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Moral Implication of Big Brother Naija (BBN) on Nigeria Youths

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of Big Brother Nigeria (BBN) has garnered significant attention due to its moral implications on Nigerian youth. This paper delves into the ethical ramifications of BBN on the younger generation of Nigeria, exploring how the show's content influences their behavior, values, and perceptions and other factors that are responsible for moral decline among Nigerian Youths. The rise of reality television programs, such as BBN, has perpetuated a culture of voyeurism and sensationalism, which raises concerns regarding the impact on the moral fabric of Nigerian society. BBN exhibits a wide range of behaviors, including deceit, manipulation, and public humiliation, which can normalize and desensitize the youth to these negative actions. One of the primary moral implications of BBN on Nigerian youth is the erosion of traditional values and ethics. This study adopts historical, descriptive and sociological approaches. It was revealed that the show often emphasizes materialism, instant gratification, and superficiality, promoting a value system that prioritizes fame, wealth, and self-interest. On the positive side, BBN also exposes the Nigerian youth to diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives. It offers a platform for social issues to be discussed, raising awareness and encouraging critical thinking. It concludes that, its content and presentation have the potential to shape the behavior, values, and perceptions of the younger generation. The study recommends that the citizens and government should rise to take serious measure against the activities of Big Brother Naija or better still to set laws that will check and regulate their activities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Big Brother Nigeria (BBN), a reality television show, has gained significant popularity and attention in Nigeria and beyond. The show, which involves participants living together in a controlled environment under constant surveillance, has not only entertained audiences but also sparked conversations about its potential moral implications, especially among Nigerian youths. One aspect of the show that has garnered widespread discussion is its portrayal of interpersonal relationships, conflicts, and strategies for winning the competition. Critics argue that the dynamics within the house often feature behaviors that may not align with traditional or conventional moral standards. This includes instances of conflict, manipulation, and the pursuit of fame or financial gain at the expense of authenticity and integrity. Another point of contention is the showcasing of certain lifestyles and value systems that might not necessarily resonate with the cultural or moral fabric of Nigerian society. The open display of intimacy, materialism, and interpersonal conflicts, often sensationalized for entertainment value, has raised concerns about the potential influence on impressionable viewers, particularly the Nigerian youth. It is essential to consider the socio-cultural context within which BBN operates. Nigeria, a country with diverse cultural and religious traditions, grapples with the challenge of balancing entertainment with the preservation of moral values, especially among its youth population. This complexity adds layers to the debate on the moral implications of shows like BBN and the potential risks or benefits they pose to the ethical development of the younger generation. This paper examines the moral consequences of Big Brother Nigeria on the moral life of Youths in Nigeria, it delves into the various areas that big brother Nigeria (BBN) affects the Youths of Nigeria, it also explores other causes of moral decline among the Youths of Nigeria.

2. LITRATURE REVIEW

In Africa and Nigeria particularly, morality is becoming a thing of the past. Most Youths today are not morally sound; some even feel as though they don't need anything as it relates to their moral life. As it is now, Nigeria is experiencing moral decadence. In the words of Aminigo and Nwaokugha (2006); morality is "an accepted code of human conduct in a society". Morality entails "having laws that will regulate dealings of men who can choose to abide by these laws because they know it is good sense to do so" (Uyanga & Amingo, 2010). Ugwu (2010) described morality as "the astuteness of one's conduct and behavior which enhances good conduct and fair relationship. Youths are usually very energetic and are always willing to go the extra mile if need be, to achieve what they believe in and hold on to. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010) defines youth as "the time of life when a person is young especially the time before a child becomes an adult". Olujide (2008) quoting the National Youth Development Plan of 2001 defines youth as "young persons of ages 18-35 years who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria". Other groups "state different age brackets to embrace a person identified as a youth. That is why in line with Mabogunje and Obasanjo in Oyebamiji (2008), youths will be identified as young persons who manifest the following behavioral characteristics: A strong

desire to move up the ladder; A tendency to be idealistic as a result of the values passed into them at earlier ages by role models in the society; An eagerness to live to this role models and Frequent frustrations and anxiety as this idealism confronts the cold realism of daily existence. In addition, youths are very energetic, excessively ambitious young persons who desire to change things or situations overnight; as quickly as possible and in the shortest possible time frame.

Odewoye, (2017) describes moral decadence as a situation whereby someone passes from a state of goodness to a lower state by losing qualities, which are considered normal, ethical and desirable. However, the issue of moral decadence in our society has become a very controversial issue because society seems not to know the disparity between what is morally right or wrong (Chima, 2010). Nkechi, (2016) quoting Odeh asserted that moral decadence is the failure to uphold sound morality in our society. In addition, Afuge, (2015) stated that the forms of moral decadence as; cultism, Rape, examination malpractice, teenage pregnancy, students' prostitution, sexual harassment, sale of "Grade" students' demonstration, drug abuse, indecent dressing and so on. The cause of this moral decline had been attributed several factors. Westernization cannot be left out when talking about Youths and Morality. Today, the Youths are living lives that are uncultured, un-Africa. This is because of the influence of westernization. They tend copy the lifestyle of west this include their dress code, speech, choice of food, etc. this has contributed to moral decline among the Youths today. Display of strange characters by Youths today is alarming. They expressed whatever they watch on the television and the internet especially. It is no longer news that we are in the era of highly developed technology.

The media has undeniable impact in the lives of people in the world at large and Nigeria is not left out. We are in the era where one gets access to information at the tip of the finger. Via the media, one can have access to what is happening around the world even at the comfort of one's house. Information flies around the television and social media. The Youths take advantage of this and misuse this advantage. Instead of learning from television and internet they use it the otherwise. Some watch pornography while some use it for fraud. There is hardly any home today without a television. Unfortunately, people are carried away by the pleasure of television without cross examining the negative influence of television on our lives especially with particular reference to the youths (Jude and Anthony, 2019). The kind of programs they Youth watch has impact on their behavior. Jude and Anthony express further their view on this; the prevalence of immoral behavior among youths has been linked with the types of programs/movies they view.

Furthermore, previous research has examined the impact of reality TV shows on various aspects of viewers' lives. For instance, studies like Wilson et al. (2014) found that individuals who regularly watch reality TV programs may exhibit increased levels of aggression and decreased empathy, potentially compromising their moral development. Similarly, other studies by Levy et al. (2016) suggested that exposure to reality TV might lead to a decreased self-esteem, increased materialism, and a shift towards endorsing superficial values.



Big Brother Naija is one among much reality TV shows that is highly influential in Nigeria today. Currently, it has the highest view among other programs of such. The Youths are carried away by the activities of the so called Big Brother Naija, to the extent that a Youth can abandon studying for exam just to watch Big Brother Naija. This is how far it has affected the Youths. As noted by Jude and Anthony, BBN show is neither a Talent show nor Life Enhancing Show. It is rather so irritating that it is a show where adults, young people with moral weakness, are kept in one place, celebrating every form of sexual immorality and deprivations with impunity, on National Television, losing completely every sense of shame because of some financial peanuts while the organizers smile to their banks in billions having dubiously extorted from the public frailty (2019).

Big Brother Naija In the name of entertainment has polluted the moral sanity of Youths by the display of all manners of immoral and ungodly behavior. What are the benefits of Big Brother Naija to the Youths and Nigeria society at large amidst all these moral jargons? Can it add anything to the character formation of the citizens of Nigeria? What could be responsible for moral decadence in Nigeria among the Youths today? In the face of this menace which is caused by the activities of Big Brother Naija, what then is the future of Youths of Nigeria as far as entertainment is concerned? These among other questions is what the researcher intend to answer. Many Nigerians have also expressed different views about the reality show, observing it was characterized by alcoholism, nudity, sex, fun, entertainment and vulgarism even as MultiChoice, the organizers of the show, announced that the show would be for adult viewers only (Yakubu-Hammer, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper used mixed methodology: descriptive, historical and sociological approaches. The paper uses qualitative method because it provides a comprehensive understanding of the research. In order to ensure adequate details are given, the paper employs both primary and secondary source of data collection. Structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with selected participants to gain a deeper understanding of their personal experiences, perceptions, and responses to BBN.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Brief History of BBN

Historically, Big Brother is a television reality game show based on an originally Dutch TV series of the same name created by producer John de Mol in 1997. The series follows a diverse group of contestants, known as Housemates, who are living together in a custom-built home under constant surveillance with regard to daily life and activities amidst loss of the sense of shame. The Big Brother Show is actually an interpretation and replay of the character in the George Orwell novel Nineteen Eight-Four emphasizing a big brother under a constant surveillance permitting a new world order and new ethical value system against the basic tenets for being just human. The logo of Big Brother Show is an eye literally emphasizing that am watching which popular opinions refer to as the eye of horis, an ancient symbol in the invocation of spiritual beings (Jude and Anthony,

2019)

The return of Big Brother Nigeria follows the critical success of the second edition which saw aspiring hip-hop artiste Efe Ejeba winning the coveted N25 million prize money and SUV after almost three months of drama, intrigue, betrayal and entertainment in the Big Brother house. Speaking on Big Brother Nigeria's return, the Regional Director, M-Net West Africa, Wangi Mba-Uzoukwu said: "Around the globe, the Big Brother format remains one of the most popular genres of entertainment and this is also the case in Nigeria. The edition of Big Brother Nigeria was one of the most successful reality shows not just in Nigeria, but around the continent with a record number of votes and many of the housemates going on to pursue careers in entertainment. We are delighted to have the show return for a third edition and cannot wait for our audiences to once again tune in to experience all of the exciting entertainment that the show is sure to provide.

The first season of the show first aired on DSTV Channel 37 from March 5 to June 4, 2006. In a twist to the game, two new contestants were introduced on Day 23, much to the excitement of the remaining housemates. Ebuka Obi-Uchendu, the most popular housemate for several weeks into the show and widely believed to emerge, winner, was the seventh housemate to be evicted; many viewers blame the Joe's Fan Club (JFC) for his eviction. Joe himself was soon evicted from the show. Big Brother added another twist to the game on day 79 by canceling the day's scheduled nominations and making the housemates believe they will instead be evicted based on their performances on assigned tasks while in reality no more evictions were held and viewers began voting for the winner who turned out to be 26-year-old Katung Aduwak.

The second season of Big Brother Nigeria named Big Brother Naija premiered on January 28, 2018, and was hosted by previous season 1 housemate Ebuka Obi-Uchendu. The final was held on April 9, 2017, with Efe Ejeba winning with 57.61% of the vote.

The third season of Big Brother Nigeria named Big Brother Naija: Double Wahala premiered on January 28, 2018. During the first seven weeks, housemates competed and nominated in pairs of two. After the seven weeks, the housemates became individuals. The final was held on April 22, 2018, with Miracle Igbokwe winning with 38.18% of the votes.

4.2. Moral implication of Big Brother Naija on Nigerian Youths

Big Brother Nigeria has the potential to have multiple negative effects on Nigerian youth's moral development. First off, a skewed perception of reality is frequently shown in the show, with contestants resorting to questionable actions or deceptive strategies in an effort to attract attention and maintain their place in the game. This may give viewers who are easily influenced the false idea that these kinds of activities are normal in everyday life. Many Nigerians have also expressed different views about the reality show, observing it was characterized by alcoholism, nudity, sex, fun, entertainment and vulgarism even as MultiChoice, the organizers of the show, announced that the show would be for adult viewers only (Yakubu-Hammer, 2017). If it's healthy and moral why would the organizer restrict it to



only people above 18 years? This testifies that is dangerous to the moral behavior of people. This so called Big Brother Naija is not transmitting any positive value to the Youths of Nigeria. In an interview session with Mr Lawal Sunday he has this to say, Big Brother Naija affects the sexual life of the youth because it displays pornography. It does not have any difference from Porn, particularly that of 2019 (Personal interview).

Also, reactions from people confirmed that this program is a major factor that brings low the moral standard of the Youths. Similarly, beyond this concern, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Abuja, Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ojeifo said:

“What values are we transmitting to youths today, in a society where immorality and stupidity are rewarded with big prizes?”

“We cannot continue to nurture a society that places a premium on iniquitous shows such as BBNaija and expect to groom a generation of cultured, disciplined and morally upright leaders (Yakubu-Hammer, 2017).

Second, Big Brother Nigeria frequently encourages a fast-gratification and materialistic lifestyle. Without highlighting the value of a strong work ethic, an education, or moral behavior, the show’s opulent lifestyle may inspire desires for fame and fortune. This may have an impact on the young people’s moral compass, as they may value short-term rewards over long-term development or the welfare of society. Big Brother Naija does not add any value to Nigeria Youths, it’s not a program aimed at encouraging education, hard work, and other positive aspects of Youths lives. BBN when compared with Gulder Ultimate Search (GUS) which millions of Nigerians has considered 100% educating, thrilling, action, and adventure is a total bizarre to the morality and value system of our youths. Where GUS rewards patience, endurance, fortitude, resilience and determination in the life of a proven youth, BBN rewards indolence, vulgarism, indiscipline and indecency. What impact does this make to the society except that whatever gives one money and places food on our table is considered noble and morally upright (Jude et al., 2019).

Furthermore, by portraying the candidates as entertainment for the audience, the show occasionally promotes unhealthy competition and conflicts amongst them. This may have a detrimental effect on the moral principles and interpersonal connections of the young people who look up to or emulate the participants’ violent behavior, manipulation, and backstabbing.

It is important to remember, though, that Big Brother Nigeria has not always had a detrimental effect on young people’s moral development. It also gives young Nigerians a chance to show off their abilities, inventiveness, and entrepreneurial spirit, which can serve as an example and source of inspiration for others. The program also tackles societal issues and occasionally highlights virtues like cooperation, fortitude, and flexibility.

4.3. Other areas that BBN affects Nigerian Youths

Educational Life: BBN program is not a program that encourage the youth to be serious with education rather it is a discouragement to those that are into education because of what they see on media. It reduces the value for education in Nigeria; the worse thing is that Nigeria government is not helping to increase the standard of education because they

don’t reward hard work and intelligence. In an interview with Gaga, he said:

those youth particularly our young children who have not attained much height in education will be tempted to forget about studies and focus on programs like BBN. Programs like shell, cowbell, the price tag for educational competitions are low, it ranges from 20000- 5000 at most. But in BBN where one has not gone to school, no academic background will be rewarded with hundred millions in two months, who will not accept that education is scam in this country? We will accept that view because overnight you’re getting millions but education where you burn your candles and energy at the end of the day you return home with 100,000 it is an insult to education setup in Nigeria (Clifford Bunde Gaga, Interview).

Religious Life: morality is a core value in most religions but it is unfortunate that BBN does not teach any morals rather it displays immoral acts that religion forbids. It can corrupt the mind of the youth, like the display of nude images and pornographic display is against most religious values. An interview Gaga reveals that, there’s nothing like morals in the program, you see them moving half naked and they live an Americana kind of life. Our culture is depleting and westernization has taken over, Africans does not encourage half naked people moving about, they’re not imparting morals in the young generation of today (Clifford Gaga Bunde, Interview).

Social Life: Big Brother Naija affects the social life of the youth in that it affects how they relate with their fellow youth. It also changed their mentality, most of them want to become like the celebrities they watch in BBN that include their mode of dressing. This has led many of the Youths into anti-social behavior that reduces their value and moral sense.

Financial Life: the money that youths spend on watching BBN is overwhelming, most of them are unemployed. Some will have to subscribe to the channel that shows it, others watch it via YouTube especially students, me and you know that you need to do enough subscription to watch videos on YouTube. Others pay money during voting, it is the vote of people that the organizer use to determine the winner. Research has shown that most viewers of this program are the Youths. The money that should have been invested in their careers, studies and personal lives for growth and development is wasted on BBN just to catch fun.

4.4. Other Causes of Moral Decadence among Nigerian Youths

Poor Parenting: The place of family in character formation among children and Youths especially cannot be undermined. The home is the first place for moral education and character formation. Parents are supposed to help to instill moral values into their children but it is unfortunate that parents of this generation don’t have time for their children. This is caused either by business or white-collar job of both parents. It has led to many youths being wayward and disobedient citizens of Nigeria.

The Media: Today social media tops the list of daily activities youth of Nigeria are engaged in, with some staying on it for as



much as 6-8 hours daily. The youth, using modern electronic gadgets such as laptops and smart phones stay busy browsing, playing games, watching movies, listening to music, interacting with their friends through chatting and the like. This will make it easy for them to practice whatever they may have seen on the media. In addition, the use of social media, television, and the increased proliferation of social functions has given rise to celebrities who the youth yearn to learn from or imitate. These celebrities are famous for nudity and substance abuse among other indecent habits. The youth continue to witness the media society celebrate scantily dressed women and socialites and corrupt people celebrated as heroes and trusted with public offices (Wachege, 2017).

Get rich quick syndrome and quest for materialism:

Youths of nowadays are eager to arrive early because of what they see every day on the social media especially in programs like Big Brother Naija where people go home with huge amount of money and other prizes. The 'get rich quick' syndrome that has eaten deep into many Youths of today's generation, both male and female; they are willing to get money anyhow, even though macabre means in order to meet up with societal standard, (Salami and Akoje, 2021). In support of the get rich quick syndrome Wachege (2017), wrote that, modern society has adopted the philosophy "the end justifies the means." Everyone wants to acquire wealth in the shortest time possible thereby causing the wave of corruption to be in vogue. Big Brother Naija Reality TV show and other programs of this kind have changed the orientation of Youths. All they want is to make money, they don't care whether it's legal or illegal means of making it. Sharing the same view, Jude (2019), affirmed that it is noted that attention of people has shifted from morality to instant wealth. This desire for instant wealth has led many people to get involved in acts that are inimical to society not minding whose ox is gored.

About the materialistic nature of the youth of this generation Awokoya (1978), had this to say,

Type of environment now developing is very materialist. Most people love and worship mercy because of what it can buy. In the quest for it, kindness, love, justice, social responsibility gets undervalued and the virtues of yesterday are replaced by the vices of today. This presupposes that attention has shifted from the things which are of value and emphasis is now placed on material gains. These materialistic tendencies have a negative implication for our development.

The quest for materialism has led some ladies into hook-up while others are sleeping around with yahoo boys simply because they want to have what their money cannot afford. Some ladies even drop their pictures in hotels for pick-up or is it to talk about the guys that engage in Cybercrime (yahoo) because they want to buy house, car and live large. Now youths have moved from Yahoo to yahoo-plus (rituals activities) they now use people for rituals just to make money. Where do they get all these ideas from if not from what they see in programs like Big Brother Naija and other immoral TV shows?

Government policies and bad Leadership: From experience, it is clear that the Nigeria government contribute to moral decline among youths. They kind of laws they make and the plans show that they don't have the interest of the citizens.

Our government on the other hand should not be left out as one of the prominent culprits. The issue of embezzlement and mismanagement of fund is rampant in Nigeria; the fund that is supposed to be invested in social and human development is siphoned by our leaders which in return create problem for the people. A practical example is the issue of flood; this has affected thousands of Nigerians. Many don't have place to stay, others lack food to eat. According to Punch, (2022) in 2017, floods affected 250,000 people in the eastern-central region, in 2016, 92,000 were displaced and 38 died, in 2015, more than 100,000 were displaced, with 53 deaths, in 2012, devastating flooding forced two million Nigerians from their homes and 363 died, according to authorities. This has led a lot of Youths into all manners of immoral act in an attempt to find ends meet. They approve projects without completion, instead of the government to do something that could prevent this evil; they prefer to provide palliatives for people. The palliatives can never be enough for everyone but they do that not because they really want to help people but because they knew that they will get extra funds from those palliatives to their banks accounts. Bad leaders contribute some percentage to unemployment in the country; graduates are not employed or empowered. This has led the Youths act otherwise. Stating the causes of moral decadence in Nigeria Jude (2019), says it is estimated that over 60 million Nigerians are unemployed. So many Nigerians are already on the psychic road to madness as a result of unemployment. They are depressed and frustrated. When the unemployment is prolonged, they are pushed to the wall and as such see every available opportunity as a means of remedying their situation without scrutiny.

5. CONCLUSION

It's no longer news that BBN has come to stay in this country. It continues to get endorsement and support from various organizations in Nigeria. While it may be generating revenues for Nigeria, on the other hand it is gradually depleting morality among youths. Africa is known for high moral value among other continents of the world but as we speak if we don't rise to combat this menace, the future of our nation will be in shambles. This paper therefore is a wakeup call for Nigerians to take adequate measure to either eliminate this program or monitor their activities against any form of immoral display. The government should encourage educational sector by rewarding the efforts of students who perform excellently and also meet the needs of education to avoid things like strike which reduce the value of education. Parents should try by all means to inculcate into their children morals which will help them whenever they go. Finally, the future of Nigeria lies in the hands of both the leaders and the citizens, everyone should take active responsibility to help improve morality in Nigeria.

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