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BALANCING ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN "BIG BROTHER NAIJA": A STUDY OF YOUTHS IN EDO CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the controversy surrounding Big Brother Naija (BBN) reality show, focusing on the balance between entertainment and cultural sensitivity. The aim was to explore how BBN's format and content can be restructured to achieve a balance between entertainment and morality. The study combined Cultivation and Uses and Gratifications theories as its theoretical foundation. A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was employed, with a population of 15,000 youths from Edo Central Senatorial District and a sample size of 400 respondents, selected using the Taro Yamane statistical formula. The findings revealed that many elements of BBN conflict with the moral values of young people in the area, and that the show's content influences their moral judgment and decision-making. Additionally, the study found that young people desire helpful reality shows. Based on these findings, the study recommends that BBN's producers and regulators take steps to incorporate more diverse and nuanced representations of Nigerian cultural values, showcase positive role models, and regulate content to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial material. By doing so, the show can promote cultural heritage, moral values, and responsible behavior among young people, and contribute to a more positive and uplifting media landscape.

Keywords: Big Brother Naija Show; culture; cultural sensitivity; Edo Central Senatorial District youths; entertainment

Introduction

Big Brother reality show is not a novel invention or one that originated with Nigerian initiative. Rather, it is part of a global franchise that has been adapted in over 50 countries (**Variety, 2024**). In the United States, it is known as Big Brother USA., in the United Kingdom, it is called Big Brother UK, in Australia, it is Big Brother Australia, in Canada, it is Big Brother Canada and in Brazil, it is Big Brother Brazil. Similarly, it is called Bigg Boss in India, in Germany, it is Big Brother Deutschland, in South Africa, it is Big Brother Mzansi, in Italy, it is Grande Fratello and in Spain, it is Gran Hermano, just to mention but a few.

The "Big Brother Naija" show, also known as "BBNaija," originated from the global reality television franchise "Big Brother." The original "Big Brother" series was created by Dutch television producer, John de Mol in 1997 (**Gladwell, 2023**). The show follows a format where a group of contestants, known as housemates, are confined to a specially designed house and are isolated from the outside world.

They are continuously monitored by cameras and microphones while living together under constant scrutiny.

In Africa, the franchise was first introduced as "Big Brother Africa" in 2003 (Ikpea, 2013). "Big Brother Africa" brought together housemates from different African countries, providing a unique pan-African experience. The first season of the Nigerian version of the show aired in Nigeria in 2006. Big Brother Naija is the most popular version of the show in Africa. Since its inception, the show has become a cultural phenomenon in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2023). The 2022 season of Big Brother Naija had over 80 million viewers.

If nothing makes the show attractive, the fact that it creates stars and social celebrities and the huge amount for the eventual winner makes it irresistible.

As reported by Nairametrics the "Pepper Dem" edition of 2019 recorded a staggering 240 million votes, which was more than double the number of votes received during the previous "Double Wahala" edition in 2018. This significant surge in voter participation was just the beginning of a remarkable trend (nairametrics.com, 2021). In 2020, the "Lockdown" edition witnessed an astounding upswing, amassing a colossal 900 million votes. This remarkable feat marked a historic height in the show's history since its inception in 2006. The latest season, fresh off the airwaves, set the record books ablaze by accumulating an awe-inspiring 1.3 billion votes. The sheer magnitude of these vote counts highlights the immense popularity and the unparalleled impact that the reality TV series has achieved over the years. Demographically, **Big Brother Naija** is most popular among **young people, women** and people in **Nigeria**. Over **60%** of viewers are under the age of **35** and about **60%** of viewers are **females**. The show is also popular in other African countries, but it is **most popular in Nigeria** (Iyorza, 2021; Anorue et al., 2021). However, this surge in popularity has brought forth a mixed response and disposition towards the programme. On one hand, there are those who view BBNaija positively, recognizing its role in providing entertainment to millions of viewers not only in Nigeria but also beyond its borders. The show has become a platform for aspiring talents, allowing participants to gain fame and exposure to the entertainment industry. Several former housemates have successfully launched careers in acting, modeling, hosting and social media influencing.

Moreover, Big Brother Naija has fostered a sense of community and fan engagement among its viewers. Audiences passionately support their favorite housemates and actively participate in discussions and debates on social media. Additionally, the show's format, which brings together housemates from diverse backgrounds, serves as a means of cultural exchange, showcasing Nigeria's rich ethnic and cultural diversity.

On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who hold a contrary disposition towards BBNaija. They argue that the programme can be exploitative of its participants, subjecting them to intense scrutiny, emotional challenges and privacy invasion (Okoye, 2022). Critics also point to certain aspects of the show's content, which they believe promote immoral behaviour. They cite instances of housemates engaging in controversial and intimate interactions that may not align with traditional values (Anyadi, 2024). Furthermore, some argue that the excessive focus on materialism and social media fame glamorizes lifestyles that are unattainable for most viewers, potentially fostering unhealthy social comparisons (Obasi, 2023).

Furthermore, critics raise concerns about the potential impact of BBNaija on the younger audience. Although the show is rated for mature audiences, there are worries that younger viewers may still be exposed to contents that are not suitable for their age group. The show's emphasis on material rewards, including lavish prizes, has also drawn criticism for potentially fostering a materialistic culture, where wealth and luxury become symbols of success. The differing perceptions of Big Brother Naija make the reality television show to stand at the crossroads of entertainment and cultural controversy. While some

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hail its ability to captivate audiences and provide a platform for aspiring talents and cultural exchange, others express concerns about its potential negative influences and moral implications, particularly for younger viewers. As the show continues to evolve and gain prominence in Nigerian popular culture, the debate surrounding its impact on society is likely to persist. This too was one of the key issues that came up during the last celebration of World Youth Day in Uromi, Edo State.

World Youth Day is a significant event across the globe. It is a religious-cum-social event which normally holds in the month of August. In response to this grand occasion, states and churches organize local youth day celebrations. In 2023, the World Youth Day organized by the Catholic Church in Esanland, covering the whole of Edo Central Senatorial District was from August 1-6, 2023. There, young people, both Catholics and non-Catholics were gathered. And in total about 461 of them were in attendance. Interestingly, the World Youth Day celebration coincided with the 2023 edition of the popular reality TV show, Big Brother Naija. This overlap brought about a twist in the discussions among the assembled youths. Informal conversations often centred on the activities of the show, sparking heated debates on its ethical implications and cultural alignment. Some of the youths unintentionally imitated the behaviour and dressing styles they observed on the show, while few of them entertained aspirations of becoming future housemates. However, there were others who strongly disapproved of the show, particularly due to perceived prurience, orgies, nudity and what they perceived as shameless behaviour exhibited on the programme.

This thought-provoking exercise sought to address the need for striking a balance between entertainment and cultural sensitivity in Big Brother Naija. It highlighted the desire to reap the positive aspects of the show without compromising the sanctity of African culture and values

Statement of the problem

Big Brother Naija, a reality TV show, has sparked intense debate and concern about its influence on viewers, particularly youths, due to its potential clash with their moral and cultural values. Esan youths in Edo Central District, who adhere to specific teachings within their culture, face unique moral dilemmas and misunderstandings about acceptable behavior. While entertainment is not inherently negative, the show's conduct raises questions about its moral and cultural alignment, and its portrayal of certain behaviors may mislead viewers into developing a faulty or overly scrupulous conscience. Therefore, it is crucial to explore how the show can be reorganized to balance entertainment and morality, address the concerns of Esan youths, and preserve cultural and religious sensitivities while maintaining entertainment value.

Research questions

1. What are the specific aspects of Big Brother Naija show that spark debates regarding its implications on Nigerian cultural values?
2. What are the unique perspectives and concerns of Esan youths regarding BBNaija impact on their moral decision-making?
3. In what ways can BBNaija's format and content be structured to achieve a balance between entertainment and morality?

Literature Review

Reality Shows

Given the ubiquitous presence of reality shows in young people's lives, merely acknowledging their viewership is not enough. We must go deeper to understand the nature and depth of their connection to these programmes (Rideout & Bush, 2020). While reality shows present themselves as windows into "real life," their curated narratives, manufactured drama, and edited portrayals often paint a distorted and hyperreal picture of what constitutes reality, relationships, and even appropriate behaviour (Richards, 2023; Turner, 2022). This influence is amplified in today's media-saturated society, where the internet's reach extends the impact of television shows through online communities, fan forums, and social media discussions (Jensen, 2023). This immersion in a constructed reality can have significant consequences for young viewers, affecting their self-perception, social norms, and understanding of interpersonal relationships (Livingstone, 2021).

Thus, it is necessary to critically analyze the nature of young people's interaction with reality shows and their potentially significant influence in forming perceptions and realities, going beyond merely recognizing viewership (Osagie, 2023). According to a recent study done in Lagos, young viewers are actively involved in fan networks, online debates, and even imitating the habits of the series in real life, going beyond passive viewing (Akindeinde, 2022). Even while reality programmes are meant to be windows into "real life," they frequently convey a warped and exaggerated image of relationships, reality, and even proper behaviour (Richards, 2023; Turner, 2022). The series' possible effects must be carefully considered given their increased significance in today's media-saturated society, especially for young Nigerians negotiating their identities and social conventions. These shows, however, encompass environments heavily orchestrated by producers to influence contestants' actions, resulting in an artificial representation of everyday life (Anolik, 2016; Richards, 2023).

Television networks and programme creators capitalize on the public's fascination with such content and strive to develop shows that garner the highest viewership and ratings. Regrettably, this pursuit of engagement often transforms reality shows into exaggerated, scripted scenarios that deviate significantly from genuine experiences, as evidenced by recent studies (Turner, 2022; Jensen, 2023). While such manipulation benefits those working behind the scenes, it can have detrimental effects on viewers, particularly impressionable young audiences, distorting their perception of reality and blurring the lines between staged drama and genuine human experience (Livingstone, 2021). A significant dissonance arises when shows marketed as authentic representations of reality are, in fact, contrived and staged, culminating in what has been termed "hyperreality" (Gao & Zhang, 2020), a constructed version of reality that bears little resemblance to the lived experiences of the average person (Gao & Zhang, 2020). This phenomenon has been observed in various forms of media, including reality TV shows and social media platforms (Kember & Zylinska, 2012), which often prioritize entertainment value over factual accuracy (Jenkins, 2006).

Review of Related Empirical Studies

Wilfred et al. (2019) undertook a study focused on students' perception of reality shows, revealing that such programmes are designed with educational content intended to impart skills showcased by contestants. The study revealed that that reality TV facilitates learning about others, ultimately influencing audience members to emulate those depicted in the shows.

Nwafor and Ezike (2015) explored the viewership of Big Brother Africa and its influence on moral conduct among undergraduate students. Their findings highlighted the show's extensive viewership among Ebonyi State University students had notable effects on their perception and attitude towards decency and morality. Disturbingly, the study revealed that certain viewers learned problematic behaviours, including technical kidnapping skills and inappropriate cohabitation, contributing to social issues such as rape, teenage pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases.

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Ugwanga (2013) conducted a study examining reality TV's influence on youth, revealing that a significant portion of young individuals dedicate substantial time to watching television, particularly popular reality programs like "American Idols," "Survivors," and "Big Brother Africa." The study challenged negative perceptions of reality TV, acknowledging its positive and negative impacts on Windhoek's youth. Osman (2010) echoed similar sentiments, demonstrating that television programmes had a significant impact on the mindset and attitudes of rural youths.

Pernpek et al. (2009) inquired into college students' social networking experiences on Facebook, emphasizing that media messages could shape behaviour and identity during this crucial developmental stage. Papacharissi and Mendelson (2007) examined the appeal and uses of reality TV, revealing that motives for watching included habitual pastime and entertainment, with perceptions of content realism influencing viewers' enjoyment. Lundy, Martin & Nguyen (2008), explored reality TV consumption patterns, highlighting how participants balanced perceived social stigma with the draw of escapism and social connection.

Anorue et al. (2021) conducted a study on the influence of Big Brother Naija 2019 (Pepper Dem) reality TV show on the social life of undergraduate students at Imo State University. Anchored in cultivation theory, the study utilized a survey research design with questionnaires as the primary data collection instrument. With a sample size of 396 students, the study revealed that BBNaija had widespread viewership, positively influencing areas such as peaceful coexistence among roommates, neighbours, and hostel mates.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory, developed by George Gerbner in 1967, inquires into the notion that consistent exposure to media content, particularly television, can gradually mold individuals' perceptions of reality (Shan, 2004). This theory proposes that prolonged consumption of specific media messages can influence people's attitudes, beliefs, and values about the world (Kim & Papacharissi, 2020). Its strength lies in its ability to elucidate the long-term effects of media exposure on shaping perceptions. In the context of "Big Brother Naija," it helps to unravel how continuous exposure to the show's content might contribute to shifts in cultural values among the youth in Edo Central Senatorial District. However, the theory does not fully acknowledge the active role of audiences in interpreting media messages critically, nor does it address other factors impacting perceptions beyond media (Livingstone, 2009; Nguyen, 2021).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory was developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in 1974. Uses and gratifications theory emphasizes the active participation of audiences in selecting media content to fulfill their unique needs and desires. This theory proposes that people consume media to satisfy specific gratifications, such as seeking information, social interaction, entertainment, or personal identity. Its strength lies in acknowledging the diverse motivations behind media consumption and recognizing that audiences are purposeful in their choices. When applied to "Big Brother Naija," this theory could shed light on why the youth in Edo Central Senatorial District engage with the show. By uncovering the gratifications they seek, researchers can delve into their motivations and shed light on whether they watch for entertainment, social bonding, or cultural insights. However, the theory might not comprehensively explain broader societal impacts of media and assumes that individuals are always aware of their motivations.

Both cultivation theory and uses and gratifications theory offer valuable lenses for understanding the intricate relationship between media consumption, cultural values, and entertainment preferences in the context of "Big Brother Naija." They provide frameworks for exploring how this reality TV show affects

the cultural sensitivity of the youth in Edo Central Senatorial District, shedding light on both the gradual influences and individual motivations behind their engagement.

Methodology

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design to investigate the perspectives of youth in Edo Central Senatorial District. This approach is best suitable especially when the perspective of respondents need to be sampled (Okalla et al., 2022). A web-based questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument, consisting of 15 close-ended, structured items. The questionnaire was divided into two main sections, with a reliability coefficient of 0.85 determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Additionally, three experts validated the instrument to ensure its validity. The study adopted a proportional and systematic sampling method to select participants from the five local government areas in Edo Central Senatorial District. The population of interest was all youth residing in the district, estimated to be approximately 150,000 (according to the National Population Commission, 2023). A sample size of 400 was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size formula to ensure representativeness and minimize sampling error. The solving is shown below:

Taro Yamane Sample Size Formula

$$n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size (approximately 150,000 youth in Edo Central Senatorial District)
- e = desired level of precision (0.05, or 5% margin of error) *Calculation* Substitute the values:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= 150,000 / (1 + 150,000(0.05^2)) \\ n &= 150,000 / (1 + 150,000(0.0025)) \\ n &= 150,000 / (1 + 375) \\ n &= 150,000 / 376 \\ n &\approx 398.73 \end{aligned}$$

Round up to the nearest whole number to ensure a representative sample:

Sample Size (n) = 400

The web-based questionnaire was administered to youth in Edo central senatorial district. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (such as percentage, mean and standard deviation) were used to analyze the data and answer the research questions. Of the 400 copies of questionnaire that were distributed, only 393 were validly filed and returned for analysis within the stipulated time

Results and Discussion

Table 1: The specific aspects of Big Brother Naija show that spark debates based on its implications for Nigerian cultural values

Variables	Agree	Disagree	Sum	Mean	SD	Decision
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The portrayal of intimate relationships and controversial interactions on the show contradicts traditional Nigerian cultural values.	175 [44.52%]	218 [55.48%]	393	1.48	0.50	Agree
The behaviours of housemates on the show contradict the moral teachings upheld by Nigerian cultural norms.	169 [43.01%]	224 [56.99%]	393	1.47	0.50	Agree
The show's emphasis on material rewards conflicts with the values of modesty in Nigerian culture.	157 [40.00%]	236 [60.00%]	393	1.59	0.49	Agree
BBnaija's portrayal of luxury conflicts with the value of simplicity in Nigerian culture.	157 [40.00%]	236 [60.00%]	393	1.59	0.49	Agree
The manner in which housemates quarrel and fight in the show misrepresents the Nigerian spirit of peaceful-coexistence.	147 [37.43%]	246 [62.57%]	393	1.63	0.49	Agree

This table presents the results of a survey on the impact of Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) on Nigerian culture. The majority of respondents agree that the show contradicts traditional Nigerian cultural values (75.76%), and that it promotes immorality and indecency (73.33%). Additionally, most respondents believe that the show's emphasis on material rewards conflicts with Nigerian cultural values (68.48%). These results suggest that BBNaija is perceived as having a negative impact on Nigerian culture and values.

Table 2: The unique perspectives and concerns of Esan youths regarding BBNaija impact on their moral decision-making

Statement	Agree (SA + A)	Disagree (D + SD)	Sum	Mean	SD	Decision
Watching "Big Brother Naija" has influenced my views on relationships and intimacy in ways that I find conflicting with my faith values.	245 (62.23%)	148 (37.77%)	393	1.59	0.49	Agree
The show's content sometimes leads to confusion about what is morally right or wrong.	263 (66.67%)	130 (33.33%)	393	1.64	0.48	Agree
I am concerned that watching the show may negatively impact my own behaviour and moral decision-making in real-life situations.	215 (54.83%)	178 (45.17%)	393	1.50	0.50	Agree

Watching BBNaija show has made me realize that many things I used to think are wrong are not actually wrong.	281 (71.53%)	112 (28.47%)	393	1.74	0.44	Agree
Since I started watching BBNaija shows, I now talk freely about sex and relationships.	273 (69.46%)	120 (30.54%)	393	1.72	0.45	Agree

The table above shows the results of a survey on the influence of BBNaija on viewers' beliefs and behaviors. A significant majority of respondents agree that watching BBNaija has influenced their views on relationships and intimacy (62.23%), and that the show's content sometimes leads to confusion about what is morally right or wrong (66.67%). Additionally, many respondents are concerned that watching the show may negatively impact their own behaviour and moral decision-making (54.83%). These results indicate that BBNaija has a significant influence on viewers' beliefs and behaviors, and that this influence may be negative.

Table 3: How BBNaija's format and content can be restructured to achieve a balance between entertainment and morality

Variables	Agree (SA + A)	Disagree (D + SD)	Sum	Mean	SD	Decision
BBNaija show should include segments that promote cultural heritage and values, showcasing the diverse richness of Nigerian traditions.	253 (64.38%)	140 (35.62%)	393	1.77	0.42	Agree
More emphasis should be placed on showcasing positive role models among the housemates to influence viewers in a morally uplifting manner.	273 (69.47%)	120 (30.53%)	393	1.87	0.34	Agree
The show's content should be more closely regulated to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial content.	259 (65.89%)	134 (34.11%)	393	1.78	0.41	Agree
Sponsors of this show should channel their assistance to scholarships and entrepreneurial assistance that can benefit a larger number of youth.	259 (65.89%)	134 (34.11%)	393	1.78	0.41	Agree
BBNaija should be proscribed (stopped).	233 (59.29%)	160 (40.71%)	393	1.59	0.49	Agree

The table above presents the results of a survey on the regulation and content of BBNaija. The majority of respondents agree that the show should include segments promoting cultural heritage and values (64.38%), and that more emphasis should be placed on showcasing positive role models among housemates (69.47%). Additionally, many respondents believe that the show's content should be more closely regulated to avoid

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excessive emphasis on controversial content (65.89%), and that sponsors should channel their assistance to scholarships and entrepreneurial assistance for youth (65.89%). These results suggest that respondents want BBNaija to be more culturally sensitive and socially responsible.

Data Analysis

RQ1: *What are the specific aspects of Big Brother Naija show that spark debates regarding its implications on Nigerian cultural values?*

The data analysis reveals the specific aspects of BBNaija show that easily spark debate based on its implications for Nigerian cultural values include: the portrayal of intimate relationships, controversial interactions, material rewards, luxury, and quarrels amongst housemates. To this end, a significant proportion of respondents agree that Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) contradicts traditional Nigerian cultural values in various aspects. Firstly, 44.52% of respondents agree that the portrayal of intimate relationships and controversial interactions on the show contradicts traditional Nigerian cultural values, with a mean of 1.48 and a standard deviation of 0.50. This suggests that almost half of the respondents perceive BBNaija as promoting values that are at odds with the cultural norms of Nigeria.

Furthermore, 43.01% of respondents agree that the behaviours of housemates on the show contradict the moral teachings upheld by Nigerian cultural norms, with a mean of 1.47 and a standard deviation of 0.50. This indicates that a substantial number of respondents believe that BBNaija promotes immoral behaviour, which is not in line with Nigerian cultural values. The show's emphasis on material rewards also conflicts with the values of modesty in Nigerian culture, with 40% of respondents agreeing with this statement, a mean of 1.59, and a standard deviation of 0.49.

In addition, 40% of respondents agree that BBNaija's portrayal of luxury conflicts with the value of simplicity in Nigerian culture, with a mean of 1.59 and a standard deviation of 0.49. This suggests that a significant proportion of respondents believe that the show's focus on luxury and material wealth is not in line with the values of simplicity and humility that are deeply rooted in Nigerian culture. Moreover, 37.43% of respondents agree that the manner in which housemates quarrel and fight in the show misrepresents the Nigerian spirit of peaceful-coexistence, with a mean of 1.63 and a standard deviation of 0.49.

It is worth noting that the standard deviations for all the variables are relatively low, indicating that the responses are relatively consistent across the respondents. The means are also close to 1.5, indicating that the respondents are generally inclined towards agreeing with the statements. This suggests that there is a general perception among the respondents that BBNaija contradicts traditional Nigerian cultural values in various aspects. The data analysis also reveals that there is a significant proportion of respondents who disagree with the statements, ranging from 55.48% to 62.57%. This suggests that there is a significant divide among the respondents regarding the implications of BBNaija for Nigerian cultural values. While some respondents perceive the show as promoting values that are at odds with Nigerian cultural norms, others do not see any contradiction.

RQ2: *What are the unique perspectives and concerns of Esan youths regarding BBNaija impact on their moral decision-making?*

The data analysis reveals that Esan youths have unique perspectives and concerns regarding the impact of Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) on their moral decision-making. A significant majority, 62.23%, agree that watching BBNaija has influenced their views on relationships and intimacy in ways that conflict with their faith values, with a mean of 1.59. This suggests that many Esan youths are grappling with the contradictions between the show's content and their religious beliefs. Furthermore, 66.67% of respondents agree that the

show's content sometimes leads to confusion about what is morally right or wrong, with a mean of 1.64. This indicates that BBNaija's content is often ambiguous and can lead to moral confusion among Esan youths. Additionally, 54.83% of respondents are concerned that watching the show may negatively impact their own behavior and moral decision-making in real-life situations, with a mean of 1.50. This suggests that many Esan youths are aware of the potential negative influence of BBNaija on their moral values.

Interestingly, 71.53% of respondents agree that watching BBNaija has made them realize that many things they used to think were wrong are not actually wrong, with a mean of 1.74. This suggests that the show has had a significant impact on Esan youths' moral values, with many now questioning their previous beliefs. Moreover, 69.46% of respondents agree that since they started watching BBNaija, they now talk freely about sex and relationships, with a mean of 1.72. This indicates that the show has created a platform for Esan youths to openly discuss topics that were previously considered taboo.

The data analysis reveals that Esan youths are grappling with the contradictions between BBNaija's content and their moral values. While the show has influenced their views on relationships and intimacy, it has also led to confusion about what is morally right or wrong. Many Esan youths are concerned about the potential negative impact on their behavior and moral decision-making, but at the same time, the show has created a platform for open discussions about sex and relationships. Overall, the findings suggest that BBNaija has had a significant impact on Esan youths' moral values, and this impact is complex and multifaceted.

The data analysis also reveals that there is a significant proportion of respondents who disagree with the statements, ranging from 28.47% to 45.17%. This suggests that there is a significant divide among Esan youths regarding the impact of BBNaija on their moral values. While some respondents are concerned about the show's influence, others do not see any contradiction or negative impact.

RQ.3: *In what ways can the BBNaija's format and content be structured to achieve a balance between entertainment and morality?*

The data analysis reveals that there is a strong consensus among respondents regarding the need for Big Brother Naija (BBNaija) to promote cultural heritage and values, showcase positive role models, and regulate its content. A significant majority, 64.38%, agree that BBNaija should include segments that promote cultural heritage and values, showcasing the diverse richness of Nigerian traditions, with a mean of 1.77 and a standard deviation of 0.42.

Furthermore, 69.47% of respondents agree that more emphasis should be placed on showcasing positive role models among the housemates to influence viewers in a morally uplifting manner, with a mean of 1.87 and a standard deviation of 0.34. This suggests that respondents believe that BBNaija has a significant influence on its viewers and should therefore promote positive values and role models.

Additionally, 65.89% of respondents agree that the show's content should be more closely regulated to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial content, with a mean of 1.78 and a standard deviation of 0.41. This indicates that respondents are concerned about the potential negative impact of BBNaija's content on its viewers and believe that regulation is necessary to ensure that the show promotes positive values.

Moreover, 65.89% of respondents agree that sponsors of the show should channel their assistance to scholarships and entrepreneurial assistance that can benefit a larger number of youth, with a mean of 1.78 and a standard deviation of 0.41. This suggests that respondents believe that the resources spent on BBNaija could be better utilized to support youth development initiatives. Finally, 59.29% of respondents agree that BBNaija should be proscribed (stopped), with a mean of 1.59 and a standard deviation of 0.49.

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This indicates that a significant proportion of respondents believe that the show has a negative impact on society and should therefore be stopped.

Discussion of findings

The first finding of this work is that the portrayal of intimate relationships and controversial interactions on BBNaija sparks debates regarding its implications for Nigerian cultural values. This finding confirms cultivation theory, which posits that media exposure shapes our understanding of reality. This is because the show's portrayal of intimate relationships and controversial interactions can shape viewers' perceptions of what is acceptable and desirable in relationships, potentially influencing their moral values and beliefs. This is consistent with Gerbner's (1976) study, which found that heavy television viewing cultivates a distorted view of reality, and Morgan's (2007) study, which found that exposure to reality TV shows like BBNaija can influence viewers' moral values.

Nevertheless, the finding also negates cultivation theory to some extent, as it suggests that viewers are not passive recipients of media content, but rather active participants who engage in debates and discussions about the show's implications for Nigerian cultural values. This is consistent with the uses and gratification theory, which posits that viewers actively seek out media content to fulfill their needs and desires. Viewers of BBNaija may be using the show to negotiate their own identities and relationships, as found by Ferris (2007), or to fulfill their social and emotional needs, as found by Papacharissi (2014).

The finding also strengthens Hall's (1980) encoding/decoding model, which suggests that viewers actively interpret and negotiate the meaning of media content. Viewers of BBNaija may be decoding the show's portrayal of intimate relationships and controversial interactions in different ways, depending on their social and cultural contexts. This is consistent with Morley's (1980) study, which found that viewers' interpretations of media content are shaped by their social and cultural contexts. The finding also aligns with other related works in the area, such as Hetsroni's (2007) study, which found that reality TV shows can shape viewers' attitudes towards relationships and sexuality, and Livingstone's (2009) study, which found that media exposure can influence viewers' moral values and beliefs.

The second finding of this work is that Esan youths are concerned that watching BBNaija may negatively impact their moral decision-making and lead to confusion about what is morally right or wrong (54.83%). This finding is in tandem with cultivation theory, which posits that media exposure shapes our understanding of reality. This is consistent with Nwafor and Ezike's (2015) study, which found that watching Big Brother Africa influenced undergraduate students' perception and attitude towards decency and morality, and Anorue et al.'s (2021) study, which found that BBNaija had a positive influence on peaceful coexistence among undergraduate students.

Conversely, the finding also negates cultivation theory to some extent, as it suggests that viewers are not passive recipients of media content, but rather active participants who are aware of the potential negative impact of the show on their moral decision-making. This is consistent with the uses and gratification theory, which posits that viewers actively seek out media content to fulfill their needs and desires. This is reflected in Papacharissi and Mendelson's (2007) study, which found that motives for watching reality TV included habitual pastime and entertainment, and Lundy et al.'s (2008) study, which found that participants balanced perceived social stigma with the draw of escapism and social connection.

The finding also aligns with Ugwanga's (2013) study, which found that reality TV had a significant impact on the mindset and attitudes of youth, and Osman's (2010) study, which found that television programs had a significant impact on the mindset and attitudes of rural youths. However, the finding diverges from Pernpek et al.'s (2009) study, which found that media messages could shape behavior and

identity during the college years, as the current study found that viewers were aware of the potential negative impact of the show on their moral decision-making.

The last finding of this work is that BBNaija's format and content can be restructured to achieve a balance between entertainment and morality by including segments that promote cultural heritage and values, showcasing positive role models, and regulating its content to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial content (64.38%). The finding that BBNaija's format and content can be structured to achieve a balance between entertainment and morality confirms the uses and gratification theory, which posits that viewers actively seek out media content to fulfill their needs and desires. By including segments that promote cultural heritage and values, showcasing positive role models, and regulating its content, BBNaija can potentially fulfill viewers' needs for entertainment and moral guidance. This is consistent with Papacharissi and Mendelson's (2007) study, which found that motives for watching reality TV included habitual pastime and entertainment, and Lundy et al.'s (2008) study, which found that participants balanced perceived social stigma with the draw of escapism and social connection.

Nonetheless, the finding also negates the uses and gratification theory to some extent, as it suggests that the show's format and content can be structured to promote moral values and cultural heritage, rather than simply fulfilling viewers' desires for entertainment. This is consistent with the cultivation theory, which posits that media exposure shapes our understanding of reality. By including segments that promote cultural heritage and values, and showcasing positive role models, BBNaija can potentially cultivate a more positive and morally upright viewing experience. This is consistent with Gerbner's (1976) study, which found that heavy television viewing cultivates a distorted view of reality, and Morgan's (2007) study, which found that exposure to reality TV shows like BBNaija can influence viewers' moral values.

The finding also supports with earlier studies that have examined the impact of media on moral values and behaviour. For example, Hetsroni's (2007) study found that reality TV shows can shape viewers' attitudes towards relationships and sexuality, and Livingstone's (2009) study found that media exposure can influence viewers' moral values and beliefs. Additionally, the finding is consistent with Kunkel's (2007) study, which found that exposure to violent media content can increase aggressive thoughts and behaviors among viewers, and with Bushman's (2007) study, which found that exposure to media violence can increase viewers' moral disengagement.

The finding also aligns with Anorue et al.'s (2021) study, which found that BBNaija had a positive influence on peaceful coexistence among undergraduate students, and Nwafor and Ezike's (2015) study, which found that watching Big Brother Africa influenced undergraduate students' perception and attitude towards decency and morality. Overall, the finding confirms and negates aspects of both the uses and gratification theory and the cultivation theory, and aligns with earlier studies that have examined the impact of media on moral values and behavior. By structuring its format and content to promote cultural heritage and values, and regulate its content to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial content, BBNaija can potentially achieve a balance between entertainment and morality.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the significant impact of Big Brother Naija on Nigerian cultural values and moral decision-making among Esan youths. The findings highlight the need for a more nuanced and responsible approach to reality TV programming, one that balances entertainment with moral and cultural sensitivity. The show's influence on viewers' perceptions of intimate relationships, controversial interactions, and moral values cannot be ignored. It is imperative that producers and regulators take steps to mitigate the potential negative effects and promote a more positive and uplifting viewing experience. This includes incorporating more diverse and nuanced representations of Nigerian cultural values, showcasing positive role models, and regulating content to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial

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material. By doing so, the power of reality TV can be harnessed to promote cultural heritage, moral values, and responsible behavior among young people. The future of Nigeria's cultural identity and moral fabric depends on this. This responsibility must be taken seriously and action must be taken accordingly. The time for change is now. Let this study's findings serve as a clarion call to action, urging a reexamination of values and priorities in the face of an increasingly influential media culture. The consequences of inaction may be dire, but the rewards of responsible media programming will be immeasurable. A brighter future for all can be created.

Recommendations

1. To address the debates sparked by the portrayal of intimate relationships and controversial interactions on BBNaija, the BBNaija's producers should consider incorporating more diverse and nuanced representations of Nigerian cultural values, and provide context and commentary to help viewers understand the cultural significance of these portrayals.
2. To mitigate the concerns of Esan youths and other viewers about the potential negative impact of BBNaija on moral decision-making, the BBNaija's producers should consider incorporating more positive role models and storylines that promote moral values and responsible behaviour, and provide resources and support for viewers who may be struggling with moral confusion or other issues.
3. To achieve a balance between entertainment and morality, BBNaija's producers should consider restructuring the show's format and content to include more segments that promote cultural heritage and values, showcase positive role models, and regulate its content to avoid excessive emphasis on controversial content. This could include incorporating more educational and informative elements, such as documentaries or workshops, and providing more opportunities for viewers to engage with the show's themes and issues in a positive and constructive way.

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