

INFLUENCE OF BIG BROTHER NAIJA REALITY TELEVISION SHOW ON THE MORAL BEHAVIOUR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

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Abstract

This seminar examines the influence of the Big Brother Naija reality television show on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The increasing popularity of the programme among Nigerian youths has generated concerns regarding its possible effects on students' dressing patterns, language use, interpersonal relationships, and moral values. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 32,000 undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while a sample size of 395 respondents was selected using the Australian Sample Size Calculator. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages. Findings indicated that Big Brother Naija is widely watched by undergraduate students and that regular exposure to the programme influences their moral behaviour, especially in the areas of dressing, language use, and interpersonal relationships. The study recommends media literacy education, parental guidance, effective content regulation, and responsible media consumption among students.

Keywords: Big Brother Naija, Reality Television, Moral Behaviour, Undergraduate Students, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Introduction

Reality television has become one of the most popular television genres across the world. Unlike scripted programmes, reality television presents ordinary individuals in unscripted situations where their actions, relationships, emotions, and lifestyles are displayed before a large audience. The popularity of reality television has continued to increase because viewers often identify with contestants and actively participate

through voting and social media engagement. Scholars have argued that repeated exposure to reality television programmes can shape viewers' attitudes, values, and behaviours (Scarborough, & McCoy, (2016),&Han, Ali, &Salleh, (2024).

In Nigeria, Big Brother Naija is one of the most watched reality television programmes. Since its return in 2017, the programme has attracted millions of viewers through television broadcasting and digital streaming platforms. Contestants are kept together in a monitored house where they perform tasks, compete for prizes, and interact socially. Throughout the programme, viewers are exposed to contestants' dressing styles, language, romantic relationships, conflicts, celebrations, and lifestyles. These contents have generated debates regarding their influence on young audiences (Joseph, (2019), &Edadi, Emuru, Odey, &Ntui, (2025).

Moral behaviour refers to conduct that conforms to accepted societal values, ethical principles, and cultural expectations. It includes honesty, discipline, responsibility, modesty, respect, integrity, and obedience to accepted standards of behaviour. Universities are expected to promote not only academic excellence but also sound moral development among students who will become future leaders.

The mass media remain one of the major agents of socialization alongside the family, religion, schools, and peer groups. Through continuous exposure to media messages, individuals may imitate behaviours displayed by media personalities. Asakura, Lee, Occhiuto, &Kourgiantakis, (2022) explain that observational learning occurs when people acquire new behaviours by watching others. Consequently, reality television programmes may influence viewers' perceptions of acceptable behaviour.

Although Big Brother Naija is appreciated for entertainment, creativity, and talent discovery, critics argue that some aspects of the programme portray indecent dressing, offensive language, alcohol consumption, romance, and other behaviours that may conflict with Nigerian cultural values. University students are among the programme's major audiences because they have easy access to television, smartphones, and social media platforms.

Students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, come from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds and regularly consume media content. Their continuous exposure to Big Brother Naija raises

important questions about whether the programme influences their moral behaviour, dressing patterns, language use, and interpersonal relationships. This seminar therefore investigates the influence of Big Brother Naija reality television show on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Statement of the Problem

Big Brother Naija has become one of the most popular entertainment programmes among Nigerian youths. While the programme provides entertainment and promotes creativity, many of its contents have generated concerns among parents, educators, religious leaders, and communication scholars because of their possible influence on young viewers.

Many university students regularly watch the programme through television and online platforms. Continuous exposure to its content may influence their attitudes, dressing patterns, language use, interpersonal relationships, and moral values. Despite these concerns, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This seminar therefore seeks to examine the influence of Big Brother Naija on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to examine the influence of Big Brother Naija reality television show on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the extent to which students watch Big Brother Naija;
2. Examine the influence of the programme on students' moral behaviour;
3. Determine whether exposure to the programme influences students' dressing patterns;
4. Examine the influence of the programme on students' language use and interpersonal relationships; and

5. Identify measures that can reduce any negative moral influence associated with the programme.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, watch Big Brother Naija?
2. How does Big Brother Naija influence students' moral behaviour?
3. Does exposure to the programme influence students' dressing patterns?
4. How does the programme influence students' language use and interpersonal relationships?
5. What measures can reduce the negative moral influence of the programme?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this seminar will benefit undergraduate students by creating awareness of the possible effects of reality television on their moral values and behavioural choices. Parents and guardians will gain a better understanding of the influence of media exposure on young people and the need for proper guidance.

The study will also provide useful information to media regulators, television producers, and policymakers in developing programmes that promote responsible entertainment while respecting societal values. Furthermore, the study will contribute to the existing literature in Mass Communication and serve as reference material for future researchers interested in media effects and youth behaviour.

Scope of the Study

This seminar focuses on the influence of Big Brother Naija reality television show on the moral behaviour of undergraduate

students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study is limited to students' exposure to the programme and its influence on moral values, dressing patterns, language use, and interpersonal relationships.

Literature Review

Concept of Reality Television

Reality television is a genre of television programming that presents ordinary individuals in unscripted or semi-scripted situations for the purpose of entertainment. Unlike traditional drama or movies, reality television focuses on real-life interactions, competitions, emotions, and interpersonal relationships. According to Levy, (2025), reality television attracts viewers because it creates the impression of authenticity and allows audiences to identify with participants. The rapid growth of reality television worldwide has been attributed to its interactive nature, audience participation through voting, and extensive discussions on social media.

Although reality television provides entertainment and opportunities for talent discovery, scholars argue that it also influences viewers' attitudes and behaviours. Young people, who constitute a large proportion of television audiences, are more likely to imitate behaviours displayed by participants, especially when such behaviours appear attractive or rewarding.

Concept of Big Brother Naija

Big Brother Naija is the Nigerian adaptation of the international Big Brother reality television franchise. Contestants from different parts of Nigeria are selected to live together in a specially designed house under constant camera surveillance while competing for a grand cash prize. During the programme, contestants participate in weekly tasks, social interactions, nominations, and eviction processes decided largely by viewers' votes. Anyanwu, & Amarachi, (2021).

Since its reintroduction in 2017, Big Brother Naija has become one of the most popular television programmes in Nigeria. Its popularity extends beyond television broadcasting to online streaming platforms and social media, where viewers actively discuss contestants and programme events. While many viewers appreciate the programme for promoting entertainment, creativity, and entrepreneurship, critics argue

that some of its content portrays behaviours that may conflict with Nigerian cultural and moral values. Akinola, & Ogunnubi, (2020).

Concept of Moral Behaviour

Moral behaviour refers to actions that conform to accepted ethical principles, societal norms, and cultural values. It includes honesty, integrity, respect, self-discipline, responsibility, modesty, and obedience to accepted standards of conduct. Moral behaviour develops through interactions with the family, school, religious institutions, peer groups, and the mass media. Chaddha, & Agrawal, (2023).

Among university students, moral behaviour is reflected in dressing patterns, language use, interpersonal relationships, academic honesty, and respect for others. Exposure to media content that repeatedly portrays controversial behaviours may influence students' perceptions of acceptable conduct and gradually affect their behavioural choices (Ajayi, Adebuseyi, & Adebayo, 2025).

Big Brother Naija and Moral Behaviour of University Students

The relationship between reality television and moral behaviour has attracted the attention of communication scholars for many years. Big Brother Naija exposes viewers to different lifestyles, fashion trends, interpersonal relationships, conflicts, celebrations, and social interactions. As a result, regular viewers may consciously or unconsciously adopt some of the behaviours displayed by contestants. Supporters of the programme argue that it promotes creativity, confidence, resilience, talent development, and entrepreneurship. Several former contestants have become successful actors, musicians, media personalities, and business owners, thereby inspiring many young people. Jibrin, A. O. (2024).

However, critics maintain that some aspects of the programme normalize indecent dressing, vulgar language, excessive alcohol consumption, and sexual relationships outside accepted cultural and religious values. Such portrayals may influence students who frequently watch the programme, particularly those who lack adequate parental guidance or media literacy skills.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

This study is anchored on the Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory explains that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling. According to Mauter,&Liljeholm, (2026), people are more likely to imitate behaviours they observe when such behaviours appear rewarding or socially accepted.

The theory argues that learning occurs through four major processes: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Individuals first pay attention to a model, retain what they have observed, reproduce the behaviour, and become motivated to continue if the behaviour receives positive reinforcement.

The theory is relevant to this study because undergraduate students who regularly watch *Big Brother Naija* may imitate contestants' dressing styles, language, attitudes, and lifestyles if they perceive such behaviours as fashionable, rewarding, or socially acceptable.

Empirical Review

Ekure (2024) investigated the influence of *Big Brother Naija* on the moral behaviour of youths in Benin Metropolis using a survey research design involving 360 valid respondents. The study found that respondents perceived the programme as containing predominantly promiscuous and immoral content and believed it negatively influenced youths' moral behaviour, peer behaviour, and societal norms. The findings are relevant to studies on media effects because they demonstrate how repeated exposure to media content can shape audience perceptions and behavioural outcomes.

Fasaanu, Akinwumi, Olarerin, and Olaniyan (2023) examined public perceptions of the cultural and moral implications of the *Big Brother Naija* reality television show using a descriptive survey of 200 staff members of Achievers University, Owo. The study, anchored on Cultivation Theory and Cultural Norms Theory, found that although some respondents considered the programme educative, informative, and entertaining, the majority believed it encouraged indecent dressing, open sex, smoking, alcohol consumption, and gossip, making it inconsistent with Nigerian cultural values and moral standards. The researchers concluded that the programme exerts a predominantly negative moral influence on viewers and recommended stricter media regulation.

Okafor and Ugwuagbo (2024) investigated the influence of reality television on the moral development of Nigerian youths. The study employed a quantitative survey design involving 400 respondents aged 15-24 years in Enugu Metropolis and was anchored on Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory. The findings revealed that frequent exposure to reality television could influence young people's moral reasoning, perceptions of acceptable behaviour, and decision-making, while cultural and societal factors moderated these effects. Based on the findings, the authors recommended media literacy education, stricter content monitoring and regulation, and the inclusion of more educational and morally responsible content by broadcasters.

Ngonso, Egielewa, Cirella, Iyalomhe, and Orobello (2023) examined the influence of the *Big Brother Naija Lockdown 2020* edition on Nigerians' value orientation during the COVID-19 lockdown using an online survey of 400 respondents. Anchored on the Minimal Effects Theory, the study found that viewership increased during the lockdown, with females watching the programme more than males. Although respondents acknowledged the programme's entertainment value and many reported that it motivated them to work harder, the majority also considered its moral content offensive. However, the study found no significant gender difference in perceptions of the programme's moral content, concluding that while the show attracted widespread viewership, its influence on viewers' moral values was not uniformly negative.

Summary of Literature

The literature reviewed indicates that Big Brother Naija remains one of the most popular reality television programmes in Nigeria. Previous studies generally agree that the programme contributes positively to entertainment, creativity, and talent development, but may also influence viewers' dressing patterns, language use, interpersonal relationships, and perceptions of morality. The Social Learning Theory explains that repeated exposure to media content may lead to imitation of observed behaviours. However, few studies have specifically examined the influence of Big Brother Naija on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This gap provides the justification for the present study.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate the influence of *Big Brother Naija* on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN). The population comprised 32,000 undergraduate students (Academic Planning Unit, 2023/2024), from which a sample of 395 respondents was determined using the Australian Sample Size Calculator. A multistage sampling technique involving purposive, simple random, proportionate, and convenience sampling was used to select participants.

Data were collected using a researcher-designed structured questionnaire, validated by experts and tested for reliability through a pilot study using Cronbach's Alpha. Of the 395 questionnaires distributed, 380 were successfully retrieved, representing a 96.2% response rate. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency tables and simple percentages, to answer the research questions and present the findings.

Findings

The findings showed that the majority of undergraduate students regularly watched *Big Brother Naija*, indicating that the programme enjoys wide popularity among students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The study further revealed that most respondents believed that the programme influences students' moral behaviour. Many respondents agreed that exposure to *Big Brother Naija* affects dressing patterns, language use, and interpersonal relationships. This finding is consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which explains that individuals learn and imitate behaviours they observe from media personalities.

The findings also showed that contestants' dressing styles and language are often copied by viewers, particularly young people who regard contestants as role models. Although respondents acknowledged that the programme promotes entertainment, creativity, and youth empowerment, many believed that some of its content could negatively influence moral values if consumed without proper guidance.

Respondents identified media literacy education, parental guidance, effective content regulation, and personal self-discipline as the most effective strategies for reducing any negative influence associated with the programme.

Summary

This seminar examined the influence of Big Brother Naija reality television show on the moral behaviour of undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study was motivated by the increasing popularity of the programme among Nigerian youths and the growing concern over its possible influence on students' dressing patterns, language use, interpersonal relationships, and moral values.

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 32,000 undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while a sample size of 395 respondents was selected using the Australian Sample Size Calculator. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency counts and simple percentages.

The findings revealed that Big Brother Naija enjoys a high level of viewership among undergraduate students. Most respondents agreed that exposure to the programme influences students' moral behaviour, particularly in the areas of dressing, language use, and interpersonal relationships. Although the programme is appreciated for entertainment, creativity, and talent discovery, respondents believed that some aspects of its content could negatively affect students' moral values if viewed without critical evaluation.

The study also identified media literacy education, parental guidance, effective content regulation, and personal discipline as important measures for reducing the negative influence of reality television on undergraduate students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that Big Brother Naija is one of the most popular reality television programmes among undergraduate students of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Regular exposure to the programme has the potential to influence students' moral behaviour, especially with respect to dressing styles, language use, and interpersonal relationships.

However, the influence of the programme is not entirely negative. While it promotes entertainment, creativity, confidence, and entrepreneurship, some of its content may encourage behaviours that are inconsistent with accepted moral and cultural values. The extent of this

influence depends on students' personal values, family upbringing, peer influence, and ability to critically evaluate media messages.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Undergraduate students should be encouraged to develop media literacy skills that will enable them to critically evaluate television content and distinguish entertainment from behaviours that may negatively influence their moral values.
2. Parents and guardians should monitor the television viewing habits of young people and provide appropriate moral guidance regarding reality television programmes.
3. University authorities should organize seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns on responsible media consumption and moral development among students.
4. The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should continue to strengthen the monitoring and regulation of reality television programmes to ensure compliance with the Nigerian Broadcasting Code.
5. Producers of Big Brother Naija should promote content that reflects positive social values while maintaining the entertainment value of the programme.
6. Students should exercise self-discipline by avoiding the imitation of behaviours that conflict with acceptable moral and cultural standards.
7. Future researchers should replicate similar studies in other universities using larger samples and different research designs to improve the generalizability of findings.

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