

## AUDIENCE PERCEPTION ON THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION REALITY SHOWS ON THE MORAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS IN TARABA STATE

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### Abstract

This study titled “Audience perception on the impact of television reality show on the moral lives of adolescents in Taraba State, Nigeria,” aims to examine audience’s perceived view about the moral impact of the show(s) on adolescents in Taraba State especially on those in their developmental stage. The study was anchored on the Perception theory to provide support for ongoing discussion. The study was contingent on a dual research method, utilizing survey (quantitative) and In-depth interview (qualitative) research designs. The study’s population comprises of respondents resident in Taraba State who are audiences of television reality show(s). A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane’s determinism sampling technique. Multi stage sampling method was employed to select three Local Governments in the strata from the three senatorial district of the State, while simple random sampling was used to select the wards as well as the proportional sampling method was utilized to get numbers of respondents who are audience of television reality show in the three stratums. Findings from the study shows that adolescents in Taraba State have access to television reality show and can form a reasonable opinion about the show. Findings also indicate that, the Big Brother Naija, the Nigerian Idol, and the Voice Nigeria among others are the various television reality shows that adolescents in Taraba State have access to. The study concludes that since television reality shows has the potency to influence and sway ideas, programme packaging and

design of the show should be tilted towards building learning and promoting excellence instead of obscenity, nudity and materialism. It is therefore recommended, among others, that content creators, stakeholders and government parastatals in liaison with the ministry of Arts and Entertainment should work together, prioritize television reality shows, develop and broadcast a TV show that reflects the true nature of the Nigerian society and that are value oriented.

**Keywords:** Television reality shows, Audience perception, Moral impact, Adolescents

## INTRODUCTION

Television since its invention has been an influential and impactful tool that has over the years shaped and modeled the minds and behaviors of individuals of all ages, genders and culture. Its significance and enormous role in forming, transforming and building characters especially that of the adolescents can never be under or overestimated. The effects of television have been examined and studied among various population and age groups; and the impact of it indicates that programmes be it dramas, serials, soap operas, news, interviews or reality TV shows, has always been a powerful one. Albeit, that individual of all ages are affected by television, adolescents are most likely to be affected since they are in their development stage.

Nwafor (2015) in his study on the influence of Television series on the morals of Nigerian youths in Tertiary Institution revealed that Big Brother Africa for example has wide viewership among undergraduate students and its influences, perception and attitude towards decency and morality is quite disturbing. The findings showed that some youth learn technical kidnapping skills while others learn to cohabit with the opposite sex in their off campus hostels, and this contributes to the many cases of rape, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and abortion related deaths among this vulnerable group.

In their personality developmental stages, adolescents are victims of the shows and environment exposed to. Nigeria Like all other nations in Africa, bank on television for their main source of entertainment, edification, and major source of awareness. However,

most Nigerian population are illiterate and has no access to education but has easy access to television; hence, learning and adopting from television is relatively easier.

Adolescents, regardless of their learning background, have access to television. Reasons for watching television, particularly reality TV shows, include; using it as a form of escapism, out of boredom or due to peer pressure. Hence, to deny the significance and influence of television in any society would be to deny the needs of millions of illiterate Nigerians who turn to television reality show for enjoyment, information, and cultural understanding; which is why television series follow "real life" people's daily activities rather than professional actors known as reality TV shows (Abideen & Salaria, 2009).

These shows are particularly appealing to the younger demographic since they provide them a platform to showcase their skills while also encouraging healthy rivalry among contestants. It's also a type of escape from the monotony of their everyday lives, which has a long-term effect on their attitudes. An elevated degree of irritation and inappropriate and aggressive conduct have been connected to reality television viewing among adolescents in Nigeria. Based on reality, they can adapt their conduct and personality and acquire new languages (Adnan et al., 2020). The culture of a country undergoes a shift as young people's personalities and habits change. Any civilization's future rests on its youth's moral and behavioral growth, which is why adolescent, are so important. The dominance of television is undeniable, notwithstanding, the proliferation of other media channels and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok and a host of other platforms. It's one of the few mediums that people can see of all ages, and it's the most powerful because of its wide audience (Yousaf et al., 2015).

Reality television shows has a wide range of negative consequences on young people's mental and physical well-being, all of which are difficult to anticipate. Adolescents' attitudes and behaviors are influenced by reality television shows and their exposure, living style, and the overall culture of a nation, Paredes et al (2013). However, even though not all reality TV shows have a detrimental impact on young people's personalities and conduct, those that construct fictional circumstances have a significant impact. Teachers and parents are very concerned about the impact of television on adolescents, despite the widespread belief that it has no discernible impact on young people's conduct. It's safe to say that shows that include obscene content or people with poor manners will have a detrimental effect on our moral and ethical standards as a society Lasa Álvarez (2017).

Big Brother Naija, Nigerian Idols, The X Factor, Maltina Dance, Who wants to be a Millionaire, Gulder Ultimate Search, The Next Titan, Knorr Taste Quest, Nigeria's Got Talent, Nigeria's Top Model, Project Fame West Africa and The Voice Nigeria. However, Big Brother Naija is one of the most popular reality programmes. In the Big Brother Naija show dating, beauty pageant, alcohol consumption, conquering fright, and suggestive behavior linked to sexual activity themes are adopted. It should be added that the show has received wider attention among “adolescents” due to special features like reward options for the participants, format and their interactive nature heighten the unprecedented unhealthy spirit of competition.

Reality television shows have become the leading television programs for TV audience, particularly adolescents who have access to the show (Ligocki, 2018). In Nigeria, one of the leading reality television shows is the Big Brother Naija. This annual programme is premised on young men and women living together for at least 3 months in a confined environment where they are denied access to the outside world. The environment, popularly known as the “Big Brother House” with the participants being known as “housemates”, brings together young men and women who are viewed by the audience as celebrities. The housemates spend time sharing emotions, values, life experiences, playing “house games” and other activities scheduled for their participation. During the period of living together, some of the housemates, before their eviction, indulge in sexual intercourse with marriage promises in full view of the audience (B.F. Ngonso et al. 2023).

Television programs have the power to both reflect and shape societal values and morals. How television portrays moral values is a critical factor in influencing adolescent perception. Television content varies widely, from educational programs and news to entertainment and reality shows. Each genre can have a different impact on the moral life of adolescents.

It is axiomatic to say that television series cannot be totally said to be bad, one aspect of audience perception involves the identification of positive role models on television. Adolescents often look up to characters that embody virtues such as honesty, empathy, and resilience. Shows that feature well-developed, morally upright characters can positively influence adolescents' moral development. Audience perception regarding the availability of such role models can significantly impact their moral outlook.

Li et al. (2019) stated that young people's behavioral and social character development can be influenced by watching reality television shows that include elements of drama, shock, stunts, celebrities and laughter, constructing fake scenarios, believing in which because they to some extent match the real life of young individuals can be a permanent factor. Numerous studies have been undertaken to examine the good and negative impacts of reality television on young adults; Boys between the ages of 14 and 16 from various schools were employed in the study. Real life TV broadcasts like talent contests help teenagers develop stronger stamina and social attractiveness at an early age. After viewing reality TV shows, it also showed that youngsters emulate certain habits that may not be appropriate for them. Positive or bad, reality TV shows have a significant influence on young adults.

The Nigerian society is diversified with different cultures; the cultural and societal context plays a significant role in shaping the audience's perception of television live series and their moral impact on adolescents in Nigeria. Nigerian society is characterized by a rich tapestry of traditions, values, and norms. Scholarly research indicates that these societal values often influence how television content is received and interpreted. In some cases, television live series may align with traditional Nigerian values and morals, reinforcing positive behaviors and ethics. Conversely, if the content contradicts these values, it may be perceived negatively by the audience. Understanding this cultural context is essential in assessing the impact of television series on adolescent morality in Nigeria.

To this end, audience's perception on the role of television live series in shaping the moral life of adolescents in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted issue. These series have the potential to both positively and negatively impact adolescent morality, depending on the content and how it aligns with cultural values and societal norms. Scholarly research underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of how television series are perceived by Nigerian adolescents and how they can be used as a platform for conveying moral lessons and values. Additionally, the role of parents and guardians in guiding and mediating their children's television viewing experiences is vital to ensuring that adolescents derive positive moral lessons from these series.

As a result, this study sort to examine how adolescents in Taraba State engage with a variety of television reality shows, focusing on the prism of its moral impact(s) on its audience.

### **Statement of the Research problem**

Television reality shows have become a prominent part of the entertainment landscape in Nigeria, much like in many other countries. While these shows offer a diverse range of content and entertainment value, they are not without their problems, especially when it comes to their impact on the morality of adolescents. It is evident that, television reality shows aside its positive impacts, also presents array of pseudomic and unrealistic lifestyles to so many adolescents. Many reality shows often depict contestants engaging in unethical or morally questionable behavior to win or gain popularity. This exposure to unethical behavior can desensitize adolescents and lead them to believe that such actions are acceptable or even desirable. Examples include manipulation, deceit, and betrayal, which are often portrayed as strategies for success in these shows. More so, many reality shows depict participants living extravagant and sometimes morally questionable lifestyles.

Television Reality shows has never exuded high level of controversy as now. The controversial aspect of reality television is situated in its generally unscripted nature, its participants 'seeming improvisation of every act. Because of the inherent spontaneity, participants are likely to display on-the-spot misjudgments or unintended behaviors that may be detrimental to the moral standing of the audience. Adolescents may perceive that success can be achieved quickly and easily, without the need for hard work, education, or ethical conduct. This can lead to a skewed expectations and a devaluation of important life values such as perseverance, dedication, honesty, and above all morality.

Some reality shows perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce prejudices. When adolescents witness individuals from particular backgrounds or demographics being portrayed in a negative or stereotypical manner, it can reinforce biases and contribute to discrimination and intolerance. Reality shows often blur the line between public and private life, showcasing intimate and personal moments for the sake of entertainment. This normalization of invasive behavior can erode the value of privacy among adolescents, potentially affecting their understanding of personal boundaries and consent.

Hence, this study seeks to assess audience' perception on the impact of TV reality shows on the moral life of adolescents in Taraba State, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The broad objective of this study is to assess audience' perception on the impact of television reality show on the moral life of adolescents in Taraba State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Establish whether adolescents in Taraba State have access to television reality shows
2. Identify the reality shows that adolescents in Taraba State are exposed to
3. Identify the factors that catalyzed adolescents' exposure to television reality show

### **Literature Review**

Over the year's avalanche of studies have been conducted in the ambience of television and its enormous impact on viewers. These significant effects can range from intrinsic and behavioral shift from certain ways of life to the other. However the case maybe, television content consumption cannot be ridden out for not mentioning the influence that it has that transcends even culture and religious beliefs. These impacts can be positive or negative; hence researchers in this field have put forward results and opinions on the impact of television. Therefore, studies from researchers in this field and in tandem to the study at hand are reviewed as thus:

Zikra and Azeem (2022) conducted a study on the Impact of Reality TV Shows on University Student's Performance, The purpose of the study was to figure out the impact of reality television shows on the young adult students at university-level, to find out the impact of reality TV shows on university students and to find out the pros and cons of a reality TV show for university students. The quantitative approach was adopted, whereas the research design was descriptive to determine the impact of reality TV shows on university students' performance. The researcher collected data through a cross-sectional survey method technique. Total of 800 (400 males and 400 females) students were selected using a random sampling technique. The researchers developed a questionnaire which was consisted of two parts; the first part was consisted of demographical information, whereas the second part comprised of 40 closed-ended items, which were consisted of four subscales; influence of reality TV shows, pros and cons of reality TV shows, reality TV shows and impact on learning and education, and role of the show in an Education). The data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using SPSS

version 21. Results of the study showed that reality TV shows negatively impact students' minds. The majority of the participants agreed that they use the WhatsApp compared to other social media Apps. Reality TV shows engage students most of the time, and they never complete their tasks on time. Students are negatively affected by reality shows in more than one ways. Student's sometimes associate reality shows with the real world because these shows focus on bullying, violent conduct, and unhealthy competitiveness. It is recommended that government must take steps to prevent the negative impact of reality TV shows on students.

This study is in line with the current study because they are both geared towards examining the effect of TV reality shows on the moral development of youth. This is also in congruence to the core objective of the current study, which seeks to look at the impact of TV live shows on the moral life of adolescents in Taraba State. The point of divergent to this review is the utilization of a single method which according to Asemah & Gujbawu (2016) is not sufficient to make a generalizable results. Hence, the current study seeks to gauge the effect of TV reality shows on adolescents in Taraba State which is a different location from the foregoing.

A study conducted by Sharma and Agarwal (2015) on the Impact of Reality Shows on Adolescent's Personality. The study set out to know the effects of reality shows on adolescents since its effect are multi-pronged, far reaching and unpredictable. Though not all reality shows are same but the ones which indulge in creating fake realities are the ones to blame the most. The main objective of the study was to see the positive and negative impact of reality shows on adolescent's personality. The study was conducted in Lucknow Uttar Pradesh in the academic year 2014-2015. The study was conducted on 120 adolescents of residing in and studying in government and private schools. Simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. Self-constructed interview schedule was used to collect the data. The data analysis was done using 'F' test for independent groups, and the findings showed that there is a significant academic distortion and academic performances because a glaring difference between students of Government and Private schools in positive feeling and outlet for competitiveness at the 0.05 level. The main result from the study shows that the students of private schools were more positively affected with reality than students of government schools.



According to the study conducted by Stanislaus (2021) when he sampled Reality Television and Audience Dilemma for Big Brother Naija Survival in Nigeria Majorly; the study sets out to ascertain the benefits or values of the Big Brother Naija programme to the housemates and audiences and to determine the audiences' position on the survival or proscription of the show. This study was contingent on the Uses and Gratification Theory and the Social Learning Theory. Quantitative research method was employed in the study; the survey design was adopted for a sample population of 460 respondents. Findings from the study showed that audiences largely accept that the show has value to the social and economic status of the housemates with little value to educational and emotional needs of the audience despite its fairly significant entertainment value. Larger proportion of the respondents agreed to the indecent and corrupt nature of the Big Brother Naija with a little more than of half of the population calling for its ban. The study concludes that the ban of the show was not necessary as this will negate all the benefits. The paper recommends that producers of the show should consciously introduce rules that will mitigate core acts of indecency and immorality among the housemates while members who find the program distasteful should avoid tuning to the channels.

This study is quite peculiar to the understanding of the dynamics of TV reality and the causal effects they do have on its audience and if they share certain values. The study utilized the survey research method to understudy the responses of respondents, where findings indicates a reasonable number of value added potentials to the house members and even the audience. The study further tilt it arguments towards its level of indecency in the show where a larger population identified and agreed with its high rate portrayal of indecency and unrealistic variables. The findings in tandem with the objective of the current study which is geared towards identifying a number of TV reality shows viewed by TV audience in Taraba State, and in retrospect measure its impact on adolescents. However, the study is peculiar to a terrain that is more prone to understanding the dynamics of morality, because morality in the setting of the study is quite a relative term. Hence, the current study will seek to identify TV reality show impacts, values and further suggest ways to design TV reality show contents that will be in tandem with Nigerian standards.

In the same vein, Wilfred and Grace (2019) understudied Nigeria University Students' perception of Reality Programmes on Television. The study analyzed reality television programmes and ascertained Nigerian students' perception of the programmes. Data were

also generated with a 22-item self-developed questionnaire with a reliability of 0.81 established using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The instrument was administered on 388 respondents drawn from six different Universities across the six states in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria using a simple random sampling technique. The results show that reality television programmes are produced with educational contents meant to teach the audience skills being performed or perfected by the contestants and the programmes helps audience members to learn things about other people. The study concludes that reality television programmes have serious influence on audience members as they desire to be like the people they watch in the programmes. Again, to a great extent, many reality television audience members do believe that what they watch in the programmes are real life situations and not mere action. Therefore, it is recommended, among other things that since reality television programmes enable audience members to learn things about others when they watch contestants in the programmes, producers must ensure that reality television programmes aired on Nigerian television stations are those capable of impacting positively on the lifestyles of Nigerians, especially University students.

Also, Ram and Rakesh (2021), sort to know the influence of TV reality shows when they studied the Influence of Reality-Based Television Shows on Adolescent Viewers: Empirical evidence. The study aimed at finding the influence of reality-based television shows on adolescent viewers from two perspectives – one is in creating awareness about crime in society and other is in sharing new ways of crime to viewers with criminal mentality. Descriptive and hypothesis – testing research design it adopted in this study. Data was collected from 440 respondents of Delhi through well designed questionnaire using convenient sampling technique. Data analysis was done with SPSS 21 and results revealed that there are significant and positive influence of reality-based crime show on creating awareness and sharing new ways of crime to viewers too. The strong positive influence in creating awareness about crimes in society while moderate influence reported in case of new ways of crime to criminal minded viewers. Parents are recommended to educate their children about good and bad part of reality-based shows.

Ezeakolam Amarachi (2022) appraised Audience Perception of Indecency on television Reality Show with (Big Brother Naija Bbnaija) as a practical case study. The study examined audience perception of indecency on television reality show using Big Brother Naija as a study focus. The study questioned the rising concerns on reality show. The study sampled the much controversial opinions by many people within the normal social circle with the

claim that they do not understand the purpose of the show due to the open acts of immoral behaviour amongst the housemates. The objectives of the study are to ascertain the audience perceptions of the level of indecency displayed on the reality show and to understand if exposure to the show has in anyway affected moral standard in the society. The study, anchored on the preposition of cultivation theory and social learning theory, the study employed quantitative research method using survey to gather data from a sample population of 200 respondents. The instrument that was used for gathering data for the study was the questionnaire. The study used the convenience sampling technique to reach respondents. Data collected from the research were statistically analyzed using simple percentages and frequency distributions presented in tables. Findings revealed that respondents who frequently watch the Big Brother Naija reality programme were mainly young people and their perception of the programme differs as most of them find it entertaining and engaging. Findings also revealed that the respondents find the show indecent to a large extent though it is strictly for adults. The study concluded that Big Brother Naija an unscripted and unedited reality show should be controlled by the broadcast regulatory body over the wide exposure to indecent lifestyle to the public.

Souvik and Partha (2021) compared the views of reality television audience and that of the entertainment industry professionals when they did Perception Analysis of TV Reality Shows: Perspective of Viewers' and Entertainment Industry Professionals. Alternatively, the study holds that Television content is predominantly classified into fiction and non-fiction category which further diversifies in various subcategories. Reality shows are propositioned as entertainment content under non-fiction format in contrast to fictionalized events that are acted in. Road to stardom and affluence is made easier through participation in Reality TV Shows. Extensive audience reach through Television Rating Points (TRP) and support over various social media platforms is achieved through the manufacturing of controversies. Channels are making use of viewer's emotions both in positive as well as negative ways. Many viewers are obscure about the intent of the show makers. The authenticity of Reality TV Shows as real or unreal has been under contention. Therefore, the study made an attempt to understand how an audience perceives the programming tools used in Reality TV shows and how the TV industry professionals perceive the way Reality TV Shows function and delivers their content to the audiences at large. The study employed mixed-method research. Findings from the study showed that the overall perception of the viewer's regarding the authenticity of the Reality TV Show has

been skeptical. The manipulation of reality does bother them but not to an extent that it hampers the regular viewing pattern of their choicest Reality TV Shows. Moreover, they believe in enjoying the content being served not caring much about the debate surrounding the legitimacy of TV Reality Shows. Monotony is a problem with the shows alongside unreal content though for the viewers. However, these shows aim at providing opportunities to the hidden talents residing in the far-flung interiors of the country. They unleash true potential which paves way for subsequent careers. The viewers are of the firm opinion that the tactics employed by producers are quite evident in front of the viewers. They can identify that the dramatics being involved alongside the competition is just to spice up the entertainment quotient.

Gazala Bhoje (2017) studied the Effects of Reality Show on Teenagers. Reality shows is the genre of programming in which the everyday routines of “real life” people (as opposed to fictional characters played by actors) are followed closely by the cameras” (Frisby). In this genre there are three major categories of shows: game shows, dating shows, and talent shows. The scope of reality show has increased steadily over the last couple of years, with shows like the “Bachelor” gaining millions views. With such a large following, it’s no wonder it seems impossible to escape reality television or to even question how it is these kinds of shows began to captivate audiences. This can be visualized even Indian television world where a hoard of realty show are gaining popularity and being director and produced for TRP.

Findings from this study confirms existing views surrounding reality shows which suggest that reality shows is only for entertainment purposes and is largely popular among teenagers. Teens who are watching reality shows are doing so for social reasons – to have common with peers so that they can gather to discuss the shows. This fact is supported by the types of reality shows students mostly watch. Reality shows has the ability to influence attitude and shape perception. As reality shows as a powerful medium with reality shows prominence and appeal, procedures can use the genre to communicate societal messages of importance and health address some of the nation’s Fixable issues- education, for example Reality shows can be utilized to help raise awareness.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is contingent on the Perception theory. The Perception theory was propounded in 1964 by G.A Steiner and Berelson. They (Steiner and Berelson, 1964) defines perception

as a “complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world” perception can be influenced by an individual past experience, societal and family values, either way, stimuli are sensed differently by people. Perception can be influenced in two different ways: structural and functional. Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso. (2008) structural influence refers to how sensory stimuli are perceived physically. As the name states, it is coordinated and usually structured. Functional influence is based on personal conviction (which is in most cases subjective), and in all cases deals with psychological factors that affect our perception. These two influences on perception (structural and functional) are related in the sense that the structural influence poses as a platform for functional influence.

There is tendency for individual to have a varying perception based on circumstances encountered, environment, sex, and lifestyle and so on. This tendency is termed *selective perception*. For this reason, messages are not interpreted in the same manner by individuals. This suggests that mass communication goes beyond just hitting a target with an arrow. The messages can reach the receiver and still fail to accomplish its purpose because its interpretation is at the mercy of the receiver.

The rationale for selecting this theory as explicated by Akinfeleye (2008) is because they it described “human development and explicate how mass media audience react to media messages. Since this study examines “audience perception on the impact of television reality shows on the moral life of adolescents in Taraba State”, Nigeria. this theory therefore is in tandem to the profile of this research study.

## **METHODS**

The study employed a dual research method, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Since the researcher cannot study the entire State, the researcher deployed the multi-stage sampling method to ensure equal representation of respondents. Three LGA from the State were randomly selected through the stratified sampling method from the three senatorial districts who are audience of television reality show; these include Wukari, Gassol and Jalingo. The population of the study was obtained from the projected online population census, 2022 which estimated Taraba population as 3,609,800. A sample size of 400 respondents was determined using the Taro Yame’s sampling determinism formulae. The proportional sampling method was utilized to ascertain the actual number of

respondents from these Local government, they consists of Wukari with 147, Gassol with 151 while Jalingo had 86. Therefore, the total population for the study is 384. The study collected data both qualitatively and quantitatively using in-depth interviews and a structured questionnaire. Out of the 384 copies of questionnaire administered, only 372 representing 97% were retrieved. The analysis of the study was therefore based on the retrieved copies of the questionnaire.

## RESULTS

**Table 1: Respondents opinions to whether adolescents in Taraba State have access to television reality shows**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Strongly agree	295	77.6%
Agree	75	19.7%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Undecided	10	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Data retrieved from respondents on the subject to whether adolescents in Taraba State have access to television reality show(s) revealed that, 295(77.6%) which represents a majority of respondents reported that, they have access to television reality shows in Taraba State. While 75(19.7%) of the respondents wading in the same opinion agree that have access to television reality show(s) in Taraba State, While, 10 respondents representing 2.6% of the population claimed numb, by neither agreeing or disagreeing that they have access to television reality shows. The implication from the findings above shows that, majority of the respondents have access to television reality shows, hence, have an average knowledge of the show(s) and their access to the show gives inference to how these adolescents can hold and sustain discussion about television reality shows in Taraba State.

Also, majority of the respondents 190 representing (50%) said that, they view television reality shows on a daily basis anytime the shows are launched running through the span of eight weeks as long as the shows last, 110(28.9%) of the viewers were of the opinion that they only watch the show on a weekly basis, this is because despite missing the show on a daily basis during broadcast, a repeat of the show and weekend package were aired given

them opportunity to watch the after missing episodes from previous days. 55 respondents representing (14.4%) of the population state that, they only watch the show occasionally, 6.5% of the respondents said they rarely watch the shows simply because of interest.

By implication, majority of the respondents said they have access to television reality shows hence, and view them regularly making them aware of the show and can form a valid opinion about the moral impact of television reality shows on adolescents in Taraba State.

**Table 2: Opinions of respondents by the kind(s) of TV reality shows exposed to**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
<b>Big Brother Naija</b>	195	51.3%
<b>Nigerian Idol</b>	125	32.8%
<b>The Voice Nigeria</b>	40	10.5%
<b>Ultimate Love</b>	20	5.2%
<b>None of the above</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Data collected on the types of television reality show(s) adolescents in Taraba State are exposed to unraveled that majority of respondents 195(51.3%) are exposed to the Big Brother television reality show. The overwhelming percent of respondents indicating the kind of television reality show they are exposed to, 125(32.8%) of the respondents indicated that they were exposed to the Nigerian Idol television reality show while 10.5% said they are exposed to the Voice Nigeria and 5.2% were exposed to Ultimate Love reality show. This goes to say that, respondents are highly exposed to the Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol television reality shows setting the basis for its moral impact on adolescents in Taraba State.

Also, 205 (53.9%) respondents forming majority opinion of the population said the Big Brother Naija show is their favorite television reality show from other televised programmes, similarly, 145(38.1%) of the respondents forming the second majority of the population indicated that they prefer the Nigerian Idol over other television reality shows. Meanwhile, 30 respondents forming (7.8%) of the population argued that they prefer to watch the Voice Nigeria because of the singing sections of the show. Conversely, majority of the respondents prefer the Big Brother Naija show and the Nigerian Idol over other broadcasted television reality shows.

The above responses clearly reveal the choices of respondents in their preferences when it comes to television reality shows, majority choosing the Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol simply because of the features in the shows which may include but not limited to competitions, portrayal of culture, use of celebrities and the opportunity it provides for local talents to gain stardom and popularity.

**Table 3. Opinions of respondents about the factors that influenced their exposure to television reality show(s)**

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Interest in the concept or theme of the show	66	17.3%
Influence of friends or peers	124	32.6%
Availability of free time	40	10.5%
Curiosity about contestants or participants	150	39.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2024*

Table 3 was designed to show factors responsible for the exposure of respondents to television reality shows. Data shows that majority of the respondents which constitutes 150(39.4%) unravel that the factors that informed their choice of exposure to the show(s) is an incline of curiosity about contestants or participants in the house and in the show. 66(17.3%) of the respondents indicated that they became active participants of the show because of the theme and interest in the concept of the show. This means respondent were drawn to the show because of the core concept and theme of the show. Consequently, 124 respondents forming (32.6%) of the population were of the view that they were influenced by friends and peers. This implies that, adolescents in Taraba State through association and interactions with friends and peers in school, viewing centers and worship centers have the potency of generating interest in the show(s). Only 40(10.5%) of the respondents indicated that they accessed the shows because of free time.

Also, data unraveled that, celebrity participation in television reality shows influenced their level of interest of respondents in the show. Here, 210 respondents representing (55.2%) of the population strongly agreed that the use of celebrity and popular personality in the shows heightened their followership of the show, 105(27.6%) of the respondents indicated that the use of celebrity in television reality shows occasionally influenced their choices of



watching the show. Inversely, 60 respondents representing (15.7%) of the population out rightly disagreed that, the use of celebrity didn't influence their interest in watching the show(s). Why only 5 respondents (1.3%) of the respondents were not sure whether using celebrities or popular figure in television reality shows actually influenced their choices of watching the show. By implication, it is apposite to infer that the use of celebrity in television reality actually influences respondents into watching and following the shows.

### **In-depth Interview with key members of the communities**

The in-depth interview which was conducted with nine (9) members of the communities for the study in order complement data collected through questionnaire is hereby thematically presented below.

#### **Theme 1: Accessibility of adolescents in Taraba State to television reality show(s)**

The interviewees attested to the fact that they have access to television reality show(s) indicating their knowledge and self-awareness of the show.

Supporting this, an IDI with a respondent in Wukari, Local Government Area, He said:

“Yes, I have access to the shows, Infact, I am aware of television reality shows and I have enjoyed watching shows like “Big brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol. In this current world of digital age we are more advanced than before in this State to say that we don't have access to these shows. For me, I have being exposed to the show since 2017, and these shows have added to entertainment and information value to me”.

#### **Theme 2: kind(s) of television reality show(s) that adolescents in Taraba State are exposed to?**

The findings from the in-depth interview revealed that majority of the respondents in Taraba State are exposed to the Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol television reality shows.

In response to this theme, interviewee 1 affirmed thus:

...“well, over the years since I started watching and following television reality show(s), I am only conversant with the Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol. The Big Brother Naija TV show for me is captivating and intriguing, just as auditions are done and participants are shortlisted for the house, one knows that the game is on, we start following the development

in the house to know who is doing this and who is doing that, sometimes, the participant heightens competition as to who knows how to cook best, who has the best skills, who has the best fashion sense, who is more industrious and all; these the show presents on a daily basis hence, eliminating any participants that is not qualified for the next stage. Sometimes, the gaming and voting aspect of the show carry us along whereby audience get to vote and bet on participant of choice to win the show. And for the Nigerian Idol, the singing competition makes the show heavenly, currently the show is on the auditioning and qualification stage to select participants that can go on to the live shows”.

Also, interviewee 2 shared a similar view that the Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol since the suspension of the show “who wants to be a millionaire” has been the most frequent and popular TV reality shows she frequents. According to her words:

“Big Brother Naija has undeniably captured the hearts of millions like myself across Taraba and Nigeria as whole. Its blend of drama, romance, and strategic gameplay has the ability to keep viewers hooked season after season. As a devoted fan myself, I find the dynamics between the housemates utterly fascinating. Whether it's the intense competitions, the unexpected alliances, or the emotional rollercoaster of evictions, Big Brother Naija delivers entertainment like no other reality show”.

An IDI with Interviewee 7 is in consonance the above view:

... “Nigerian Idol holds a special place in my heart as one of the most captivating talent competitions on television. The sheer talent showcased by contestants is awe-inspiring, ranging from powerful vocal performances to mesmerizing stage presence. What sets Nigerian Idol apart is its celebration of Nigerian music and culture, providing a platform for aspiring artists to showcase their skills to a national audience. Beyond the performances, the journey of contestants, their struggles, triumphs, and growth, resonates deeply with viewers”.

In the words of interviewee 9:

“When it comes to television reality shows, Big Brother Naija and Nigerian Idol stand out as my top choices for a multitude of reasons. Firstly, their

ability to entertain and captivate audiences is undeniable. Whether I'm watching the drama unfold in the Big Brother Naija house or cheering for my favorite contestants on Nigerian Idol, I'm always on the edge of my seat, fully immersed in the experience. Secondly, these shows serve as platforms for talent discovery and personal growth. From uncovering raw musical talent on Nigerian Idol to showcasing the complexities of human behavior on Big Brother Naija house, both shows provide invaluable opportunities for individuals to shine and pursue their passions”.

### **Theme 3: Factors responsible for exposure of adolescents in Taraba State to television reality shows**

The study tried to unravel the main factors that catalyzed exposure of adolescents to television reality show(s) in Taraba State. The study find out that aside entertainment and information value of the show(s), interest in the theme and concept of the show has actually galvanized their interest to the show. Others opined that, their interest in the participants of the show had actually being the reason for their interest in the show. To some, the game, competition and intense rivalry are their major interest.

All these factors that catalyzed their exposure to the show were identified variously by different interviewee.

The IDI conducted with interviewee 1 supported that, respondents get exposed to this shows because of curiosity and interest in some certain participant. He stated as thus:

“Infact, my followership and interest in the show increased of recent especially in the 2022 seasons. I watched the show because I was very interested in one of the house members “Terri Kidwaya” who is someone that is from my place and I think I rooted for him to win the show. I must confess I didn’t miss an episode because of the interest I have in the particular participant, however, my choice of interest ended up not winning”

Similarly, Another Interviewee (7) in Magami, in Jalingo Local Government Area of the State supported the view of the interest of respondents in the theme and participant in the show where he stated:

... “I watch Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol primarily because I'm deeply intrigued by the diverse range of participants and their unique personalities. Each season brings a fresh batch of individuals with different backgrounds to house and to the show, stories, and strategies, which keeps me glued to the screen. Witnessing their interactions, conflicts, and alliances unfold in the confined space of the house is not only entertaining but also offers insights into human behavior and social dynamics. It's like observing a microcosm of society under a magnifying glass, and I find myself invested in the journey of each participant, rooting for my favorites and analyzing their gameplay. Ultimately, my interest in the participants drives my engagement with the show, making it a compelling viewing experience for me.”

In the same vein, Supporting 17.1% of the respondents in Wukari Local Government Area of the State who stressed the reasons why he likes the show. He said:

“I am drawn to television reality shows primarily because of the participants. For me, they are the heart and soul of the entire experience. Whether it's watching them navigate challenges, form alliances, or simply reveal their authentic selves, I find their presence captivating. Reality shows offer a glimpse into the lives of ordinary people placed in extraordinary circumstances, and it's fascinating to see how they respond and evolve throughout the journey. Their personalities, quirks, and interpersonal dynamics are what keep me hooked episode after episode. In essence, the participants are the driving force behind my enjoyment of reality television”.

Similarly, interviewee 3 attested to this same claim when he said:

“I am drawn to Big Brother Naija for its unique blend of entertainment and social innovations. Because of the Big Brother Naija show, I gain insights into human behavior, societal dynamics, and interpersonal relationships. The housemates' interactions serve as a reflection of what happens in our society sometimes, reflecting both its strengths and its flaws. Sometimes, I find myself analyzing the strategic moves, emotional outbursts, and

alliances formed within the house, drawing parallels to their own lives and relationships. In essence, watching Big Brother Naija becomes a form of escapism intertwined with a deeper exploration of human nature, making it a compelling and addictive experience for many.”

In the same vein, an IDI with an interviewee 3 in Mutumbiyu, she said:

“Beyond the music, my exposure to the Nigerian Idol provides me with a sense of inspiration and empowerment. As I watch the contestants pursue their dreams, overcome challenges, and rise to the occasion serves as a reminder of the limitless possibilities within reach. Whether one aspire to become a musician what one needs is motivation to pursue this passions, most at times I find encouragement and hope in the stories of resilience and determination showcased on the show. Nigerian Idol becomes more than just a television program; it becomes a source of motivation, reminding viewers that with talent, hard work, and perseverance, anything is possible”.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the result presented, the findings of the study are hereby discussed below.

Data collected in Table 1 revealed that the majority of respondents have access to television reality show(s) whereby a few highlighted Cable/satellite TV, Online streaming services, and Local TV channels as platforms they utilize in watching these shows. Also, the Big Brother Naija, the Nigerian Idol, the Voice Nigeria and the Ultimate Love were some of the television reality shows that adolescents and respondents in Taraba State are exposed to. These findings were corroborated by the qualitative data from the in-depth interview.

Analysis of data presented in Table 2 when asked about their preferences of television reality show(s) revealed that 195 respondents representing (51.3%) of the population stated that they are exposed to the Big Brother Naija reality show giving an overwhelming percent of the television reality show exposed to, (32.8%) of the respondents forming the second majority indicated that were exposed to the Nigerian Idol television reality show. This was

supported by an IDI conducted in Jalingo metropolis which holds the same views as that of the previous speakers, she said: “For me, Big Brother Naija and the Nigerian Idol are my most preferred reality shows, see this shows are more than just entertainment; it's a reflection of society. It's fascinating to see how different personalities interact under one roof, how they navigate relationships, alliances, and conflicts. Unlike other reality shows that can feel contrived or staged, Big Brother Naija feels real. It's like watching a social experiment unfold before your eyes, and that's what makes it my top choice.”

This finding corroborated the findings of Ezeakolam (2022) who appraised Audience Perception of Indecency on television Reality Show with (Big Brother Naija Bbnaija) as a practical case study. Ezeakolam reported that respondents who frequently watch the Big Brother Naija reality programme were mainly young people and their perception of the programme differs as most of them find it entertaining and engaging. Findings also revealed that the respondents find the show indecent to a large extent though it is strictly for adults.

Similarly, Nwafor (2015) in his study entitled “*Viewership of Big Brother Africa Reality TV Show and Its Influence on the Moral Conduct of Undergraduate Students in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria*” revealed that Big Brother Africa has wide viewership among Ebonyi state university undergraduate students and it influences their perception and attitude towards decency and morality. Some of them learn technical kidnapping skills while others learn to cohabit with the opposite sex in their off campus hostels, and this contributes to the many cases of rape, teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion and abortion related deaths among this vulnerable group.

Significantly, findings in Table 3 shows the deciding factors that actually attracts and lure respondents to television reality shows, of all the available means ranging from friends and family, adverts on television and randomly browsing and streaming online platforms, majority (32.2%) of the respondents said that mostly they come across information's and advertisement about television reality shows through various social media platforms. Also, the IDI conducted in Wukari Local Government Area of the State stressed the reasons why he likes the show. He said; “I'm drawn to television reality shows primarily because of the participants. For me, they are the heart and soul of the entire experience. Whether it's watching them navigate challenges, form alliances, or simply reveal their authentic selves, I find their presence captivating. Reality shows offer a glimpse into the lives of ordinary

people placed in extraordinary circumstances, and it's fascinating to see how they respond and evolve throughout the journey. Their personalities, quirks, and interpersonal dynamics are what keep me hooked episode after episode. In essence, the participants are the driving force behind my enjoyment of reality television”.

This corroborated the study of Umoren and Udonquak (2022) in a separate study which affirmed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (91.9%) stated that the factor responsible for the growing popularity of the Big Brother Naija reality television show was social media and social factors like peer/friends/family and the pressure to stay trendy. This is more like feeling pressured to watch and participate in the online engagements due to social media hype and trends. Social media play a huge part on contemporary lifestyle.

Also, in a study by Munjal et al., (2019) titled *An Empirical study on Factors Affecting the Reality Shows on Youngsters' Personality in India* revealed that entertainment value and viewers' belief regarding reality shows are the major factors that affect the personality of youngsters' in Punjab. The study also found that independent factors such as participators to reality show because of publicity and fame. They have less moral values as compare to society who is watching these reality shows. Knowledge and learning and aggressive marketing are also significant positive factors that affect the youth. Hence all factors are not considered equally important for factors affecting youngsters' personality.

## CONCLUSION

This research study concludes that television reality show has a reasonable number of viewership and followership in Taraba State especially amongst adolescent male in the State. The show is found to entertain and inform but however, in retrospect, the show(s) has negative impact on adolescents in Taraba State. The shows portrayal of materialism, obscenity, unhealthy competition and strife making some of the presumed reality in the show as fake and pseudomic which by and large do not reflect the true nature of the society Nigerian society given a skewed version of what reality means.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. The NBC should play the watchdog role by monitoring TV reality shows to ensure strict adherence to regulations, so that the content of the shows can incorporate diverse and relatable contestants who will exemplify positive values such as integrity, empathy, and resilience.
2. Government agencies/departments/parastatals/ should intensify efforts by equipping themselves with media literacy knowledge on how to place certain control (PG) on their gadgets; more so to limit adolescents exposure to potentially distressing or mental triggering content which may provide adequate breaks and downtime to prevent burnout and emotional exhaustion.
3. Prioritize Provision of educational content and discussions alongside the show to explore relevant social and ethical issues that will promote critical thinking and empathy among adolescents in Taraba State
4. The show is not a complete failure, hence, there should be a Collaboration with experts in child development, psychology, and media ethics to develop companion materials and resources for parents, educators, and youth to facilitate constructive conversations about media consumption and its impact.

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