



Media Portrayals of People with Disabilities: An Analysis of Malaysia's Television Series, "Kerana Cintaku Saerah" (Because of My Love, Saerah)

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ABSTRACT

The media has a powerful ability to influence and shape society's perceptions towards people with disabilities. The portrayal of individuals with disabilities within the media can often have an enormous impact on the way that are perceived by viewers. In Malaysia, people with disabilities are frequently viewed as pitiful, thus medias are more likely to use the element of sympathy in order to garner support from its targeted audience. The focus of this article is on the portrayal of people with disabilities in a popular television series in Malaysia, Kerana Cintaku Saerah (Because of My Love, Saerah) through the analysis of; self-acceptance by the characters with disabilities, family and society's acceptance, and disability stereotypes in the Malay society. The findings revealed the ideation of how people with disabilities are treated, as well as exhibits disability stereotypes that exist in the Malay society.

Keywords: Media portrayal, people with disabilities, prejudice, stereotype

INTRODUCTION

A The portrayal of people with disabilities in the media started as early as the 19th century when the first fifty second film, The Fake Beggar made it to the silver screen industry. The film, which

was produced in 1898 by Thomas Edison depicted a man who pretended to be visually impaired in order to collect money and was eventually chased off by police (Ivory, 1997). After the first instalment of a disability in this movie a trend was established and numerous other movies started to use disabilities as a means to heighten the effect of slapstick comedies, as well as melodramas (Safran, 1998). This led to the development of various themes that were derived over the years through the portrayal of individuals with disabilities within films. In 1904, themes such as, "humor,

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e-ISSN: 2550-1623

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