valkenburg, 2010), so perceived realism was related with attitudes (Cho, Shen, & Wilson, 2014). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H6a:** There is a significant relationship between viewers' perception of Korean drama reality and their attitudes towards this drama.

**H6b:** There is a significant relationship between viewers' perception of Korean drama utilities in the real life and their attitudes towards this drama.

**H6c:** There is a significant relationship between viewers' identity with Korean TV drama and their attitudes towards this drama.

To facilitate an investigation of how to better understand the perceived realism in South Korean TV drama among Jordanian youth, and to address the aforementioned research questions and hypotheses. a suggested model for perceived realism of Korean drama is shown in Figure (1).

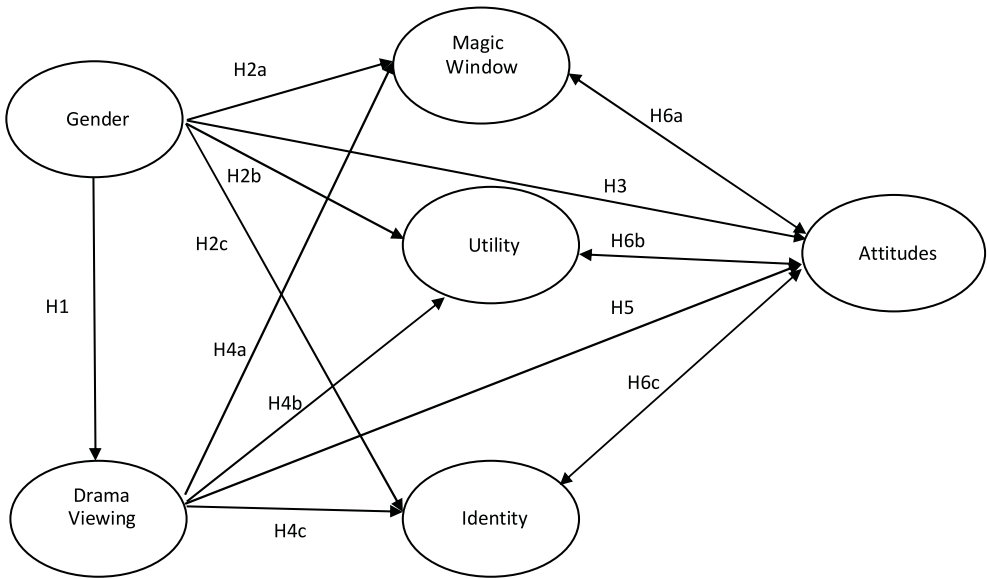


Figure 1. Suggested model for perceived realism of Korean TV drama

## Methodology

Survey questionnaire was administered to purposive sample of Jordanian youth who watch Korean TV drama. A total of 400 Korean TV drama viewers responded to the survey from June to August 2016. The survey contains was divided into four main parts: (i) Korean TV drama viewing, (ii) Perceived reality dimensions of the Korean TV drama, (iii) Attitudes towards Korean TV drama, and (iv) Gender. The sample consisted of 113 male (28.2 %) and 287 female (71.8%).

*Measures:* Korean TV Drama Viewing : Respondents were asked “how long do you spend watching Korean dramas weekly?” Subjects responded to a series of questions about each item with a 3-point Likert type scale ranging from (1) less than one hour, (2) more than one hour and less than two hours, and (3) more than 2 hours. The more choosing 3 means more viewing to the Korean Drama.

*Perceived Reality Dimensions of the Korean TV Drama:* To measure respondents’ perceived realism of Korean drama, used positive six items include: “Korean drama reflects a real social life”, “it reflects real social problems”, “it increases my experience and knowledge”, “it provides me with the information concerning different lifestyles”, “Korean drama actors teach me how to behave in similar situations and circumstances”, and “I feel a part of the events of this drama” to tap into respondents’ perceived social reality of such drama, with a 3-point Likert scale ranging from disagree (1), neutral (2), to agree (3). Choosing number 3 on the scale means that the respondent perceive the reality of Korean TV drama more than who choose number 1.

*Attitudes towards Korean TV Drama:* Respondents’ attitudes towards Korean TV drama were measured by six items as shown in Table 2. Subjects responded to each item with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = agree, and 3 = strongly agree). Choosing the high number on the scale mean the respondent has good attitudes toward Korean TV drama and vice versa is true.

## Findings

**Korean TV Drama Viewing:** Results indicate that overall intensity of Korean drama viewing is weak ( $M = 1.19$ ,  $SD = 0.530$ ). Most of respondents (87%) reported that they watch Korean drama less than one hour weekly, twenty-seven respondents only (6.8%) watch this drama ranging from 2-3 hours weekly, and only twenty-five respondents only (6.2%) watch this drama more than two hours weekly. This result can be explained by the fact that the Korean drama is still new to the Jordanian viewers as there is intense competition from the Turkish drama and others that are greater interest to the Jordanian viewer.

**Perceived Reality Dimensions of the Korean TV Drama:** The results indicate that respondents' perceived social reality of this drama is moderate ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = 0.758$ ). As shown in Table 1 the results reveal that the highest rated dimension is: Utility ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $SD = 0.815$ ), followed by "Identity ( $M = 2.13$ ,  $SD = 0.808$ ), and Magic Window ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = 0.799$ ).

Table 1. Perceived reality measure items

Dimensions of perceived reality	Perceived reality measure items	Mean	SD
<i>Magic Window</i> ( $M = 2.12$ , $SD = 0.843$ )	Korean drama reflects a real social life	2.13	0.835
	Korean drama reflects real social problems	2.12	0.852
<i>Utility</i> ( $M = 2.14$ , $SD = 0.873$ )	Korean drama increases my experience and knowledge	2.16	0.872
	Korean drama provides me with the information concerning different lifestyles	2.12	0.873
<i>Identity</i> ( $M = 2.13$ , $SD = 0.875$ )	Korean drama actors teach me how to behave in similar situations and circumstances	2.14	0.867
	I feel a part of the events of Korean drama	2.12	0.882
Total perceived reality		2.13	0.864

**Attitudes towards Korean TV Drama:** Results show that the respondents have a lower level of positive attitude towards Korean drama ( $M = 0.91$ ,  $SD = 0.901$ ). As shown in Table 2, results also reveal that the highest rated item is: "Korean drama shows a variety of exciting events" ( $M = 1.09$ ,  $SD = 1.154$ ), followed by "It addresses crucial social problems" ( $M = 1.05$ ,  $SD = 1.172$ ), "It shows real events" ( $M = 1.01$ ,  $SD = 1.175$ ), "It's events are familiar" ( $M = 0.74$ ,  $SD = 1.113$ ), "It's scenes accurately portrays events and characters" ( $M = 0.80$ ,  $SD = 1.111$ ), "It's decorations are suitable for its events" ( $M = 0.75$ ,  $SD = 1.045$ ), and "Its events are familiar" ( $M = 0.74$ ,  $SD = 1.113$ ).

Table 2. Attitudes towards Korean drama

Attitudes' Items	Mean	SD
Korean drama shows a variety of exciting events	1.09	1.154
It addresses crucial social problems	1.05	1.172
It shows real events	1.01	1.175
It's events are familiar	0.74	1.113
It's scenes accurately portrays events and characters	0.80	1.111
Its decorations are suitable for its events.	0.75	1.045
Overall attitudes	0.91	0.901

In testing the impact of respondents' gender on their intensity of Korean TV drama viewing, t-test revealed that gender has a significant effect on this intensity ( $t(398) = -3.124, p = 0.002$ ); since females ( $M = 1.24$ ) watch this drama more than males do ( $M = 1.06$ ), therefore, **H1** was supported.

T-test results indicated that viewers' perceptions of the Korean drama reality (magic window) are affected by their gender ( $t(398) = -3.576, p = 0.000$ ). That is to say, female viewers ( $M = 2.21$ ) perceive the Korean TV drama reality more than male ones do ( $M = 1.90$ ). Hence, **H2a** was supported. Likewise, **H2b**, concerning whether viewers' utilities of Korean TV dramas in their real life are affected by their gender, is also supported ( $t(398) = -3.236, p = 0.001$ ). That is to say, female viewers ( $M = 2.22$ ) perceive utilities of the Korean TV drama more than male ones do ( $M = 1.93$ ). Similarly, **H2c**, concerning whether viewers' identities with Korean TV drama are affected by their gender, is also supported ( $t(398) = -3.552, p = 0.000$ ). That is to say, female viewers ( $M = 2.22$ ) identify with Korean TV drama more than male ones do ( $M = 1.91$ ). Thus, gender has a significant impact on their perceived reality of Korean TV drama ( $t(398) = -3.707, p = 0.000$ ), since female viewers ( $M = 2.22$ ) perceive the realism of this drama more than male ones do ( $M = 1.91$ ).

To measure the impact of respondents' gender on their attitudes towards Korean TV drama, t-test revealed that viewers' attitudes towards Korean TV drama were found to be significantly impacted by their gender ( $t(398) = -3.539, p = 0.000$ ), since female viewers ( $M = 1.01$ ) have more positive attitudes towards this drama more than male ones do ( $M = 0.66$ ), so, **H3** was supported.

One-way ANOVA indicated that intensity of Korean TV drama viewing among respondents has no significant impact on their perceived reality of Korean TV drama [ $F(3, 396) = 0.964, p = 0.410$ ], so, it also failed to find any significant effect for this intensity on the magic window [ $F(3, 396) = 1.000, p = 0.393$ ], nor perceived utility [ $F(3, 396) = 0.641, p = 0.589$ ], nor perceived identity [ $F(3, 396) = 1.224, p = 0.301$ ] of this drama, therefore, **H4a, H4b, H4c** were not supported.

One-way ANOVA revealed that viewers' attitudes towards Korean TV drama were found to be significantly impacted by their intensity of Korean TV drama viewing [ $F(3, 396) = 4.487, p = 0.004$ ], therefore, **H5** was also supported. Post hoc analysis using the LSD technique indicates that the significant difference in viewers' positive attitudes towards Korean TV drama can be attributed exclusively to the category of "more than two hour weekly" is the highest compared to all other categories with the significant  $p$ -value at 0.01. For a comparison of differences in viewers' positive attitudes towards Korean TV drama (see Table 3).

Table 3. LSD Post Hoc comparison of SNSs use for purposes pertaining to the marital life based on respondents' educational level.

Dependent variable	Educational level (I)	Educational level (J)	N	Mean difference (I-J)	Sig.
Viewers' positive attitudes towards Korean TV drama	More than two hours	Less than one hour	400	0.541	0.004

I: less than B.A degree; J: B.A and above degree

Regarding the relationship between Jordanian youth attitudes towards Korean TV drama and their perceived reality dimensions (Magic Window, Utility and Identity) of this drama, Pearson's correlation didn't find any significant relationship between respondents'



attitudes towards Korean TV drama and their perceived reality of this drama: Magic Window dimension ( $r = -0.055, p = 0.270$ ), nor Utility ( $r = 0.009, p = 0.863$ ) nor Identity ( $r = 0.006, p = 0.909$ ) of this drama. Hence, **H6a, H6b, H6c** were not supported. Depending on the results of hypotheses tests, the researchers present the following model to summarize the relationships among these variables, see Figure 2.

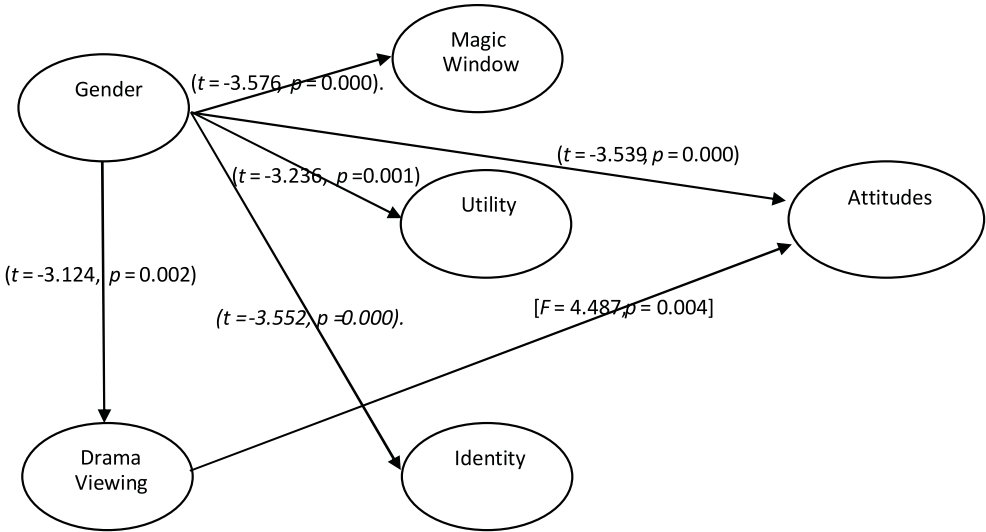


Figure 2. The model for perceived realism of Korean TV drama

### Discussions

The results show some interesting patterns about the relationships between Jordanian young viewers, and Korean TV drama. Although Correa (2012) reported that Korean TV drama has enjoyed immense popularity all over the world. A somewhat surprising finding is that the respondents had a lower level of positive attitude towards Korean drama and overall intensity of Korean drama viewing is weak, since most of them reported they watch Korean drama less than hour weekly.

The current study reveals that respondents' gender has a significant impact on their viewership duration of Korean TV drama, since it indicates that female viewers watch Korean TV drama more often than male ones. This result reinforces previous research from Jiang and Leung (2012) which states that women, more than men, watched Korean TV drama, and this result is different from Hasegawa (2006) study that indicated no significant difference between males and females for viewing duration of Korean drama. One explanation for this result is that most of Arab women are not working and they stay in home more than men do (King, Naon, Wolde-Tsadick, & Habib, 2009), therefore, they have enough time to watch such dramas, as well as, they are interested in viewing the emotional aspects in Korean TV drama.

The results also show that respondents' gender has a significant impact on their perceptions of Korean TV drama reality, since female viewers perceive the realism of this drama more than male ones do. This result reinforces previous research from some previous studies (e.g., Elliott and Slater, 1980; Paek, Choi, & Hove, 2017) which reports that gender has impact on perceived TV content reality, and it is different from Punyanunt-Carter (2008)

study that indicated no significant difference between males and females for viewers' perceptions of drama realism.

Another interesting result, related to gender impact, is that female viewers also have more positive attitudes towards these drama more than male ones do. This result reinforces previous research from some previous studies (e.g., Calzo & Ward, 2009; Ward & Friedman, 2006) which reports that were more likely to have positive attitudes towards TV content.

The fourth important finding of this study is that respondents' attitudes towards Korean TV drama are significantly impacted by their intensity of Korean TV drama viewing. This result reinforces previous research from some previous studies (e.g., Eyal & Kunkel 2008; Gottfried et al., 2013; Peter & Valkenburg 2010; Rivadeneyra & Ward 2005; Vu & Lee 2013) which states that more frequent exposure to materials or contents of mass media will lead to more positive attitudes toward these contents, However, this result is different from Calzo and Ward (2009) study which didn't find any significant relationship between TV homosexuality content viewing and attitudes toward homosexuality.

Unlike of most previous research (e.g., Elliott and Slater 1980; Kang, Andersen, & Pfau 1997; Peter & Valkenburg, 2010; Potter, 1992; Quick, Morgan, LaVoie, & Bosch, 2014; Vu & Lee, 2013), the current study failed to find any significant effect for the intensity of Korean TV drama viewing on the perceived reality of Korean TV drama, and it also failed to find any significant relationship between respondents' attitudes towards Korean TV drama and their perceived reality of this drama.

This study sheds light on perceived reality of foreign dramas, particularly Korean TV ones, among Arab young viewers and the role of such dramas in portraying their countries' real life, events, individuals, and culture. But it has some limitations: First, it did not content analyze Korean TV dramas to identify the effects of Korean TV drama on audiences. Second, the non-probability purposive sampling method limits study generalizability (Vu & Lee, 2013). Third, it didn't use qualitative method in highlighting the nature of perceived reality from this TV drama.

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